SELF-STUDY
2016–2017

Submitted to
The Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Dedicated to providing educational access, exceptional service, and outstanding academic opportunities to adult learners for 124 years

[DATE TBD]

STRAYER UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

Institutional Philosophy and Mission
Strayer University aspires to provide a positive teaching and learning environment and to offer its students high-quality and relevant academic programs so that they may succeed personally and professionally, and acquire an appetite for lifelong learning. The university mission statement, adopted in 2014 is based for four strategic pillars—Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success, and Customer Service:

Through exceptional service and our personal commitment to student success, we enable students to obtain a valuable education and change their lives, starting the day they enroll.

The validity of this philosophy has been substantiated through the success of Strayer University graduates and the prestige the institution has enjoyed over the years. While the university envisions that its fundamental purpose will remain the same, the dynamic nature of education and its global environment require constant review of short-term and long-term goals and objectives, and progress toward achieving those goals and objectives. Strayer University is committed to continuous improvement through rigorous periodic evaluation of progress toward achieving its mission and goals. [See Strategic Plan 2015–2020, Appendix B.]

University Profile: Students, Faculty, and Staff
Strayer University students are working adults who seek the skills and credentials to advance in their jobs or transition to new careers. More than 34,000 students have graduated from the university since 2012, and the university has more than 100,000 alumni.

Characteristics of the student body have changed little since the periodic review in 2012. Undergraduate students make up 70% of the student body, and business-related programs are the primary fields of study selected by both undergraduate and graduate students. The median age is 35, and women and minorities make up 65% and 74% of the student body, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Changes in enrollment since 2012 are apparent. The Strayer student body is about 20% smaller in 2016 than it was four years ago. The percentage of students who take only online courses has grown by 17%, and this pattern is expected to continue. Another change, most clearly illustrated in the following figure, is the enrollment of more undergraduate students who have no prior collegiate experience. For the calendar year 2012, only 37% of new undergraduate students had enrolled without post-secondary credit. By calendar year 2015, that number had risen to 53% of all new students. Students with transfer credit declined from 50% of new students in 2012 to 25% in 2015. However, graduate student enrollments remained relatively stable.

The decline in overall enrollment is mirrored by a decline in the number of faculty and staff. In spring 2016, the university employed 208
full-time faculty members and 2,388 adjunct faculty members, as compared with 292 full-time and 2,939 adjuncts in 2012. The number of Strayer staff who support the academic mission of the university, also has changed. In 2012, Strayer employed 2,007 staff members, and in May 2016, the number of staff was 1,302. The nearly 35% decline in staff can be attributed to reorganizations; campus closures; and efficiencies made possible by better use of technology, outsourcing of some functions, and the shift to more online enrollments.

In this report, we address the effects of enrollment changes on planning, resource allocation, educational programs, faculty, and student services. Despite the overall reduction in the number of Strayer faculty and staff, the university continues to invest in its students. Academic expenditures per student have dropped only slightly since 2012, from $2,183 to $2,061 per student in 2016. The university also remains committed to academic quality. In 2012, 83% of the full-time faculty held terminal degrees. In 2016, nearly 88% have terminal degrees in their fields.

### TABLE 1: STRAYER UNIVERSITY STUDENT PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strayer University Student Profile (selected)</th>
<th>Spring 2012</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>50,896</td>
<td>41,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying at undergraduate level (% of total)</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying part-time (% of total)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying business administration</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online-only modality that term (% of total)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/racial minority (confirmed % of total)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (% of total)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### FIGURE 1: NEWLY ENROLLED STUDENTS, 2012–2015

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**Organization of the Report**

The university elected to undertake a comprehensive self-study with some standards reordered. This model was selected to provide opportunities for in-depth analysis of each of the 14 characteristics of excellence, and to
ensure the alignment of the standards with the newly developed five-year strategic plan. Further, the comprehensive review served as a tool to educate the Strayer community about accreditation, the standards, and the ways in which the daily activities of faculty and staff contribute to institutional effectiveness and student learning.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the self-study report describe Strayer’s history and accreditation, developments since the Periodic Review, and how the university approached the study. The body of the study is organized around five themes:

**Theme 1:** Ensuring a Strong Foundation, covered in Chapters 5-7, provides insight into the university’s mission and integrity (Standards 1 and 6), planning and resources (Standards 2 and 3), and leadership and governance (Standard 4).

**Theme 2:** Ensuring Quality and Capacity, addressed in Chapters 8-11, focuses on the fundamental elements related to administration (Standard 5), faculty (Standard 10), educational offerings (Standard 11), and related educational activities (Standard 13).

**Theme 3:** Ensuring Student Success, explored in Chapters 12 and 13, examines student admissions, retention, and support (Standards 8 and 9), and general education (Standard 12).

**Theme 4:** Ensuring Continuous Improvement, covered in Chapters 14 and 15, examines compliance with the fundamental elements related to institutional assessment (Standard 7) and the assessment of student learning (Standard 14).

**Theme 5:** Preparing for Change, Chapter 16, addresses an overarching research question regarding the implications of online enrollment growth trends for Strayer’s future.

Chapter 17 is a compendium of the recommendations and suggestions from the self-study to improve compliance with the fundamental elements, address challenges, and capitalize on opportunities for improvement.

**Recommendations for Improvement**

Chapter 3 of the report describes many changes that have impacted Strayer University since the 2012 Periodic Review. Some changes, such as the establishment of new academic programs and acquiring specialized accreditation have been quite positive; others such as declining enrollments and the growing number of students who enroll without prior college credit, have highlighted or created opportunities for improvement. These issues are addressed throughout the self-study report.

The comprehensive self-study revealed that Strayer University is in compliance with the fundamental elements of the 14 standards. However, as detailed in Chapter 17, the self-study identified a number of suggestions to improve institutional effectiveness and student learning. The analysis also revealed 7 key recommendations to strengthen compliance with the fundamental elements of six standards as described below.

**Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

1. Adopting a formal assessment process focused on the effectiveness of expenditures would be a helpful tool in planning and institutional renewal. A more consistent approach to the analysis of post-investment outcomes may be beneficial to the university in informing future investment decisions. Requests for funds provide the rationale for making an investment, but currently there does not
appear to be a rigorous and consistent process requiring project owners to evaluate and document the benefits achieved from an investment relative to the expectations at the time the investment was approved.

Leadership and Governance

2. Strayer has appropriate mechanisms in place to properly assess the effectiveness of institutional leadership. Although the Board of Trustees meets annually in executive session to evaluate the performance of the university’s President, we recommend that the board develop and provide the president with an annual written performance review for his benefit and for the university record.

3. The Board of Trustees should consider diversifying its membership to include more women and alumni. With the appointment of its newest member in December 2015, the board now has two female members. Currently, only one trustee is a Strayer alumnus. Women make up more than half of the student body, and graduates in recent years have perspectives that would be beneficial to the institution. Further, we recommend that adding a trustee who has that expertise in online education or experience in technology or similar fields relevant to current and planned academic programs would provide valuable insights in guiding Strayer’s future directions.

Faculty

5. The university should create a standing Curriculum Committee comprised of adjunct and full-time faculty and academic administrators to review and recommend changes designed to improve all curricular offerings of the university.

Student Support Services

6. Although the university has adopted several strategies and tools to support students, and collects student usage data, detailed assessment of the effectiveness of student services on academic achievement is lacking. The team concluded that studies should be undertaken to correlate usage with retention, continuation, and student satisfaction rates.

General Education

7. Place additional emphasis on assessing essential skills and general education competencies that are important for student success in upper-division courses and employ these data to make improvement in curricula and instruction.
Chapter 2: History, Accreditation and Strategic Planning

In 1892, author and businessman Dr. S. Irving Strayer founded a private business college in Baltimore, Maryland, to meet the demand for educated workers in America’s rapidly expanding industrial economy. The mission of the institution was to provide adult students with the practical training and foundational skills needed to succeed in their careers. In 1904, Strayer’s Business College opened a second location in Washington, D.C. That campus, which began with two instructors on staff, became the cornerstone of a national university.

After serving adult learners for more than 70 years with new and innovative courses and academic programs, the institution was licensed to grant the Bachelor of Science degree and renamed Strayer College in 1970. Approved to open campuses in Virginia in 1981, Strayer was first accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) that same year. In 1987, the College was authorized to award master’s degrees by the District of Columbia Education Licensure Commission.

Building on its foundations in business-related fields, Strayer developed a number of degree programs and launched a groundbreaking distance education program in 1996. The university’s geographic expansion added campuses throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia during the next five years.

Strayer Education, Inc., was established in 1996 to raise capital for expansion and take Strayer College public. The institution became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Strayer Education, Inc. enabling Strayer to broaden its reach to more adult learners. In 1998, Strayer College was granted university status and changed its name to Strayer University.

In 2000, MSCHE reaccredited Strayer University for a 10-year period. At this point in its history, Strayer University enrolled 11,500 students at its 13 campuses in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland. Enrollment increased over the next five years and by fall 2006 reached 31,449 students. Under the leadership of interim President Dr. Joel Nwagbaraocha, Strayer undertook a voluntary self-study at the midpoint of its accreditation.

On June 28, 2007, MSCHE reaffirmed Strayer University’s accreditation for 10 years, through 2017. As a follow-up, Strayer was required to document progress in sustainable assessment and implementation of a faculty hiring plan to ensure sufficient faculty at its campuses. MSCHE requested that the periodic review report document additional developments in the areas noted above as well as assess the overall impact of pre-admission placement testing.

The university enrolled 53,801 students in fall 2011, and its geographic footprint had expanded to 89 campuses in 22 states. The number of full-time faculty had increased to 319 and adjunct faculty to 3,547. With the implementation of new faculty hiring guidelines, the percentage of full-time faculty with terminal degrees increased from 50% in 2007 to 82% in 2011.

Changes were not limited to enrollment growth. From 2007–2010, Strayer established four academic schools: Arts and Sciences, Business, Information Systems, and Education. The university created new positions to focus on faculty development, writing across the
curriculum, academic advising, student support services, and instructional design and assessment. In 2008, the University’s Board of Trustees (BOT) endorsed the adoption of six core competencies as the learning outcomes all Strayer students are expected to demonstrate. New degree programs were established including the Bachelor of Criminal Justice, the Associate in Criminal Justice, the Master of Human Resource Management, and new concentrations were offered in the Bachelor of Business Administration and the Master of Education. In 2011, Strayer University acquired the Jack Welch Management Institute (JWMI) to offer an Executive Master of Business Administration (Executive MBA) degree online.

MSCHE accepted the university’s progress letter relating to outcomes assessment, institutional assessment, and faculty hiring in June 2009 and the following year approved a letter documenting progress in the implementation of the new criminal justice program. [See MSCHE Progress Letter, March 26, 2009; MSCHE Progress Letter Approval, June 2009; MSCHE Criminal Justice Implementation Letter, March 2010; MSCHE Criminal Justice Approval, June 2010.]

At the end of 2010, the university community engaged in a thorough evaluation of Strayer’s 2006–2010 Strategic Agenda. This planning activity provided an evaluation of institutional accomplishments and a sense of needed to be done in the next five years to achieve institutional goals and objectives. [See Strategic Agenda Close-Out Report, Appendix B.]

Following this analysis, the Strategic Planning Committee developed a new mission statement, a new strategic plan, and core values for the period 2011–2015. [See Strategic Plan 2011-2015, Appendix B.]

Dr. Michael Plater began his tenure as president in 2012. That year, the university’s periodic review report (PRR) was accepted by MSCHE. The Commission reaffirmed Strayer’s accreditation and requested a follow-up report as noted below:

[The Commission requests] a progress report, due October 1, 2013, documenting steps taken to strengthen the independence and autonomy of the University board and to ensure that the University board has sufficient authority to select, determine compensation for, and evaluate the University chief executive officer (Standard 4).

The requested progress report was submitted in September 2013 and accepted by the Commission at its November meeting. [See 2013 Progress Report on Governance; MSCHE Approval Letter.]
Chapter 3: Recent Developments

Specialized Accreditation
In 2013, the university achieved its first specialized accreditation approvals. In 2013, Strayer University’s Master of Education program was granted accreditation by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) for a period of seven years. Also that year Strayer’s business degree programs (including accounting, business administration, marketing, economics, management, human resource management, health services administration, and acquisition/contract management) were accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) for a 10-year period. [See TEAC Approval Letter; ACBSP Approval Letter, 2013.]

Because the Jack Welch Management Institute (JWMI) Executive MBA degree had not been in operation for two years that program was not eligible for ACBSP accreditation in 2013. However, the JWMI Executive MBA was accredited by ACBSP the following year. [See JWMI ACBSP Letter, 2014.]

Enrollment Changes
The year 2013 marked the beginning of a decline in overall enrollments at Strayer University. Fall 2013 enrollments dropped to 42,265 students, compared with 50,920 students for the same term in 2012. The decline in revenues resulted in expenditure reductions, including a reduction of approximately 20% of the workforce in October 2013. In the fall 2014 term, enrollments declined slightly, to 41,128, but there was a slight increase in the fall 2015 term, to 41,729. [See Profile of Enrolled Students, Fall 2010–2015.]

Concurrently the university has experienced a shift in enrollment preferences with more students choosing to enroll and take all of their courses in the online modality. Further, despite efforts to enroll more students with prior college credit through partnerships with community colleges, Strayer has experienced growth in the number of students who enroll with no post-secondary experiences. Strayer has responded to these trends by shifting resources, reorganizing administrative structures, and investing in more support for students who need remediation or other student support services as described throughout the report.

Tuition Changes
To address the issue of college affordability for U.S. students, in 2012 Strayer created the Experienced Student Completion Scholarship. Designed for new and readmitted undergraduate students with 27 or more transfer credits, this scholarship opportunity reduced the cost of a bachelor’s degree program by approximately 30%. Beginning in summer 2013, all new and readmitted undergraduate students participate in the Graduation Fund program, which allows students to earn tuition credit as they progress toward their bachelor’s degree, reducing the cost of their degree by up to 25%. In 2014, the BOT approved a reduction in tuition of 20% for new and readmitted undergraduate students, formalized its alternative credit processes to further reduce the cost of students’ education through Challenge Exams and experiential learning credit and made other opportunities available to Strayer students. [See Scholarship List.]
Campus Closures

In fall 2013, the university submitted substantive change applications to MSCHE requesting approval to close 21 campuses in nine states. As the university explained, given the enrollment trends at those campuses, and the fact that Strayer was spending a disproportionately high percentage of resources at those campuses supporting a relatively small number of students, the university concluded that it could not profitably operate the campuses and that the resources would be better spent on our online operations and affordability initiatives. At the request of the Substantive Change Committee, the university provided additional information about the proposed closures in December 2013. In January 2014, the Commission accepted the substantive change application and requested a follow-up report, which was provided by Strayer in March 2014 and accepted by the Commission in June 2014. [See Campus Closure Substantive Change and related documents.]

The following campuses were closed in January 2014: Aurora, Chicago, Downers Grove, and Schaumburg, Illinois; North Indianapolis, Indiana; Florence, Lexington, and Louisville, Kentucky; Bloomington and Minneapolis, Minnesota; Kansas City and St. Louis–Brentwood, Missouri; Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Fairborn, Fairview Park (Cleveland), and Mason, Ohio; Sandy, Utah; and Penn Center West, Pennsylvania. The Milwaukee, Wisconsin campus was closed in April at the end of the winter 2014 academic quarter.

Students at these campuses were given the option of transferring to Strayer’s online program, and Penn Center West students were transferred to the nearby Warrendale campus. Affected students, a majority of whom already were enrolled in online classes, were offered support to continue their education online. Students who transferred to online classes were provided with online training and a $500 voucher for the purchase of technology (laptop or tablet). Transcript fees were waived for all students at the closed campuses.

Strayer University notified MSCHE of the decision to close the Metairie, Louisiana, campus in October 2014, and it was closed on March 23, 2015. In addition, the university notified MSCHE of the decision to close the Coral Springs, Florida, campus in February 2015, and it was closed on September 21, 2015. Strayer notified MSCHE of the decision to close the King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, campus in April 2015, and it was closed on September 21, 2015. In July 2016, Strayer submitted substantive change applications for the closure of the Doral and Brickell, Florida campuses at the end of the fall 2016 quarter. Approval also was sought to close or relocate the Lawrenceville, New Jersey campus.

2013 Reorganization

To address the decline in enrollments and expenditure reductions, President Plater and academic leaders undertook a thorough analysis of the Strayer’s portfolio of academic offerings and its organization. Courses were redesigned, concentrations were added to degree programs, and new degrees were added to meet shifting market demands. Changes were made to faculty credentialing, training, and evaluation; student support services were centralized; and the academic structure of the university was reorganized to ensure focus on its core programs.

The October 2013 reorganization created two new colleges, the College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences, each co-led by a college dean and a senior vice president of operations. The university consolidated faculty hiring, training, and evaluation, as well as course and curriculum development, within each college. Schools were established within the new
College of Business and College of Arts and Sciences to enhance support for faculty and students by discipline and program. The Schools of General Education, Education and Public Administration, Criminal Justice, and Information Systems & Technology were housed within the College of Arts and Sciences. The College of Business gained responsibility for the Graduate and Undergraduate Business Schools.

**Student Support**

Student support centralization began as a pilot initiative in November 2013. Due to the success of the pilot, which provided a centralized location for all academic services, the university initiated a complete rollout, which was finalized in mid-February 2015. The Student Academic Services team consists of trained staff that provides academic support, career counseling, and a range of other services from enrollment to graduation. Chapter 12 provides details about student support services.

Strayer launched a partnership with Civitas Learning to use “big data” methodology to evaluate and improve a wide range of academic outcomes including student engagement. The metric measures real-time student activity in the Strayer learning management system, Blackboard, including log-in frequency and duration, discussion thread activity, completion of gradable items, and classroom interaction. The total of such activity each day is used to rank each student’s “engagement” compared with that of peers in the same class. Faculty use these data to evaluate student learning progress and identify students who need real-time support. Data also provide valuable information regarding an instructor’s contributions to improving student engagement over time.

**Academic Program Changes**

Since 2012, a number of academic programs were closed to new enrollments, primarily due to lack of demand. These included the Diploma in Accounting, Undergraduate Certificate in Accounting, Executive Graduate Certificate in Accounting, Executive Graduate Certificate in Business Administration, Undergraduate Certificate in Information Systems, Diploma in Information Systems, Executive Graduate Certificate in Information Systems, Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice, Associate of Arts in Economics, and Bachelor of Science in Economics.

To address a market need, in November 2014, Strayer submitted a Substantive Change Application to MSCHE to launch a new baccalaureate completion program for RNs who hold an active, unencumbered license from any U.S. state and want to earn their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). Offered in an online format, the RN-BSN Completion Program was launched in 2015 and is under review for accreditation by the Collegiate Commission on Nursing Education.

**Strayer@Work**

Started in 2015, Strayer@Work is a partnership program designed to help companies attract, educate, and retain qualified employees. With tuition paid by their employers, employees can earn the associate, bachelor or master degree from Strayer University at no cost and with no personal debt. The university offers preferred tuition rates to participating companies, and employees go through the normal admissions processes and meet admissions requirements, as would any other Strayer student. This program also helps businesses identify and close the skills gap in their organizations through targeted non-credit training programs. [See Board of Trustees Report, June 2015.]
Strategic Plan 2015–2020

In 2014, the university created a new strategic plan to ensure focus on core programs, services, assessment, and continuous improvement. This effort was launched prior to 2015 because the Strayer had undergone a major restructuring, a decline in enrollment, and a change in presidential leadership. In preparing its analysis, the Strategic Planning Committee first created a close-out report for the 2011–2015 plan, reflecting on accomplishments and shortcomings in achieving the institution’s goals and objectives. [See 2011–2015 Close-Out Report, Appendix B.] The 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, adopted in December 2014, describes the major goals, objectives, and indicators of success that the university intends to achieve under the four pillars of Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success, and Customer Service. [See 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, Appendix B.]

A new mission statement serves as the foundation for the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan:

Through exceptional service and our personal commitment to student success, we enable students to obtain a valuable education and change their lives, starting the day they enroll.

New Academic Leadership

Dr. Plater announced his retirement from the presidency in March 2015. The Board of Trustees appointed Strayer University General Counsel Brian Jones interim president. Prior to joining Strayer, Jones was a senior official in the U.S. Department of Education and was co-founder of Latimer Education Inc., a company that partnered with historically black colleges to help develop opportunities for adult learners. Following a search, Jones was inaugurated as Strayer’s 15th president in December 2015. Dr. Andrea Backman, who had served as dean of the JWMI Executive MBA Program, was appointed provost and chief academic officer, and Rosemary Rose became the university’s first vice president and chief operating officer (COO). In 2016, Rose left the university and Chad Nyce was appointed COO.

2015–2016 Reorganization

Following a thorough review of the university’s structure, Strayer’s leaders determined that the structure of the academic enterprise should be reorganized to reallocate human and financial resources to the rapidly growing online program, and to improve the content design and development process. On October 29, 2015, the university executed its planned reorganization of both its academic structure—transitioning away from the colleges and field operations that were established in 2013. The change also aligned Strayer’s academic functions under six major areas reporting to the provost, and brought reporting lines for operations areas under the chief operating officer. The new structure is described in detail in Chapter 8 of the report. [See Board of Trustees Report, December 2015; Campus and Online Enrollment Trends.]

Faculty Compensation

In spring 2015, the university instituted a pay-for-performance model in which the top-performing 20% of adjunct instructors receive the highest compensation. Under the new policy, an adjunct instructor’s teaching performance is measured over four consecutive quarters during the calendar year. The university also implemented a new pay-for-performance plan for all full-time faculty. Under this new model, faculty members are ranked according to their performance and merit increases were awarded based on the rankings. For online classes, the rankings are based on the weighted average of engagement score change and overall engagement level, and for campus classes, the rankings are based on the weighted average of attendance and student opinion poll scores. [See Board of Trustees Report, April 2015.]
Chapter 4: The Self-Study Process

In November 2014, University President Michael Plater appointed a planning team to begin the self-study process. The planning team was responsible for advising on and recommending strategies, models, and approaches to the self-study. The members participated in the fall 2014 MSCHE Self-Study Institute to better understand the evaluation process.

In early December, the planning team recommended faculty, staff, and administrators to serve on the steering committee. The members were selected for their broad institutional knowledge and perspectives as well as their leadership and organizational skills to oversee the self-study process. Students were not included on the steering committee but were informed about the self-study and provided with opportunities to comment throughout the process.

Dr. Sondra Stallard and Dr. Michael Curran were appointed co-chairs of the self-study. Dr. Stallard served as Strayer’s president from 2007 to 2011 and currently serves as MSCHE accreditation liaison officer for the institution. Dr. Curran has been a full-time faculty member at Strayer since 2006 and teaches at the Warrendale, Pennsylvania campus. Dr. Joel Nwagbaraocha, provost emeritus, was asked to serve as special advisor to the Steering Committee because of his extensive experience in accreditation. Dr. Nwagbaraocha also teaches at the Washington, D.C., campus and is an advisor to the university president. Steering Committee members included:

- Dr. Eva M. Ananiewicz, Faculty, School of Business, Online
- Dr. Andrea Backman, Provost and Chief Academic Officer
- Darlene Bell-Alexander, Senior Associate General Counsel
- Timothy Featherly, Vice President, Finance and Planning
- Dr. Allison Fisher, Vice Provost, General Studies
- Dr. Bruce Macdonald, Faculty, Newport News Campus
- Matthew Miko, Vice Provost, Academic Programs
- Dr. Nicole Morris, Senior Vice Provost and Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Chad Nyce, Chief Operating Officer
- Dr. Jacqueline Palmer, Dean of Students
- Dr. Ryan Poirier, Director, Institutional Effectiveness
- Chandra Quaye, Senior Vice Provost, Academic Services
- Michael Roark, Vice President, Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Alan Rogers, Faculty, Lithonia Campus
- Joe Schaefer, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology and Innovation Officer
- Chris Stout, Vice Provost, Student Services
- Mariana Valdes-Fauli, Senior Vice President, Human Relations
- Debby Zutter, Regional Vice President, Washington, D.C., Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee campuses
The steering committee first convened in January 2015 to consider the nature and scope of the institutional self-study, to identify intended outcomes of the study, and to select the self-study model. The planning team recommended consideration of the comprehensive self-study model. After deliberation, the steering committee approved the comprehensive model with some standards reordered.

The Steering Committee elected to address the Strayer's compliance with each of the 14 MSCHE characteristics of excellence with the goal of assuring the Strayer community, MSCHE, and the public that the university fulfills its mission with integrity and is dedicated to institutional effectiveness and student learning.

The committee reordered and combined the study of some Standards to create synergy for the working groups and to create a thematic approach. Working groups had the option to provide one report covering their assigned standards or to evaluate the standards separately. Most groups elected to provide separate analyses.

The working groups were charged with researching and responding to two overarching questions:

To what extent is Strayer in compliance with each of the fundamental elements of the standard, if applicable?

Analysis of enrollment trends and demand suggests that a majority of the student population will study exclusively online in the future and that this population will be increasingly technologically savvy. What are the major implications of such changes relative to this standard, if any?

The working groups also were tasked with responding to four specific research questions for each of the 14 standards. Some of these questions had multiple parts. [See Self-Study Research Questions.]

In early spring 2015, the steering committee completed the draft self-study design and MSCHE liaison, Dr. Ellie Fogarty, reviewed the draft with the steering committee and the Board of Trustees. She also met with Interim President Brian Jones, faculty, staff, and students to explain the purpose and timeline of the self-study. Based on Dr. Fogarty’s recommendations, revisions were made to the draft self-study design and invitations were sent to prospective members of the working groups.

By May 2015, 90 university employees had agreed to join the 10 working groups which were each co-chaired by a member of the steering committee. [See Self-Study Working Groups.] Guided by the steering committee, the working groups analyzed the research questions, conducted research, and evaluated the university’s compliance with the fundamental elements of each of the 14 standards during the 2015 summer, fall, and winter quarters. The steering committee held meetings throughout fall 2015 and early 2016 to assess progress. In late April 2016, working group reports were submitted to the committee. The working groups’ approaches to evaluating compliance and conducting research are briefly described in the relevant chapter of the self-study.

In hindsight, the Steering Committee discovered that the number and complexity of some research questions proved difficult for the working groups to adequately address in the timeframe of the study. Furthermore, many of the questions posed by the Steering Committee considerably overlapped with the working groups’ analyses of compliance with the fundamental elements of the assigned standards or with other standards. This redundancy caused some difficulty in the editing of the final report. The self-study also
was hampered by changes in the composition of the working groups and steering committee during the research and writing phase in some cases due to the 2015 academic reorganization. Without continuity of leadership, some working groups were unable to meet internal deadlines for completion of their reports.

Throughout the self-study process, President Jones provided quarterly updates to the trustees. Dr. Stallard briefed the board at its spring 2016 meeting. Employees were informed about the self-study by employee news announcements, at faculty meetings and town hall sessions, and at the annual Strayer Management Meeting in April 2016. The initial self-study draft was made available to the Strayer community and the Board of Trustees in August 2016, and revisions were made following the comment period. The final draft report for submission to the MSCHE visiting team chair was endorsed by the Board of Trustees on [date TBD].
Strayer University aspires to provide a positive teaching and learning environment and to offer high-quality and relevant academic programs to its students so that they may succeed personally and professionally, and acquire an appetite for lifelong learning.

While the university envisions that its fundamental purpose will remain the same, the dynamic nature of education and its global environment require constant review of short- and long-term goals and objectives, and progress toward achieving those goals and objectives. Strayer University is committed to continuous improvement through rigorous periodic evaluation of progress toward achieving its mission and goals.

Equally important to Strayer University is an unequivocal commitment on the part of all university employees to integrity in relationships with students and prospective students, with our regional and specialized accrediting bodies, with the regulatory agencies of the states wherein we operate, with federal agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and with the general public. Earning the trust of our stakeholders is especially critical because proprietary education has been tainted by the actions of institutions that failed to demonstrate commitment to integrity and thereby failed their students.

Our constituents must have confidence that Strayer has the institutional resources to fulfill its mission and achieve its primary goals, and that the university uses its resources to improve the institution and student learning. Effective planning leads to the effective deployment of institutional resources to address needs and to take advantage of opportunities. Thoughtful investments in human resources (HR), technology, facilities, student support, and assessment are essential to the health of the institution.

Strayer’s solid foundation is supported by an independent governing body that enables the university to fulfill its mission, ensures integrity, and supports planning and the appropriate allocation of institutional resources. The Board of Trustees engages in important policy development; reviews progress toward achieving the goals of the strategic plan; and selects, supports, and evaluates the performance of President Brian Jones.

The Steering Committee chose to include Standards 1, 6, 2, 3, and 4 under Theme 1 in this self-study report because we view these five standards as pillars of Strayer’s foundation. There is some overlap in the analyses that follow, but it remains clear that each of these standards is equally important to the success of our institution and to the university’s commitment to the students it serves.
Chapter 5: Mission, Goals, and Integrity (Standards 1 and 6)

The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission.

The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body, and are used to develop and shape its effectiveness.

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

The working group reviewed the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan and Close-Out Report, the current 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, the president’s annual reports to the Board of Trustees outlining progress toward achieving the strategic goals, university catalogs, and other relevant materials. It conducted interviews with academic leaders, the chief financial officer (CFO), the marketing and operation teams, and faculty regarding their understanding of and support for the university’s mission.

To evaluate compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 6 and to respond to the research questions, the group reviewed the employee handbook, catalog, student handbook, code of business conduct, external website, and intranet. The group also met with various stakeholders who have responsibility to ensure integrity in several areas including student affairs, legal and contractual matters, internal audit, HR, marketing, finance, and academic affairs.

The working groups concluded that the Standard 1 and 6 research questions were answered in the responses about the fundamental elements or covered in detail in other chapters of the self-study report and, therefore are not addressed in Chapter 5.

Conclusions:

Strayer is in compliance with the fundamental elements of Standards 1 and 6. The mission defines the purpose of the university, and academic initiatives, policies, and programs are based on the goals, objectives, and measures of success specified in the strategic plan. The fourth pillar of the strategic plan, Customer Service, added in 2014, emphasizes serving all institutional stakeholders by ensuring a safe and supportive environment. There is a clear focus on ethical behavior, transparency, personal and institutional integrity, and professionalism.

In the suggestion that follows, the working groups noted that improvements are possible in communicating the university’s mission and goals.

Suggestion:

The university should develop a communications plan to more clearly and directly communicate the mission and goals of the university with students and prospective students, faculty and staff, and external constituents.

Mission and Goals Fundamental Elements (Standard 1)

Clearly defined mission and goals that

- guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, and program and curriculum development; and in the definition of program outcomes.
• are developed through collaborative participation by those who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional improvement and development;

• are periodically evaluated and formally approved;

• include support of scholarly and creative activity at levels and of the kinds appropriate to the institution’s purposes and character; and

• are publicized and widely known by the institution’s members.

The 2011–2015 Strategic Plan approved by the Board of Trustees was organized around three pillars: Educational Access, Academic Quality, and Student Success. The goals and objectives of the strategic plan were designed to achieve the university’s mission, and guided decision-making until 2014. [See 2011-1015 Strategic Plan, Appendix B; Board of Trustees Resolution.]

Because Strayer underwent a major restructuring during this time frame, including a change in leadership, the new administration and the Board of Trustees agreed that 2014 was an appropriate time to revisit the mission, goals, and objectives. Academic administrators and faculty performed an assessment of progress under the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, which served as a reference point for the work of the Strategic Planning Committee. The 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report revealed that many of the goals had been successfully achieved. [See Strategic Plan Close-Out Report, Appendix B.]

In June 2014, senior leaders spoke with trustees, visited campuses, conducted town hall sessions, and participated in regional faculty meetings to solicit input regarding the mission and strategic directions of the institution. With feedback from many stakeholders, the Strategic Planning Committee approved, and Board of Trustees subsequently adopted, a new strategic plan and a new mission statement. [See Memo on Comment Period; Strategic Planning Committee Roster; BOT Resolution; 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.]

The new mission statement guided the development of the goals and objectives under the four pillars of the plan, Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success, and Customer Service:

Through exceptional service and a personal commitment to student success, we help all students obtain a valuable education and change their lives, starting the day they enroll.

The strategic plan operationalizes the mission by setting out specific goals, objectives, and measures of success. It also sets the stage for how we allocate resources—both financial and human—and what our strategies are across all of our teams. The mission and plan guide decision-making of the governing body, the president, provost, chief operating officer and other academic and administrative leaders. The president’s quarterly reports to the trustees describe progress in achieving the mission and goals, and regular calls with the board’s executive committee provide opportunities to seek input on academic decisions and to apprise the board of progress. [See President’s Reports to the Board of Trustees.]

As an extension of the mission, university administrators worked with the faculty in early 2015 to develop the Faculty Charter. Under the charter, faculty acknowledge and embrace four fundamental beliefs that are aligned with Strayer’s mission: (1) We are teachers, coaches, and mentors. (2) We expect the best of our students. (3) We listen to our students. (4) We welcome innovation. [See 2015 Faculty Charter.]

While Strayer does not consider academic research and scholarly activity to be part of its institutional mission, the university recognizes
and encourages faculty who wish to engage in scholarly activity and professional development opportunities. Goal 3.2 of the strategic plan specifies that Strayer initiate and support faculty training and professional development activities, and anticipates an increase in faculty participation in internal and external professional development activities. Full-time faculty and academic leaders participate in conferences and other professional development activities to keep abreast of industry trends and discipline-focused research and innovation. Between 2012 and 2015, 78.5% of faculty requests for professional development funding were approved. Strayer also has a robust internal professional development program as described in Chapter 9. [See Professional Development Expenditures Chart.]

To foster a better understanding of the university's purpose, Strayer communicates its mission and goals to distinct audiences—students, faculty and staff, prospective students, and investors and other external stakeholders—using a variety of communication tools:

- Faculty and staff, including new employees:
  - New Faculty Orientation
  - Employee handbook
  - Onboarding program for new employees (Inspire)
  - Mission posters at campus and corporate offices
  - Recruiting career site
  - Pre-quarter faculty training
  - Intranet (SUNow)
  - Faculty Charter
  - Leadership town halls
  - Faculty meetings

- Students:
  - New Student Orientation
  - Student handbook
  - Catalog
  - iCampus student portal

- External audiences:
  - Strayereducation.com
  - Strayer.edu

Changes to the mission and goals are communicated through the staff and faculty newsletters. For example, when the Faculty Charter was created in 2015, setting a new tone for faculty in supporting our mission, Faculty News released a series of articles about the charter. [See Faculty News October 2015.]

Mission and goals that relate to external and internal contexts and constituencies.

Compliance with this fundamental element is grounded in the strategic plan. Specifically, Pillar 1 (Educational Access), Goal 5, notes that Strayer will expand its programs to meet evolving market demand. Goal 5.1 indicates that the university will evaluate student and employer demand to determine program needs; Goal 5.2 states that we will invest in building and refining programs to meet the needs of external constituencies within the context of our mission.

Goal 1 under the Academic Quality pillar deals with the commitment to compliance with accreditation and regulatory standards, including MSCHE accreditation, state regulatory requirements and program-specific accreditation requirements. Strayer is approved to operate campuses in 16 states plus the District of Columbia, and has approvals and necessary exemptions from many other states to operate employer-based locations and online offerings as well.
The University Policy Committee (UPC) ensures that all curricular and policy adoptions and changes are consistent with MSCHE standards and the requirements of the states in which we operate. The university adheres to standards set forth by programmatic accrediting bodies and Strayer’s institutional research team, along with academic leaders, carefully track compliance.

Institutional goals that are consistent with the mission.

The new mission statement and related goals and objectives of the strategic plan resulted from internal consensus that providing outstanding service at all levels positively affects the student experiences and their academic success. To this end, the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan added an emphasis on customer service. While the strategic plan describes specific institutional goals that are consistent with the mission, four new vision statements express institutional aspirations to fulfill the mission:

- **Educational Access:** We provide post-secondary education to a diverse population of qualified students.
- **Academic Quality:** We provide rigorous, engaging, and professionally relevant academic programs and experiences for our students.
- **Student Success:** We provide opportunities and supportive learning environments to enable students to achieve academic, personal, and professional success.
- **Customer Service:** We provide exceptional service to students and all other university stakeholders.

Goals that focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional improvement.

Under Pillar 2 (Academic Quality), all goals relate to curricular excellence, engaged faculty, and resources to support student learning. Pillar 3 (Student Success) contains goals and objectives to serve students in a supportive learning environment. Within this pillar are specific goals related to student advisement, counseling, career services, and measures for effectively evaluating student learning. Woven throughout the strategic plan are goals and objectives to ensure institutional improvement. The academic leadership team regularly reviews progress toward achieving these goals, as does the Board of Trustees at every regular board meeting. As described in Chapter 6, the investment of university resources is closely linked to achieving the goals of the strategic plan.

**Integrity Fundamental Elements (Standard 6)**

*Fair and impartial processes, published and widely available, to address student grievances, such as alleged violations of institutional policies. The institution assures that student grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably.*

The Strayer University catalog and student handbook provide detailed instructions on the complaint resolution process, and notes that “Strayer University does not retaliate or take any unfair actions against students who file complaints with or against the University.” In an effort to ensure timely resolution of student complaints, the type of complaint dictates the specific department responsible for ensuring a fair and prompt resolution. [See 2016 Catalog, p. XX; 2015 Student Handbook; http://strayer.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2016-2017/Catalog.]

Grievances generally fall into three specific categories: academic, financial and other non-academic complaints.

The university student information system, Strayer 360, contains information on student complaints that are escalated to Student Affairs, including the date of escalation, and date of
resolution. Student Affairs staff generates reports based on this information and prepares a quarterly report for the provost of all complaints opened during a quarter. A centralized Student Financial Services team provides efficient student financial-related complaint resolution. Strayer has a formal process for financial aid complaints, set forth in the student handbook. [See Student Handbook.] Financial complaints from students are tracked in a spreadsheet and kept on a protected drive that is shared by Student Affairs and Student Financial Services staff, ensuring that financial and informal student grievances are handled promptly and efficiently.

Fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of employees.

Strayer is committed to providing equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, ancestry, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by state, federal, or local law. This policy applies to all areas of employment, including recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, transfer, termination, layoff, compensation, benefits, social and recreational programs, and all other conditions and privileges of employment, in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Employees and prospective employees are informed about the Strayer’s policies and practices in the employee handbook. They are made aware of the handbook during the hiring process and at least once per year thereafter during annual compliance training. [See Employee Handbook, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, p. 4.] Strayer also ensures compliance by providing mandatory employee relations training at all regional meetings as well as annual compliance training for every employee to build awareness of policies and procedures.

Sound ethical practices and respect for individuals through its teaching, scholarship/research, service, and administrative practice, including the avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all its activities and among all its constituents.

All employees are expected to observe high standards of ethical behavior in the discharge of their assigned duties and responsibilities. This requires demonstrating integrity in every aspect of dealing with other employees, the public, the business community, stockholders, students, customers, suppliers, and governmental and regulatory authorities. These practices extend to compliance with local, state, and federal laws, rules, and regulations, including those governing degree program integrity, student enrollment, awarding of federal financial aid, equal access to education, faculty credential standards, equal employment opportunity, employment safety, benefit and wage and hour standards, protection of employees’ and students’ personal information, and insider trading.

Strayer is committed to encouraging honest and ethical conduct, including the ethical handling of actual or apparent conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships. [See Code of Business Conduct, Honesty, Section II, B, 2.] University employees must complete annual training on the University’s Code of Business Conduct. [See Employee Handbook, Ethics Training.]

Equitable and appropriately consistent treatment of constituencies, as evident in such areas as the application of academic requirements and policies; student discipline; student evaluation; grievance procedures; faculty promotion, tenure, retention, and compensation; administrative review; curricular improvement; and institutional governance and management.

Strayer is in compliance with this fundamental element. As described earlier, Student Affairs and Student Financial Services handle every
complaint according to the complaint process as outlined in its catalog and student handbook [See Catalog, Policies and Procedures, Student Problem Resolution; Student Handbook, pp. 10–29]. Equitable and consistent evaluation of students is ensured in several ways. Many student assignments (e.g., quizzes and exams) are auto-graded, which ensures that answers and scores are counted accurately. For assignments requiring instructor review grading rubrics are used to consistently and appropriately weight and score different components. Training on the use of these rubrics is provided to faculty through the iDevelop training site. In addition, formal academic integrity reviews are conducted each quarter on specified courses to ensure fairness and consistency in student evaluation across courses.

Strayer University does not have a tenure system. Although Strayer does not offer a traditional pathway for faculty promotions, faculty have opportunities to grow in their careers. University leaders often are promoted from within faculty ranks, and faculty are eligible to apply for other academically focused management roles. In its faculty retention and compensation practices, Strayer strictly observes the university’s non-discrimination policies. [See Code of Business Conduct, Nondiscrimination, Section II, B, 8.]

Strayer University has ongoing curricular review processes in which faculty and academic leaders work together to ensure quality content as described in Chapters 9, 10 and 13 of the self-study report.

A climate of academic inquiry and engagement supported by widely disseminated policies regarding academic and intellectual freedom.

The university’s course guides (syllabi) for use in all courses are highly prescriptive. This decision was made to ensure uniformity of instruction in online and campus-based courses, and to facilitate fair assessment of student learning outcomes. However, the university respects the right of faculty to address relevant topics within their courses. Strayer continues to fine-tune the balance between standardization of courses and content, and faculty interest in creating new approaches.

An institutional commitment to principles of protecting intellectual property rights.

As noted in the employee handbook, Strayer develops intellectual property of many kinds that is or will be the subject of copyright, trademark, patent, trade secret, or other protections. Strayer recognizes that encouraging its faculty to create and disseminate scholarly works stimulates the learning process and improves institutional quality. In order to best serve its students and faculty, Strayer’s intellectual property policy is set forth in the employee handbook. By accepting employment with Strayer, each faculty member and employee agrees to comply with this policy as a condition of employment. [See Employee Handbook.]

A climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration with a range of backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.

It is the policy of the university that all persons are to be treated with integrity and fairness. [See Code of Business Conduct, Section II, B, 3.] In addition, every employee must complete ethics and harassment training annually. Since 2012, the training has had completion rates above 90%, and in the last two years nearly 100% of employees have completed this mandatory training. A biannual organizational health survey measures employee understanding of and engagement with the university strategy. [See Spring 2016 Organizational Health Survey Results.]
Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials and practices.

In conjunction with the legal department, the departments of Corporate Communications and Marketing handle all announcements and advertisements, and create marketing and recruiting materials, using stringent procedures to ensure integrity in all materials, announcements, and practices. Legal staff use a dedicated email address, MarketingReview@strayer.edu, to review and approve all press releases within 72 hours of receipt, with the general counsel approving any national press releases. In addition, all marketing and other student-facing materials are reviewed by outside counsel to ensure accuracy and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Admissions officers are trained on integrity and expected to provide prospective students with accurate information regarding every aspect of the educational experience. The legal team reviews and approves materials used in training. Practices to evaluate the interactions of admissions personnel with prospective students and students are described in Chapter 12.

Required and elective courses that are sufficiently available to allow students to graduate within the published program length.

All required courses in the Strayer catalog are offered every quarter. Some courses may be canceled due to low enrollment, but if a student needs a course to graduate, Strayer is committed to providing the course or providing an alternative independent study. In the 16 quarters since summer term 2012, 3% or fewer of our students have enrolled in an independent study to complete their academic programs. [See Independent Studies Enrollment Chart.]

Reasonable, continuing student access to paper or electronic catalogs.

Strayer students have full access to the most recent academic catalog through the Strayer.edu website. The electronic catalog is indexed and easily searchable. Updates to the catalog are posted on the student intranet portal. Printed catalogs are available at campuses.

Although archived copies of the catalog are not available on the website, the registrar maintains archived copies, and students may request information from archived catalogs by contacting the registrar staff, campus leaders, student success coaches or their academic advisors.

Changes and issues affecting institutional mission, goals, sites, programs, operations, and other material changes are disclosed accurately and in a timely manner to the institution’s community, to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and to any other appropriate regulatory bodies.

Fulfillment of all applicable standards and reporting and other requirements of the Commission.

Strayer complies with all applicable standards and reporting requirements of MSCHE. Examples include substantive change applications, follow-up reports, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) submissions. In the interests of clarity, candor, and openness, we often contact our liaison, Dr. Ellie Fogarty, to provide advance notice of material changes that are in the planning or discussion phase. We also seek Dr. Fogarty’s advice and guidance prior to developing new policies, programs, or procedures to ensure compliance with MSCHE standards.

MSCHE and state regulatory reports are not typically shared with the internal and external communities, with the exception of the periodic review report and the self-study. However, the university does report such information to certain states that require notice; states may make the information public. Federal financial aid regulations and our provisional program
participation agreement require that we notify and/or seek approval from the U.S. Department of Education for certain changes. The Department maintains an eligibility and certification approval report (ECAR), which lists our officers, campus locations, programs, and third-party servicers, among other items, and we submit an application to update this report. Once the Department approves or acknowledges the change, it sends a formal letter along with a new version of the ECAR reflecting the change. The legal team distributes such information to the president and the Student Financial Services Department upon receipt.

Availability of factual information about the institution, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education annual data reporting, the self-study or periodic review report, the team report, and the Commission’s action, accurately reported and made publicly available to the institution’s community.

This information is made available through SUNow, Strayer University’s intranet. Students may find information on accreditation at Strayer.edu/strayer-experience and employees may find information at SUNow.Strayer.edu/sites/academics/ap/acadlt/default.aspx and SUNow.Strayer.edu/sites/academics/ap/prt/default.aspx.

Information on institution-wide assessments available to prospective students, including graduation, retention, certification and licensing pass rates, and other outcomes as appropriate to the programs offered.

Institutional information provided in a manner that ensures student and public access, such as print, electronic, or video presentation.

Information on program completion is available in the Strayer Catalog [pp. XXX] and on the website at Strayer.edu/academic-program-disclosure. The Corporate Communications and Marketing departments provide information about Strayer University in several formats to internal and external communities as well as its parent company, Strayer Education, Inc., including the following:

- Digital properties including websites and web sub-pages, social media platforms, video content, and the Strayer University Buzz blog
- Marketing collateral materials including brochures, fact sheets, fliers, posters, and other materials
- Email and other direct marketing campaigns
- Media relations materials, such as press releases and sponsored content distributed through various media outlets
- Presentations at higher education–focused conferences, seminars, summits, and events
- Communication to Strayer’s internal employees in the form of newsletters, the Facebook at Work platform, and one-time employee announcements sent via email and/or released on Strayer’s employee intranet, SUNow
- Publications such as Forum and Scholar magazines

Periodic assessment of the integrity evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.

The University Policy Committee and the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) review and approve policies, processes, and practices to ensure adherence to integrity and compliance with regulations. In addition, the Board of Trustees approves any major curricular changes. The Human Resources Department and OGC review the employee handbook at least annually and update it with any relevant changes. Academic leaders, the registrar and OGC staff jointly conduct an annual catalog review. The Internal Audit Department regularly reviews internal campus processes to ensure they
conform to policy. The department conducts 20–25 campus audits quarterly. Overall campus compliance consistently shows positive results. In 2015, overall compliance was 96% in the summer and fall terms, and 97% in winter and spring quarters.

The Internal Audit Department also conducts quarterly audits of the Registrar’s Office, with a focus on students’ basis of admission. For 2015, there was 100% compliance in three terms and 94% in one term. In addition, the department conducts quarterly audits of the Business Office and Student Financial Services, focusing on students’ methods of paying tuition and fees. In 2015, overall compliance was 97% in one term and 98% in three terms. Audit results are distributed to department, and campus leaders, and management is required to submit remediation action plans if significant instances of noncompliance exist.
Chapter 6: Planning, Institutional Resources, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal (Standards 2 and 3)

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and uses the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve the mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the mission, effective and efficient uses of resources are analyzed as part of ongoing assessment.

To evaluate compliance with the fundamental elements of Standards 2 and 3, the working groups undertook a full review of the annual budget planning process, the strategic planning process, the policy change process, and past reports to the Board of Trustees. The working groups also conducted a comprehensive analysis of institutional resources, auditing processes, facilities plans, allocation processes, and internal controls to determine compliance with the fundamental elements and evaluate potential areas for improvement.

These tasks included obtaining and studying committee minutes to understand the decision-making approach and the nature of assessment tools referenced. We also gained further insight into each process by meeting with individuals directly involved. The working groups were purposely made up of individuals who play key roles in the processes that we examined, allowing group members to add input based on their personal participation and to supply documentation to confirm their accounts. Periodic meetings provided opportunities to identify knowledge gaps, examine documentation, and evaluate the information obtained to determine Strayer’s compliance with each fundamental element of Standards 2 and 3.

Conclusions:

Based on the analysis of the identified evidence, the working groups concluded that Strayer University meets the fundamental elements of Standard 2 and Standard 3. Specifically, we found that overall operation is strongly rooted in the strategic plan and the institutional mission. The strategic plan was developed with input from stakeholders throughout the university community and that the plan is used to guide decision-making at many levels of the organization. However, the working group concluded that there are opportunities to improve the planning process by making some linkages more explicit and by documenting ways in which decisions are tied to the strategic plan.

Although there is room for improvement in some areas, we found that the Strayer has robust institutional renewal processes, and effectively and efficiently uses its resources to achieve the institutional mission and goals. Our research revealed a comprehensive effort to analyze trends, and a willingness and capacity to adapt programs and processes for improvement.

Recommendation:

Adopting a formal assessment process focused on the effectiveness of expenditures would be a helpful tool in planning and institutional renewal. A more consistent approach to the analysis of post-investment outcomes may be beneficial in informing future investment decisions. Requests for funds provide the rationale for making an investment, but currently
there does not appear to be a rigorous and consistent process requiring project owners to evaluate and document the benefits achieved from an investment relative to the expectations at the time the investment was approved.

**Suggestions:**

1. Modify spending authorization forms to include a section explicitly stating the goal/objective of the strategic plan that the investment is addressing. While the team was able to conclude there was a strong link between the strategic plan and resource allocation based on actual investments being made, funding requests infrequently referenced the specific component of the strategic plan that was being addressed. This minor addition to funding request documentation would allow for easy reference to the strategic plan, provide for an easier method of confirming that all goals in the strategic plan are being funded, and to the extent that certain goals are not being funded, provide a mechanism to determine whether or not the focus has shifted or resources need to be reallocated.

2. Provide consistent feedback to the university community regarding steps that are being taken in response to surveys, feedback, and information requests. Often resources are allocated based on information distilled from student or staff surveys; however, the respondents may not always be notified that their voices have been heard and Strayer has allocated funding to address their concerns. Improved communication may enhance community goodwill and encourage future participation on surveys and other feedback-giving opportunities.

**Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal Fundamental Elements (Standard 2)**

Goals and objectives or strategies, both institution-wide and for individual units, that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels.

At the most basic level, goals and objectives are stated in the strategic plan, the creation process for which is discussed more fully in the next section. [See 2015–2020 Strategic Plan.] The strategic plan outlines overall goals for the University at a high level and several smaller objectives that facilitate goal achievement.

Linkage to the mission permeates the strategic plan in that the document includes significant discussion of the development process for the, which was revised with input from constituents.

While the strategic plan itself covers a five-year period, the university’s resources undergo annual reallocation through the budgeting process. Resources are allocated for a calendar year, with the budgeting process being completed in the fourth quarter of the prior calendar year. At the onset of the annual budgeting process, leaders review assessment results related to priorities stated in the strategic plan. Examples of items typically included in this review are reports of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, student outcome and faculty performance data generated by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, student surveys, and reports tracking enrollment trends.

Following this review, leaders identify key objectives for the upcoming year that align with the strategic plan; these objectives subsequently are communicated to department heads across the university during periodic leadership
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meetings. Department heads are expected to set departmental goals in support of the overarching objectives. Departments submit budget requests that align with the university’s goals to the Finance Department, and the finance managers subsequently work closely with leaders to aggregate and prioritize the requests. [See 2016 Budget Calendar.] This process would be improved by requiring that budget requests state the specific goals within the strategic plan that the expenditures are meant to advance.

Key milestones in the budget planning process are as follows:

- Budget parameters agreed upon
- Budget planning meetings conducted with key regional/department heads
- Budget templates distributed to departments
- Enrollment and staffing templates distributed to University COO and president
- Department templates returned to Finance Department
- Enrollment and staffing templates returned to Finance Department
- Department budget review meetings conducted
- First draft budget completed
- Final draft budget and five-year plan completed
- Budget presented to Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees oversees the budget planning process to ensure that objectives remain congruent with the strategic plan. The Board of Trustees maintains final approval authority over the budget. [See 2016 Budget Presentation to Board of Trustees; Board of Trustees Minutes.]

Planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results.

Well-defined decision-making processes and authority that facilitate planning and renewal.

Resource allocation results from an annual budget process that is overseen by the Board of Trustees and rooted in the strategic plan. Constituent participation in the planning and improvement process is likewise connected to the strategic plan. Strayer relies on a Strategic Planning Committee that includes constituents from all parts of the university, including admissions, Student Financial Services, faculty, curriculum managers, and others. [See 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, p. 4.] Other members of the community have opportunities to review and comment on the strategic plan prior to its approval by the trustees. The plan is posted on the intranet site, SUNow, and is presented at the annual faculty meeting and frequently referenced at staff meetings. [See Strayer University Strategic Plan 2015-2020, Appendix B.]

Key decisions rest with the University Policy Committee (UPC) formerly known as the Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee (APCC). The UPC consists of key academic leaders, including the president as its chair. [See UPC Charter.] The UPC reviews academic and nonacademic policies to ensure consistency with overall university goals and availability of resources to support the proposed initiatives. [See UPC Policy Approval Form.] The committee meets at least once quarterly or as often as biweekly during periods of intensive renewal. [See APCC Sample Meeting Minutes and Sample UPC Policy Approval Form.]

The assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of accountability.

The university president is ultimately accountable to the trustees for continual university
renewal and improvement. Each quarter the president reports to the Board of Trustees on progress made against key objectives stated in the strategic plan. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, October 2, 2015.] The president’s report is derived from a series of smaller reports produced by academic and administrative leaders throughout the reporting period. Examples include regular reports from the Chief Operating Officer regarding enrollment trends, reports of the chief academic officer regarding course content development, and reports of the senior vice president for human resources regarding faculty hiring needs. Financial reports are produced monthly on regional and departmental levels, comparing actual spending with the budget.

A record of institutional and unit improvements and their results.

The quarterly president’s report to the BOT provides a record of university and department improvement efforts and results. These efforts and results are further tracked and evaluated by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC). Extensive course- and term-level academic reporting are used to monitor short-term results to ensure that improvement efforts are progressing as planned, and to spot trends that may be opportunities for intervention. [See Report on Annual Progress Toward Strayer University’s 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, October 2015; IEC Minutes, October 2015.]

Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes.

Research and analysis revealed that Strayer meets this fundamental element, and observed changes to the annual budgeting process over time. For example, although the overall budgeting process always has been linked to the strategic plan in practice, the process leading up to adoption of the 2016 budget explicitly mapped department-level requests to the highest-level priorities. [See 2016 Budget Request Template; 2012 Budget Request Template.] This change indicates a more direct level of evaluation and refinement.

Nevertheless, the working group did not find any meeting minutes, presentations, announcements, or other expected documentation capturing details of a specific process for assessment of the effectiveness of our planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes. We noticed circumstantial indications of focus on the topic, followed by action to improve the process, which causes us to believe that Strayer meets the standard but should be more intentional about documenting its assessment of the process. The working group contends that a formal assessment process focused on the effectiveness of expenditures would be a helpful tool in planning and institutional renewal.

Institutional Resources Fundamental Elements (Standard 3)

Strategies to measure and assess the level and efficient use of institutional resources to support institutional mission and goals.

The university maintains sufficient financial, human, technology, and physical resources to support the institutional mission, values, goals, and objectives. Resource levels are measured, assessed, and allocated on an ongoing basis, and annually through the formal budgeting process. Strayer has achieved the highest possible financial composite score (3.0 on a scale ranging from 0 to 3) in each of the past two years pursuant to calculations prescribed by the U.S. Department of Education to measure the financial stability and resources of all higher education institutions eligible to participate in Title IV student loan and financial aid programs. [See 2014 Strayer University Financial Responsibility Composite
Rational and consistent policies and procedures to determine asset allocation.

An allocation approach that ensures adequate faculty, staff, and administration resources.

A financial planning and budgeting process that is aligned with the mission and goals, allows for annual and multiyear budget projections institution-wide and among departments, utilizes planning and assessment documents, and addresses resource acquisition and allocation for the institution or its affiliates.

The annual budget follows a consistent process as described in the section on Standard 2. Strayer approaches faculty and staff planning in a systematic fashion. With faculty, Strayer first meets all state regulatory staffing requirements on the individual campus level. Once resources have been allocated to meet those minimum requirements, Strayer considers enrollment at each campus to determine the appropriate full-time faculty staffing levels. Each year, staffing levels are reviewed for compliance with this ratio to ensure that faculty resources are in line with changes in campus enrollment levels. Based on the recent shift to greater online enrollment, the university is currently reevaluating the ratio to determine what distribution of campus and online faculty best supports all of our students. Student services roles are also staffed using standard enrollment-based ratios. Central staff is allocated based on needs communicated by leaders to reach service level goals.

A comprehensive facilities master plan and life-cycle management plan, and evidence of implementation.

A comprehensive plan showing that facilities fundamental to the educational program and libraries are adequately supported to accomplish the institution’s learning objectives at all instructional locations.

Strayer follows a standard procedure for establishing and maintaining facilities. Campuses are outfitted with standard furniture, equipment, and library and technology resources prior to opening. Once a campus is opened, Strayer’s regional facilities managers are responsible for maintenance and repair of all campus assets. Library resources are managed by the Librarian with the strategy of creating a core collection at each campus while allocating the majority of resources to an online catalog to align with student needs and actual usage. [See Procedures for Establishing and Maintaining Strayer University Facilities; Campus Inventory—List of Assets; Campus Address List as of May 1, 2015.] With the shift to more online students, Strayer is considering alternative campus designs. In 2015, an external consulting firm conducted a study to better understand which facilities and features are used by online students and how the presence of campuses impacts online student outcomes. This research will be used to consider facilities changes to better serve students. [See Strativity Campus Impact Study, February 2016.]

An educational equipment acquisition and replacement process and evidence of implementation.

Institutional controls for financial, administrative and auxiliary operations and policies and procedures in place to determine allocation of assets.

Equipment

Strayer has an established process to allocate funds for educational equipment acquisition. The initial phase happens during the budgeting process, whereby resources are allocated based on known investment objectives as well as maintenance and replacement of assets. At the time funds are needed, the project owner submits either a Request for Capital (RFC) form or a Contract Authorization Request (CAR) form. These forms document the
purpose of spending and all relevant contract terms. The requests are reviewed and approved based on the university’s spending authority approval matrix and relevance to the mission and strategic plan. [See Approval Levels Matrix 2016-03-09; Approved Capex—RFC 1199—Jackson Campus Phase 2 Computer Lab; Approved Capex—RFC 1812-14—Library Book Acquisition Q3 2014; Approved CAR—2015-1208-01—Lynda.com renewal.]

**Institutional Controls**

The university’s Internal Audit department regularly reviews three areas to ensure they conform to both institutional and regulatory policies and standards: campus operations; accounting, financial aid, and information technology (IT) controls; and financial aid processing.

**Campus Operations**

The Internal Audit Department conducts 20–25 campus audits each quarter in addition to quarterly audits of the Registrar’s Office (focusing on students’ basis of admission) and the Central Business Office / Student Financial Services (focusing on students’ method of paying tuition and fees). Audit results are distributed to university, department, and campus leaders. Management is required to submit a remediation action plan if significant instances of noncompliance exist. The table below summarizes 2015 audit results by quarter.

**Accounting, Financial Aid, and Information Technology**

The Internal Audit Department’s audit plan includes ongoing review, testing, and evaluation of the approximately 170 key accounting, financial aid, and IT controls identified by management to ensure accurate financials. The department’s review is coordinated with that performed by the registered independent auditing firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PWC) as part of its annual external audit.

Consistently, neither significant deficiencies nor material weaknesses have been identified. Control exceptions that have been identified have been minor in nature, and have been remediated by management. [See Independent Auditor’s Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters Based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with Government Auditing Standards, p. 21 of PWC’s Report on 2014 Strayer University Financials.]

**Financial Aid Processing**

The Internal Audit Department’s audit plan includes ongoing review, testing, and evaluation of various financial aid processing controls to ensure compliance with Title IV regulations. Consistently, quarterly results have found compliance of 97% or greater. Processing exceptions that have been identified have been remediated by management.

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**TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF 2015 AUDIT RESULTS—OVERALL COMPLIANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Winter 2015</th>
<th>Spring 2015</th>
<th>Summer 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Registrar</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Business Office / Student Financial Services</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cross-Department Risk Coordination

In early 2016, Strayer contracted with external legal counsel to perform an assessment of cross-department processes and communications with the potential for one department to accidentally cause compliance issues in another. For example, could a simple change in an online course design change how online attendance is tracked in a single course, without awareness of the Financial Aid department’s Title IV processing requirements? As a result of this assessment, a new quality assurance (QA) group was created to meet at least monthly to ensure that academics, audit, finance, operations, legal, Student Financial Services, marketing, HR, and IT are all aware of any pilots or initiatives in other groups with the potential to cause unintended downstream impacts. [See QA Meeting Agenda, 04/04/2016.]

An annual independent audit confirming financial responsibility with evidence of follow-up.


In addition, Strayer is subject to announced and unannounced compliance reviews and audits by various external agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, its Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), state licensing agencies, guaranty agencies, and accrediting agencies. Such visits may require the university to take follow-up action.

For example, the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) conducted audits of Strayer campuses in Virginia during 2016. SCHEV determined that, in some instances, letters needed to be written to justify the coding of certain faculty members to teach in specific disciplines. These documentation letters were drafted in all cases within one week of the SCHEV audit findings and placed in the appropriate faculty members’ files. [See Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) Program Review—Lower Bucks; VA Compliance Survey—Columbus, Georgia; Department of Education Final Program Review Determination 1.7.15; Strayer University Report on Florida Student Financial Assistance Programs and Independent Auditors’ Report for the Years Ended June 30, 2014 and 2013; Strayer University Compliance Attestation Examination of Title IV Student Financial Assistance Programs.]

Periodic assessment of the effective and efficient use of institutional resources.

The president provides quarterly reports to the trustees that detail progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Thorough reports that detail progress also are undertaken as the strategic plan is updated or revised. Such analyses include examination of how effectively the university uses its resources to advance the institution’s mission. [See President’s Reports to the Board of Trustees; 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report.] The use of institutional resources also is evaluated in the annual and multi-year budgeting processes described earlier in this section.
Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal: Research Questions

To what extent are planning and resource allocation based on the University's mission and goals? Is there an effective and demonstrable link between the planning process, resource allocation, and the strategic plan?

The working group reviewed the Strayer University strategic plan, prior-year budget presentations, and prior president's reports to the Board of Trustees, which describe the progress against objectives and outcomes of investments made. After developing an understanding of the stated goals and objectives, the working group reviewed a sample of approved funding requests from prior years for consistency with these stated goals and objectives. The working group discussed consistency of the strategic plan with the annual budget objectives, the analysis undertaken to identify annual budget objectives, and evidence that appropriate resources were allocated to the budget objectives presented to the Board of Trustees.

This review of the annual objectives presented to the Board of Trustees for the years 2014–2016 showed a strong correlation to the mission. Objectives included these:

- Improve student learning outcomes and retention
- Review faculty compensation
- Obtain technology for call center management
- Launch new programs (Nursing and Strayer@Work)
- Rebuild the first-year student experience
- Upgrade courses and content
- Align resources with increasing shift to online modality
- Ensure regulatory compliance

In addition, our commitment to making higher education affordable for our students as described in our strategic plan has been a guiding principle over the past several years, with the introduction of several scholarship programs and tuition discounts. This reduction in tuition has been central in the planning process as all resources were scrutinized for alignment with key objectives in order to ensure responsible spending that enables Strayer to fulfill its commitment to affordability. [See 2016 Military Scholarships Memo 12/4/2015; Press Release 11/22/2013: Strayer University Announces Tuition Reduction, Builds on “Graduation Fund” to Further Increase College Affordability and Promote Graduation.]

How effective is the planning process in meeting the evolving needs of our students and of the University? What changes have recently been implemented in the University?

Our review leads us to believe that the planning process is effective in meeting the evolving needs of our students and of the institution. While the annual formal budgeting process informs most of our significant investments, feedback on student preferences and outcomes, and results of research and surveys are incorporated into resource allocation decisions on an ongoing basis. Two of the most significant trends we have seen in our student population over the past several years have been a shift in student preference to taking courses online and a larger portion of the student population enrolling without having prior college experience. [See Charts on Seat Modality Mix over Time; Report on Seat Modality over Time; Report on Student Modality Preference over Time.] These two
trends provide an interesting example of the flexibility of our planning process.

To advance our stated goal of providing educational access [See 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, pp. 10–12], we set an objective to provide flexible delivery options for academic programs. As students shift to the online modality and rely less on in-person communication with resources located at the campuses, the planning process has shifted resources to online course development, a centralized Student Academic Services organization, and a central academic oversight function to better align with the resources our students are consuming. [See Memo on University Restructuring and New Initiatives, October 31, 2013.]

As detailed in the April 11, 2014, president’s report to the Board of Trustees, the university invested in redesigning 31 of its most popular courses during the fall of 2013 to strengthen student outcomes. In addition to outcomes, we also focused on identifying leading indicators of student success or challenges that would be visible through online interactions. This enabled faculty and student services personnel to proactively reach out to students that may have been struggling but had not yet reached out for assistance. [See President’s Report to Board of Trustees, April 2014, pp. 3-7 to 3-8.]

While investing in a strong online offering is consistent with the strategic plan, the significant growth in enrollment of students without any prior college education was not planned. The strategic plan even included a goal of attracting and enrolling students with prior college experience and/or associate degrees. The planning process allocated resources to help achieve the goal of attracting more experienced students. Even so, from 2012 to 2015, the percentage of our student population without prior college experience grew from 37% to 53%. [See Strategic Plan Dashboard First Year Update, slide #3.]

Acknowledging that these first-time college students likely will need additional academic support, Strayer has implemented a series of initiatives over the past few years, including designing and hiring faculty to coach and provide specialized instruction to beginning students. [See College Readiness Instructor Job Description; Instructor-Coach Job Description.]

More recently, the university has developed a Foundations of Success course to prepare these students to be successful in their education and career goals. The Foundations of Success course is the first step of a larger first-year experience initiative. [See President’s Report to Board of Trustees, October 2015, pp. 3-26 to 3-28.]

In what ways do planning and resource allocation processes provide evidence of a commitment to institutional renewal?

The working group approached this research question by reviewing each year’s budget objectives and the president’s reports to the Board of Trustees from 2012 to 2015. We concluded that the evolution of Strayer’s budget priorities over time demonstrates a strong commitment to institutional renewal.

In 2012, Strayer opened eight campuses, demonstrating a commitment to investing in a growing physical footprint. However due to declining campus enrollments, by 2015 had closed a number of physical campuses in order to reallocate investments into course content and faculty that would primarily serve students taking courses online. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 2015, pp. 3-49 to 3-50; Appendix B: Substantive Change Progress Report.] Strayer leaders also reimagined what a physical campus should look like going forward, shifting away from its traditional design to a smaller, more innovative space with
more embedded technology, in order to accommodate recently noted student behaviors and use of campuses.

Changes in program offerings over time also demonstrate commitment to institutional renewal. Strayer undertakes a rigorous program review process to identify areas to improve existing programs and potential new program offerings, as well as programs that we deem no longer in the best interests of students given job market prospects. Two examples of these adjustments are the introduction of the Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Completion Program, and the elimination of the Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice (AACJ) program. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 2015, p. 3-49.]

The university conducted a comprehensive review of the market to understand the attractiveness of several potential new programs. Based on this market review, it was determined that the RN to BSN degree was the optimal choice. As documented in the RN to BSN Program Build RFC, the resources needed to develop the program were determined based on the work done by the academic programs team and the planning team. Funds were requested and approved through the University’s RFC process. [See RN to BSN Proposal, Substantive Change Request, October 31, 2014; Approved Capex—RN to BSN Program Build.]

After review of our criminal justice degree programs in 2014, academic leaders determined that the academic outcomes and job prospects for our AACJ graduates did not meet our standards. Specifically, we found that graduates of our AACJ program fared worse in the job market than graduates of corresponding bachelor’s programs. [See Career Benefits, Employment Outcomes, and Institutional Effectiveness: Fresh Results from the Graduates Survey 2014, pp. 10, 20, Table 6.] We decided to allow existing students to finish the program, but we no longer offer the program to new students. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, April 2015, p. 3-49.] This decision is further demonstration of the University’s commitment to institutional renewal by making sure that programs we offer produce graduates in industries with attractive employment prospects.

In addition to campus and program offerings, Strayer also ensures institutional renewal through adapting and changing to better serve our students. As indicated in the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report we launched four new programs during the period, which included 29 new concentrations. [See 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report, p. 14.] Several outdated programs were retired. Much of this work was the direct result of a restructuring in 2013 to centralize curriculum development. Other successful initiatives arising from that reorganization include a revised faculty compensation model and introduction of a student engagement application to help faculty understand engagement opportunities in the online classroom. [See Adjunct Faculty Compensation Policy; President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, December 15, 2014, pp. 4-5 to 4-6.]

Although much success came out of the 2013 restructuring, as an organization we are aware that our challenges today are different than they were just two years ago. More recently, Strayer completed a restructuring in fall 2015 in order to enhance the development of course content, centralize faculty management, and refocus campus academic personnel on direct service to students.

All of these efforts—which include introducing initiatives related to corporate-academic partnerships, data analytics in education, access, and
affordability—were designed to improve student learning outcomes and student engagement, increase student retention, and grow the student body. The working group concluded that such changes have positioned Strayer well to address the rapidly evolving demands of the market, and noted that we must remain nimble to capitalize on new opportunities and address future challenges.

What prompted recent significant initiatives and changes in the institution’s program, services, and activities? What evidence is there that the institution’s strategic plans guided those initiatives and changes?

To answer this question, the working group brainstormed significant initiatives and changes and researched the origin of each initiative or change. We next reviewed the key objectives of each initiative or change to determine whether those objectives were consistent with and designed to advance the overall goals stated in the strategic plan.

The working group found that recent significant initiatives and changes were primarily driven by declining enrollment due to increasing competition and declining macroeconomic trends. At the same time that an economic downturn took place, leaving fewer students able to return to school, additional institutions entered the nontraditional education space. This meant that fewer students were available to benefit from our services and they also had more schools to choose from. In response to this trend Strayer focused on addressing college affordability, which matches a key goal within our strategic plan.

In summer 2013, the university introduced the Graduation Fund to increase graduation rates by reducing cost barriers. The program can decrease the cost of a degree by up to 25%. In addition, in winter 2014, Strayer lowered undergraduate tuition by 20%. [See Press Release, November 2013, Strayer University Announces Tuition Reduction, Builds on “Graduation Fund” to Further Increase College Affordability and Promote Graduation.] The combined impact of these two actions lowers the cost of a bachelor’s degree by up to 40%.

Strayer also engaged in new customer service initiatives and incorporated relevant goals and objectives in the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. New customer service initiatives include a centralized student services team, the iCampus student portal, and investments in faculty as described below.

Centralized Student Services

Student Academic Services (SAS) is a centralized student service team started in 2014. It takes a holistic approach to student advising, aiming to provide students with the greatest chance of academic success. Each student is paired with a dedicated success coach who has completed extensive training on basic, at-risk, and first-quarter advising. Success coaches proactively contact students to explain academic requirements and assist with course selection, as well as to provide resources related to time management skills, study skills, career services, tutoring, and crisis intervention.

iCampus

Phase II of the iCampus redesign was launched in January 2015. The release provided students additional capability and functionality via customized views into their financial and academic standing, faculty biographies, and social forums to allow students and alumni to interact, share, and network. As discussed above, student engagement with the portal substantially increased and student satisfaction metrics were extremely positive.
Faculty

In spring 2015, the university redesigned its adjunct faculty pay model to allow for recognition of the highest-performing faculty using a pay-for-performance model driven by faculty performance metrics. [See Adjunct Faculty Compensation Policy.] Similar metrics were used to rank full-time faculty members and reward the top performers through the annual merit process. This initiative underscores Strayer’s commitment to outstanding instruction.

Institutional Resources: Research Questions

How effective is our resource allocation in meeting the academic objectives laid out in the strategic plan? What examples demonstrate that the University evaluates, prioritizes, and allocates the funds needed to meet University and student needs?

Strayer University is a proprietary institution of higher education that relies on student tuition as its principal source of revenue. As addressed in the strategic plan, Strayer has made a commitment to making higher education affordable for our students and in recent years has taken several steps to enact that goal through lower undergraduate tuition, significant scholarship programs, and partnerships with employers. Given the downward pressure on revenue resulting from these affordability measures, effective resource allocation has been of critical importance.

The primary mechanism that drives resource allocation is the annual budgeting process. The first step in this process is to reach an agreement on high-level budget parameters, including enrollment expectations, which drive many of the resource allocation efforts such as the number of classes to be offered, the number of faculty required to teach those classes, the number of staff needed to support those students at campuses and through centralized functions, and the spending needed to operate campuses and deliver classes through our online platform.

Overarching goals are then identified for the upcoming year. The planning team solicits resource requests from academic leadership and operational support department heads on what they will need to achieve their goals. At this time, leaders are asked to critically evaluate their current resources to confirm that they are in line with current goals, and if not, they are reallocated.

Recent examples demonstrate that this process is effective at meeting the academic objectives laid out in the strategic plan. This process determined the resource allocation that supported the initial move toward centralization in 2013 and furtherance of additional centralization initiatives in late 2015. The decision to centralize curriculum development, course design, faculty management, and student services was rooted in fulfilling the goals under the Academic Quality and Student Success pillars stated in the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan and extending into the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. Likewise, recent investments in Strayer@Work link to goals around the Educational Access pillar and career readiness stated in the most recent strategic plan. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees June 26, 2015, p. 3-7.]

The 2015–2020 Strategic Plan introduced a new pillar, Customer Service, which formally recognized the importance placed on customer service. In 2015, Strayer contracted with Stratativity, a consulting company specializing in customer experience, to research the overall student experience. Research showed that some of the largest gaps between student expectations
and satisfaction were in career services, coaching, and technology support. Significant resources have been allocated to these student needs through Strayer@Work, more coaches for first-term students, and the rollout of Genesys technology to improve technical support. [See Strayer Experience 360 Results 02-16-16 Executive Review.]

As demonstrated in the December 5, 2015, president’s report to the Board of Trustees, Strayer continually evaluates, prioritizes, and allocates funds to meet evolving student and university needs. As discussed, the university has undergone a reorganization to better align resources with the key initiative of improving our process of course content design and development, and to address an imbalance of resources given the shift in our students’ preference toward the online modality. [See President’s Report to Board of Trustees, December 5, 2015.]

Campus Technology

Leveraging tools such as Splunk, Pingdom, and SolarWinds to monitor both system and network performance has provided insight into areas where additional campus resources were required. Splunk is an operational and security reporting tool for unstructured data. Unstructured log data from Strayer systems including Blackboard are fed into and indexed by Splunk so that they can be easily searched and analyzed. Dashboards and alerting capabilities are also built on top of the data to provide visibility into user actions and system performance across our network. Pingdom is an external service used to monitor the availability of external websites, including iCampus, Blackboard, Diamond (financial aid management solution), and our email gateways. SolarWinds is an internal application used to monitor the availability and utilization of all Strayer data center hardware and network nodes.

In 2014, we expanded Wi-Fi to the remaining nine campuses, providing our students a secured network in support of any on-campus activity. Students can remain online inside and outside the classroom, leveraging internal and external resources in support of their education. [See Splunk Data Report, 2014.]

Are our resources available and accessible to our students? Are our resources relevant to our current and anticipated future student requirements? What process do we use to identify gaps in our current resources relative to evolving student requirements?

The primary resources we have available to students are our faculty and support staff, physical campus locations, online educational platforms, course content, and technology infrastructure.

Human Resources

Strayer has invested significant resources to better understand how faculty teaching techniques impact student engagement and thus student success, especially in online courses. Through our partnership with Civitas Learning, we have modeled many factors that impact student engagement and studied the faculty members who are positive engagement outliers. This has helped us identify some of our faculty’s best practices, including language that indicates a growth mindset, discussion board responsiveness, grading feedback strategy, and video interactions. This research flows into our faculty development strategy, all designed to ensure that our HR investment in high-quality faculty meets current and future student needs. [See screenshot from Civitas tool, Civitas Illume Powerful Predictors of Undergrad Term 1 and Term 2 Students.]

A similar research-based investment with Civitas Learning is also underway with Student
Academic Services (SAS) to better understand how success coaches impact student success. This research, along with other SAS investments in lower coach-to-student ratios for first-term students, will help inform our HR strategy so as to best meet student needs.

As described in Procedures for Establishing and Maintaining Strayer University Facilities, Strayer follows a standard process to select a site and design the campus to maximize its physical accessibility and provide relevant resources for our students to be successful. On an ongoing basis, campus locations are monitored to identify when renovations are needed or additional resources are required. For example, as campuses grow enrollments or as our course materials evolve, the need may arise for additional computer labs to be added to physical campuses.

As demonstrated in the Jackson Campus Phase 2 Computer Lab RFC, the university conducts a campus lab planning analysis to evaluate actual usage against available capacity at the campus. In conjunction with recommendations from campus leadership, the analysis is used as the basis for approving additional resources. Whereas some campuses are growing and require additional resources, other campuses may have unused space. For the latter, we elect to correct the misallocation of resources at the time of lease renewal, sometimes by renewing the lease with less square footage and at a lower cost so that resources can shift to other needs.

With the shift to more online students, Strayer is considering alternative campus designs. In 2015 a study was conducted by Stratativity to better understand which facilities features are used by online students and how the presence of campuses impacts online student outcomes. This research will be used to consider facilities changes to better serve students. [See Strayer Campus Impact Study Results, January 25, 2016.]

Technology

Monitoring system and network performance is critical to the support of campus and student needs. Evaluating daily system uptimes and bandwidth utilization is essential to ensuring that the appropriate resources are being provided to our staff, faculty, and students. Strayer’s IT department leverages SolarWinds to monitor bandwidth utilization, such as the MPLS Ethernet connection at one of our largest campuses, Prince George’s, Maryland. Pingdom offers a monitoring system that continually pings our systems and sends out alerts to an IT distribution list if it detects that the system is down. [See screenshots of Prince George’s Ethernet Usage Chart and Blackboard 30-day Uptime.]

Processes to Identify Gaps

Our process for identifying gaps in our resources relative to evolving student needs consists of feedback we receive from students and faculty as well as empirical evidence. Analysis of quarterly Voice of the Student surveys, feedback at regional town halls, and input from the Office of Student Affairs or student success coaches who share feedback from their interactions all help to identify potential gaps in resources. An effective method for leaders to receive input from staff is through the “I Have an Idea” portal on the intranet. This tool offers an opportunity for all faculty and staff to share ideas on how to better serve our students. Since the portal was opened in May 2014, more than 800 ideas have been shared. [See I Have an Idea Winners document.]

In addition to providing open forums for students, faculty, and staff to share ideas or communicate their needs, we believe it is equally important to evaluate needs by looking at students’ actions or actual use of resources. Ongoing analysis of student preferences in
learning modalities, as well studies such as the campus traffic study conducted in November 2014, helped to highlight the misalignment of resources previously described in the prior question response.

What are the most significant challenges facing the institution relative to human resources, technology resources, and physical plant resources over the next five years?

The trend in student preference for the online modality presents several challenges and opportunities. Maintaining our current physical footprint of 76 campuses requires a significant investment in facilities, IT infrastructure, and operations staff at the campuses. As students continue to choose to take more of their classes online, these campus investments are benefiting a smaller portion of our student body, and they will increasingly become lower priorities in the resource allocation discussions relative to investments in online faculty, course materials, and platforms. As shown in the figure below facilities’ costs per seat have increased since 2010.

Another challenge facing our institution is making sure our faculty and staff have the necessary skills to serve students as our courses incorporate more advanced technology and virtual communications tools. Given our commitment to offering students the choice of attending online or in person, our faculty and staff need to be comfortable teaching and mentoring in both modalities.

What is the process by which those challenges have been or will be identified? What is the

FIGURE 2: TREND IN FACILITIES COST PER ON-GROUND SEAT

Rent, building depreciation, building maintenance, utilities, custodial, security, telephone, and data/networking expense included in Facilities expense.
Challenges are identified in a number of ways including student experience mapping, institutional surveys, leadership meetings, campus and faculty meetings, and the “I Have an Idea” portal housed on Facebook@Work. In spring 2015, Strayer engaged an outside firm to facilitate workshops with staff to identify all significant touchpoints with students, and pinpoint areas that need to be addressed. These student experience mapping sessions revealed a number of areas where improvements could be made. Our institutional research studies such as the survey of non-returning students also provide useful data. [See 2015 Non-Returning Student Survey Summary Report.] Finally, the university places significant value on operational and financial reporting to identify trends, assess the impact of new initiatives, and measure the progress the Strayer is making to achieve stated goals.

The university has demonstrated over the past several years its willingness to make significant changes to address challenges it has identified, such as lowering tuition, exiting markets, and reorganizing the leadership structure. Often these initiatives are considered during the annual budgeting and planning process, as described in Standard 2. In all cases, academic and administrative leaders follow a deliberate process and runs multiple scenarios and sensitivity analyses to understand a likely range of potential outcomes, with the long-term health of the our institution as the paramount consideration.
Chapter 7: Leadership and Governance (Standard 4)

The institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

To analyze the extent to which Strayer University is in compliance with Standard 4, the working group began collecting documents for review in early summer 2015. However, because of changes in the composition of the team, the new chair and co-chair convened the reconstituted working group in September and the team completed its study in late spring 2016. The group gathered and analyzed relevant documents and conducted interviews with leaders, including the president, emeritus presidents, and the secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Document review included minutes of the Board of Trustees meetings, the president’s quarterly reports to the trustees, the strategic plan, university by-laws and articles of organization, and résumés of the governing body members and the president. Members of the team also reviewed as “case studies” the planning and implementation of important initiatives, such as the drafting of the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, to consider how effectively the president and the governing body work together to improve the university.

Conclusions:
There is considerable evidence that the University’s Board of Trustees is a policy-making governing board. The board sets the strategic, budgetary, and academic policies for the university. The board establishes the annual goals, and reviews and approves the budget, tuition, and fees. In addition, major curricular revisions and additions are approved by the board. The board also adopted the 2011–2015 and 2015–2020 strategic plans and approved the self-study design proposal.

The analysis of the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees; its ability to operate independently from the parent corporation, Strayer Education, Inc.; and its relationship with the university president revealed that Strayer is in compliance with Standard 4. The research confirmed that Strayer University’s commitment to strong leadership and shared governance is consistent with the mission of our institution.

While the university is in compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 4, the recommendations and suggestion that follow would benefit the institution if adopted.

Recommendations:

1. Strayer has appropriate mechanisms in place to properly assess the effectiveness of institutional leadership. Although the Board of Trustees meets annually in executive session to evaluate the performance of the president, we recommend that the board develop and provide the president with an annual written performance review for his benefit and for the university record.

2. The Board of Trustees should consider diversifying its membership to include more women and alumni. With the appointment of its newest member in December 2015, the board now has two female members. Currently, only one trustee is a Strayer alumnus. Women make up more than half of Strayer’s
student body, and graduates in recent years have perspectives that would be beneficial to the institution. Further, we recommend that adding a trustee who has that expertise in online education or experience in technology or similar fields relevant to current and planned academic programs would provide valuable insights in guiding Strayer’s future directions.

Suggestion:
The Board of Trustees is apprised of student and faculty issues and viewpoints by reviewing the survey data and other information presented by the president and other academic leaders. However, it is suggested that we create formal opportunities for the Board of Trustees periodically to interact with faculty and students representatives.

Leadership and Governance
Fundamental Elements (Standard 4)

A well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and readily available to the campus community.

The By-Laws and Articles of Organization describe the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the university president with respect to the mission and governance of the institution. [See University By-Laws and Articles of Organization.] Other documents that describe the systems of governance include the university catalog, student handbook, and employee handbook. [See University Catalog; Student Handbook; Employee Handbook.] The student handbook and University catalog are public documents available at icampus.Strayer.edu. The employee handbook is provided to new employees during orientation and is available on the intranet at SUNow.Strayer.edu.

Written governing documents, such as a constitution, by-laws, enabling legislation, charter, or other similar documents, that:

• delineate the governance structure and provide for collegial governance, and the structure’s composition, duties, and responsibilities. In proprietary, corporate, and similar types of institutions, a separate document may establish the duties and responsibilities of the governing body as well as the selection process.

• assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making, including a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making.

• provide for the selection process for governing body members.

The University’s By-Laws and Operating Agreement describe the mission, responsibilities, and composition of the governing board, as well as the eligibility, appointment process, and terms of appointment for board members. Further, the board’s responsibility for appointing and evaluating the CEO of the University is also defined. [See University By-Laws and Operating Agreement.] The independence of the Board of Trustees is apparent. The majority of board members are independent trustees, as required by Strayer University by-laws. The board’s conflict of interest policy further ensures its independence. [See Board of Trustees Resolution—Independence of Trustees, December 2011; Board of Trustees Resolution—Conflict of Interest, April 2012.]

Because the chairman of the board of the parent company, Strayer Education, Inc., is neither an officer nor a director of Strayer University, his role and responsibilities are not established in the University’s By-Laws. Rather, these are established in the Strayer Education By-laws, in Article V, Section 2. [See By-Laws, Strayer Education, Inc.]
The president of the university is responsible for recommending major policy changes to the governing body after engaging institutional constituencies in the development and revision of policies and procedures. The University Policy Committee (UPC), formerly the University Policy and Curriculum Committee (UPCC), is responsible for reviewing and determining policy and curricular changes and recommending major changes to the president for consideration when appropriate. [See UPC Charge.]

Appropriate opportunity for student input regarding decisions that affect them.

There are no student representatives on the Board of Trustees; however, students voice their opinions and provide feedback to leaders in a number of ways. In addition to the Student Opinion Poll, in which students report their satisfaction with instruction for each course, every quarter Strayer administers the Voice of the Student (VOS) survey. [See Sample VOS Survey.] The survey solicits information about student perceptions of academic experiences, student services, and overall satisfaction. The president of the university periodically reports to the governing body on the results of this survey and on other student issues. [See President’s Reports to the BOT.] While the university is in compliance with this fundamental element, Strayer would benefit from creating other formal ways for trustees and university leaders to interact directly with students.

A governing body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest and of an appropriate size to fulfill all its responsibilities, and which includes members with sufficient expertise to assure that the body’s fiduciary responsibilities can be fulfilled.

The By-Laws state that “[the] trustees shall be members of the public and the Board of Trustees shall have determined that they have an interest in supporting the purposes for which the university is established and [are] capable of reflecting constituent and public interest. The constituencies which may be represented include, but are not limited to, higher education, public education, government, business, and industry.” The current Board of Trustees represents a variety of constituencies. Both public (Dr. Salins and Dr. Gueverra) and proprietary (Mr. Milano) higher education are represented, as are government (Dr. Beason), business (Dr. Toe and Mr. Brown), the professions (Dr. Reha and Dr. Shapiro), alumni (also Dr. Reha), and students. This diversity strengthens the board and ensures that diverse viewpoints are heard on policy matters. [See Board of Trustees Biographies.]

The board’s expertise in fiduciary matters is enhanced by members who have considerable financial and business experience. Mr. Mark Brown was formerly CFO of Strayer Education, Inc., and an executive at PepsiCo. Dr. J. Chris Toe serves as chairman of the Apex Group, a consulting, trading, and investment company. Dr. Toe also served as president of Strayer University from 2003 to 2006 and has considerable experience in higher education finance, as does Mr. Milano, who recently retired as president of Central Penn College after a 30-year tenure.

Because of the institutional commitment to diversity, the working group noted that the board’s membership could better reflect the university’s student body and represent the interests of alumni, and recommends the inclusion of more women, alumni and individuals with expertise in online learning or technology-related fields on the governing body.

A governing body not chaired by the chief executive officer.

The University President may not serve as chair of the Board of Trustees. In Article II, number 4, “Qualifications of Trustees,” the by-laws...
specifically state that the president is an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees. [See University By-Laws.]

A governing body that certifies to the Commission that the institution is in compliance with the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards, and policies of the Commission; describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies; communicates any changes in its accredited status; and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities, including levels of governing body compensation, if any.

Strayer University’s Board of Trustees consistently complies with the Commission’s accreditation standards as demonstrated by its resolutions related to subsequent substantive changes submitted to MSCHE. [See Substantive Change Applications for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Campus Closures.]

Additional evidence to support this fundamental element rests in Strayer University submissions to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), documentation to individual states regarding program updates/changes, and submissions to specialized accreditors. In all of these instances, the university describes itself in identical terms. [See 2014, 2015, 2016 IPEDS submissions; State submissions for program updates; ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs), TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council), and CCNE (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education) submissions.]

Finally, Article II, number 14, of the by-laws indicates that trustees do not receive a salary but are compensated for their expenses as trustees. Additionally, the trustees may specify that members receive a “reasonable fee” when work is time consuming or particularly demanding, or if “compensation ensures a level of governing expertise.” [See University By-Laws.]

A conflict of interest policy for the governing body (and fiduciary body members, if such a body exists), which addresses matters such as remuneration, contractual relationships, employment, family, financial, or other interests that could pose conflicts of interest, and that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

Within the university by-laws, Article II, number 4 specifies that there may be no conflict of interest between the trustee and Strayer University. This clause specifically states that the board shall at all times consist of a majority of trustees that the Board of Trustees has determined “do not have any business, professional, or family relationship or association with the university, its leadership, or related entities that would affect their capacity for independent judgment. Stock ownership that does not exceed 5% of the outstanding stock in Strayer Education, Inc., or 5% of the outstanding membership interest in the university, and compensation for services as a trustee are not considered to affect independence.” This is further discussed in the research questions.

A governing body that assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution.

While the Board of Trustees does not engage in fundraising, it is responsible for the financial health of the institution. To this end, the Board of Trustees approves the tuition and fees, budget, and financial statements of the university and considers ad hoc requests for changes outside of the normal process. [See 2013, 2014, 2015 Budget resolutions; Tuition and Fees resolutions.]
A process for orienting new members and providing continuing updates for current members of the governing body on the institution’s mission, organization, and academic programs and objectives.

The Board of Trustees has a formal orientation program to welcome and introduce new board members to Strayer University. The orientation includes information about the mission, strategic plan, organization, academic programs, faculty, student body, and annual objectives, as well as the responsibilities of members of the Board of Trustees. [See Board of Trustees minutes; Board of Trustees Orientation Program, October 2014.]

A procedure in place for the periodic objective assessment of the governing body in meeting stated governing body objectives.

The University’s Board of Trustees engages in an annual self-assessment process, through which the trustees evaluate the board’s performance in several areas, including decision making and oversight, collegiality, and support for and evaluation of the president. [See Board of Trustees Assessment Tool.]

A chief executive officer, appointed by the governing board, with primary responsibility to the institution.

Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance.

Article II, number 5, “Powers,” states that the Board of Trustees has explicit power “to appoint and assess the performance of the president and to ensure the financial and academic integrity of the institution” [see By-Laws]. The role and responsibility of the Strayer University president are established in the university’s by-laws, in Article IV, Section 2. The board also reviews the effectiveness of Strayer’s president in leading the institution and carrying out the responsibilities delegated by the governing body. An example of such review occurred at the December 2015 meeting, when the board reviewed the progress indicators from year one of the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. [See Board of Trustees minutes.]

Leadership and Governance: Research Questions

Does the system of governance clearly define the roles of all institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making? To what extent are the distinct role and responsibilities of each constituent group within arenas of shared governance understood and accepted by those involved? To what extent are the existing structures used?

To conduct this analysis, the team reviewed key documents and interviewed academic leaders in the President’s Office, the Office of the General Counsel, and the University’s Internal Audit Department. The institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making.

Governance standards are established by the University Board of Trustees, which comprises nine individuals who are accomplished in business and educational leadership. The Board of Trustees, which is governed by the university’s by-laws, is charged with making overall academic and business decisions and providing independent oversight of all academic programs and services. [See University By-Laws.] To govern, the full Board of Trustees meets at least four times per year and the Executive Committee of the board meets by telephone with the president eight times a year (once during each month that the full board does not convene).

As stated in the by-laws, Strayer is managed on a daily basis by the university president. The president is charged with the responsibility of overseeing implementation of the policies
established by the Board of Trustees and is supported in this function by senior administrative officers. The Office of the Provost / Chief Academic Officer (CAO) is responsible for faculty hiring and management, curriculum development, policy oversight, and student learning outcomes. Operational functions, such as admissions, student financial services, and information technology, are the primary responsibility of the COO.

The president chairs the University Policy Committee. This committee meets monthly and includes the president, provost, chief operating officer, and other senior academic and administrative leaders. Policy changes are communicated in a number of ways to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of revisions or new policies. The university also communicates curricular changes to faculty and staff and the student information system (Strayer 360) is updated to reflect any changes so that advising and registration processes may be in compliance with the approved curriculum. [See University Policy Charge; UPC Membership.]

The extent to which members of the university understand its governance structures may vary among individuals; however, there are opportunities for community participation in key initiatives that ultimately are approved by the Board of Trustees. The university community is provided opportunities to review and comment on drafts of the strategic plans, the self-study and other major initiatives. Staff and faculty participate in town hall sessions and campus and regional visits with academic leaders. Regional and the annual faculty meetings, and the Faculty Advisory Council engage faculty in discussions of Strayer’s strategic directions. The working group concluded that periodic opportunities for the trustees to interact with student and faculty representatives would be of value in broadening mutual understanding.

How does the Board of Trustees maintain its independence and ensure fiscal and academic integrity, policies, and resource development consistent with the University’s institutional mission? How does the University ensure sufficient independence from its parent company (Strayer Education, Inc.)? What examples demonstrate such independence?

Strayer ensures sufficient independence from its parent company (1) by requiring that the majority of its board members be independent trustees; (2) through the process for electing independent trustees; (3) by ensuring that if an officer or director of the parent company serves on the board, then neither the chairman of the board nor the CEO of the parent company may serve on the board; and (4) maintaining the academic freedom of the university such that it is able to pursue academic initiatives free from interference from the parent company. Examples of the university’s independence include the annual election of an independent trustee, election of a new independent trustee in December 2015, the resignation of Karl McDonnell from the board upon his selection to the position of CEO of the parent company in 2013, and the numerous academic initiatives that have been undertaken or are currently underway that the university has devised and implemented free from interference by the parent company.

The university is organized as a limited liability company, Strayer University, LLC, which is wholly owned by its parent company, Strayer Education, Inc. The parent company and the university have worked to ensure independence in several ways. First, the University’s By-Laws, in Section 4 of Article II, require that a majority of the trustees be independent, meaning that they “represent the public interest; are capable of decision making free from undue influence from the university’s administration and owners; and
do not have any business, professional, or family relationship or association with the university, its leadership, or related entities that would affect their capacity for independent judgment.”

The process of selecting an independent trustee also serves to maintain the independence of the board, and is triggered when the term of a current independent trustee is expiring, a vacancy among the independent trustee seats on the board has occurred, or the board wishes to add an additional independent trustee seat to the board. First the Nominating Committee, pursuant to Section 3 of Article III of the By-Laws, receives input from the community regarding possible candidates, and it then recommends to the board’s Executive Committee a slate of candidates who meet the required criteria for independence. If the Executive Committee approves the slate, the candidates then go before the full Board of Trustees. If the full board finds that the candidates meet the required criteria for independence and approves the slate, then pursuant to a shareholder agreement between the university and its parent company, Strayer Education, Inc., the parent company (which under Maryland law appoints the board of its subsidiary entity) is then contractually obligated to appoint the independent trustee candidates approved by the board. This commitment on the part of the parent, to respect the candidates qualified and recommended as independent trustees by the board, demonstrates the independence of the university from its parent. [See University By-Laws.]

Finally, academic initiatives are devised and implemented free from interference by the parent company. The president’s reports presented to the board at each regular quarterly meeting provide updates on these initiatives, and the personnel and decision makers discussed in these reports as devising and implementing these initiatives are university administrators, not parent company executives. [See President’s Reports to the Board of Trustees.]

In the last four years, the Trustee Nominating Committee followed appropriate processes to select and fill seats of those trustees whose terms were expiring. [See Nominating Committee records.] In each case, the Executive Committee and then the full Board of Trustees recommended a slate of candidates, which the parent company elected as independent trustees pursuant to the shareholder agreement. [See minutes of Executive Committee and full board.]

When a long-serving independent trustee, Roland Carey, resigned in 2015, the Nominating Committee worked to identify, qualify, and recommend a replacement, whom the Executive Committee and full board also recommended, and whom the parent company elected as an independent trustee pursuant to the shareholder agreement. [See minutes of Nominating Committee, Executive Committee, and full board.]

In addition, when Karl McDonnell was elevated from COO of both the university and its parent company to become CEO of the parent company, he resigned his position on the trustee board pursuant to Section 3 of Article II of the University by-laws. That provision requires that
if officers or directors of the parent company serve on the board (two of whom did and still do—Dr. Charlotte Beason and Mr. Todd Milano), then the CEO of the parent company cannot sit on the board. [See University By-Laws.] This demonstrates compliance with the regulations to ensure sufficient independence from its parent company.

To what extent do we assess the effectiveness of institutional leadership and the governance of the Board of Trustees?

The Board of Trustees conducts an annual self-assessment of its effectiveness and evaluates the effectiveness of the president in achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan during an annual performance review conducted in executive session. The board also reviews quarterly progress reports provided by the president that describe major initiatives, challenges, and opportunities, and addresses progress in achieving strategic goals and objectives. The president, in turn, evaluates the performance of the provost/CAO, the COO, and other leaders. [See Performance Assessment Templates.]

Section 5 of Article II of the University By-Laws states that “[a] primary responsibility of the board shall be to … assess the performance of the president….” The Board of Trustees formally evaluates the president’s performance annually at its December meeting. Held in executive session, this evaluation centers on a review of how well the president has led the university toward attainment of the annual goals established the previous December. [See December meeting agendas, 2012–2015.] In addition to this annual formal evaluation, the board assesses and provides feedback to the president informally through its discussion of the quarterly president’s report to the board at each regular meeting, and through the Executive Committee’s engagement with the president at its regular meetings. [See Board of Trustee minutes; minutes of Executive Committee meetings.]

The Board of Trustees conducts an annual self-assessment at its December meeting. Prior to the meeting, the trustees complete a survey in which they rate the board on a number of measures of good governance, and they have an opportunity to submit written comments concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the board, and ways in which its functioning could be improved. The items on the survey ask the trustees to respond on a scale of 1 to 5 to a number of statements about board governance (1 representing strong disagreement and 5 representing strong agreement). These statements cover topics such as the board’s composition, meetings, productivity, decision making, leadership, diversity, and many other aspects of the board’s operation. [See Board of Trustees Annual Self-Assessment Summaries.]

During the December board meeting trustees identify ways in which the board can improve over the course of the coming year. In recent years, items that have been identified during this process and then implemented are (1) developing an orientation program for new trustees; (2) making the December meeting of the trustees an in-person meeting rather than a telephonic meeting due to the increased workload of the board; (3) adding an additional trustee to the board; and (4) holding at least one board meeting each year at the site of a commencement. [See minutes of December meetings; Orientation Program; Agendas; Nominating Committee records.]

The working group concluded that the processes in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the board and institutional leaders are effective. The board evaluates the performance of the
president in executive session and verbally shares its findings, commendations, and recommendations. However, it may be useful to provide the president with a written performance evaluation annually and to maintain a copy for university records.
THEME 2: ENSURING QUALITY AND CAPACITY
STANDARDS 5, 10, 11, AND 13

The Board of Trustees and the president of the university are responsible for fulfilling the mission and achieving its strategic goals under the pillars identified in the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan: Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success, and Customer Service. Aiding the board and the president are talented faculty, administrators, and staff at all levels of the organization who are dedicated to providing educational offerings and learning resources that meet the needs of our students.

Students who select Strayer as their academic home expect degree programs and academic content that is rigorous, coherent, relevant, and useful. They expect instruction by qualified faculty who have the appropriate academic credentials to teach as well as professional expertise in their subject areas. Our students seek practical instruction in areas that are essential in the workplace, especially information literacy and technological competencies.

To ensure that Strayer has the capacity to provide quality undergraduate and graduate educational offerings, the university must provide the learning resources necessary to support its academic programs and enable instructional effectiveness. There also must be a methodical assessment process to evaluate educational offerings, faculty effectiveness, and learning resources.

The oversight of educational programs generally rests with its administration and faculty. They are responsible for creating, implementing, evaluating, and improving Strayer’s undergraduate and graduate educational offerings and learning resources.

Administrators and faculty also are instrumental in ensuring that Strayer provides support for students who need services related to basic skills and prior learning evaluation. And they ensure that equivalent academic programs and services are available to students at times and in places that are convenient, whether online, on campus, or at their places of employment.

For these reasons, the Steering Committee determined that Theme 2—Ensuring Quality and Capacity—is an appropriate place to examine compliance with Standards 5 and 10 (administration and faculty), Standard 11 (educational offerings), and Standard 13 (related educational activities).
Chapter 8: Administration (Standard 5)

The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s organization and governance.

To analyze compliance with Standard 5, the Steering Committee appointed a working group comprised of individuals engaged in institutional administration and support services. During the course of the investigation, the members interviewed colleagues in several departments, collected and reviewed qualitative and quantitative data, organizational charts, and the university’s strategic plan. Among the documents reviewed were minutes of the Board of Trustees’ (BOT) meetings, the president’s quarterly reports to the trustees, the strategic plan, University By-Laws and Articles of Organization, and resumes of the governing body and the president.

The group also consulted with members of the Standard 4 working group, the provost, and other academic leaders to address the fundamental elements and to respond to specific research questions. Consideration was given to evaluating the impact of recent administrative reorganizations.

The research questions were, for the most part, used to serve as the framework for the report on compliance with the fundamental elements, and the findings therefore are not repeated in this Chapter.

Conclusions:

The working group concluded that Strayer University has sufficient evidence of compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 5. The strategic plan, by-laws and operating procedures of the governing body, organizational structures, systems and processes are designed to support student learning and the full range of student academic services. Those who administer the university’s programs and services are qualified and committed to institutional improvement.

Since the Periodic Review, organizational change has affected administrative and academic structures. Changes were necessitated by shifts in the makeup of the student body, declining student enrollments, and a greater percentage of students choosing to enroll in online courses. Strayer administrators expect and embrace change, especially those changes that benefit students, improve and facilitate interaction and inter-departmental cooperation, and position the university for the future. The working group determined that this outlook allows Strayer to quickly respond to the needs of its students, alumni, and stakeholders, and to strengthen its administrative structure and services.

Recommendation:

After an appropriate period of time, assessment of the impact of administrative changes should be undertaken to determine if such changes positively affected student learning and institutional effectiveness.

Administration (Standard 5)
Fundamental Elements

A chief executive whose primary responsibility is to lead the institution toward the achievement of its goals and with responsibility for administration of the institution.

The role and responsibility of the Strayer University president are established in the University’s Bylaws, in Article IV, Section 2: “The President shall be the chief executive
officer of the University and in that capacity shall lead the University toward achievement of its goals, exercise general management authority, and implement Board of Trustees policy on all matters concerning the University.” [See BOT Bylaws.]

The Board of Trustees also reviews the effectiveness of the university president in leading the institution and carrying out the responsibilities delegated by the governing body. The Board of Trustees annually review the key performance indicators (KPI) provided by the president and his team that denote progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. [See KPI summaries; Board of Trustee minutes, 2013, 2014, 2015.]

A chief executive with the combination of academic background, professional training, and/or other qualities appropriate to an institution of higher education and the institution’s mission.

At the time of the Periodic Review until March, 2015, the university was led by Dr. Michael Plater. Dr. Plater joined Strayer in March 2010, bringing more than 20 years of experience in academic administration first as University Provost and then as the University’s 14th President. Prior to joining Strayer University, Dr. Plater was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University. He previously served as the associate dean for Brown University’s Graduate School, and as business faculty at the University of Florida. Dr. Plater holds a doctorate in American Studies from the College of William and Mary, an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania and a bachelor’s degree in economics from Harvard University.

Upon Dr. Plater’s retirement from the presidency, the Board of Trustees appointed Mr. Brian Jones as interim president, and following a search, he became Strayer’s 15th President on June 29, 2015. Prior to joining Strayer University, Mr. Jones held various high-level positions in education, having served as a senior official in the U.S. Department of Education; as co-founder of Latimer Education, Inc., which partners with historically black colleges and universities to provide postsecondary education solutions to African American working adults; and as General Counsel of College Loan Corporation, a leading privately-held education finance company. He also served as the Chairman of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, and currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. [See Plater’s and Jones’ resumes.]

Administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions.

Qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of the institution.

The university ensures that its administrative leaders have the appropriate credentials to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. During Dr. Plater’s term, Dr. Randi Reich Cosentino was appointed Provost and Chief Academic Officer. Dr. Reich Cosentino had been an integral member of the Strayer leadership team since 2001, serving as Senior Vice President of Academic Administration and Senior Vice-Provost of the Strayer West Region. She earned her doctorate in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA from Harvard University and a bachelor’s degree in psychology and political science from the University of Pennsylvania.

The College Deans and other administrative leaders who served with Dr. Plater’s administrative team were appropriately qualified to fulfill their responsibilities and many of those leaders continue to serve under President Jones in the current administrative structure.
Dr. Andrea Backman, who previously served as the dean of the university’s Jack Welch Management Institute, now serves as the Provost and Chief Academic Officer. Dr. Backman earned her doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Virginia where she also served on the faculty and developed and led programs that served adult learners in both online and on-campus programs. For the last 20 years, Dr. Backman has focused on issues related to access and innovation in higher education and she has led in a multitude of academic organizations. She also spent years teaching adult students in both the online and on-campus formats. [See Backman’s Resume.]

With the support of the governing body, President Jones and Provost Backman reorganized the university’s administrative structure in fall 2015 to promote more efficient and effective use of resources, improve inter-departmental cooperation, enhance services to students, and meet needs for improving online courses and instruction. [See Organization Charts, Appendix C.] The reorganization was an investment in the academic infrastructure to better meet the needs of Strayer University students and to improve content, instruction and resources for faculty and students. The administrators appointed to leadership positions under the new structure have advanced degrees and experience appropriate to the institution. [See Administrative Position Descriptions; Resumes of Administrative Leaders.]

To ensure appropriate staffing levels, the university approaches faculty and staff planning using a systematic process as described in Chapter 6. Each year, staffing levels are reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate for student needs, campus coverage, online student coverage and academic oversight. Central staff positions are allocated based on needs communicated annually by leaders to achieve their strategic goals and objectives. [See Staff Position Descriptions and Resume Examples.]

The Department of Human Resources (HR) oversees the hiring, orientation, and training of all new staff. Position descriptions delineate the appropriate credentials needed by the candidates, and ensure that the university employs staff who are qualified to support the academic mission of the institution. Strayer also provides orientation programs for new faculty and a variety of training opportunities on topics such as effective teaching, quarterly preparation for teaching, Strayer’s approach to andragogy, and best practices in teaching and learning.

The diversity of our administrators mirrors the diversity of the Strayer student body. Women make up 60% of the administrative staff and minorities comprise 43%. Strayer is committed to providing equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, ancestry, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by state, federal, or local law. [See HR Chart of Departmental Headcount, Date.]

In recent years, a decline in student enrollments, campus closures, and efficiencies made possible by better use of technology and process improvements resulted in a reduction in the number of Strayer staff. In 2012, Strayer employed 2007 staff members and in May, 2016, the number of staff was 1302. Despite the reduction in staffing, Strayer faculty to student ratios remained nearly the same.

Adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders.

Strayer University has comprehensive information and decision making systems to support the work of administrators and to achieve strategic goals and objectives as stated in the Strategic
Plan. As described fully in Chapter 14 (Institutional Assessment) administrators rely on multiple sources of data to examine different aspects of university effectiveness, including enrollment, retention, student academic performance, faculty performance, student satisfaction, student engagement, and course evaluation data from faculty and students.

While the strategic plan covers a five-year period, the university’s resources undergo an annual budget reallocation process as described in Chapter 6. At the onset of the annual budget process, administrators review assessment results related to priorities stated in the strategic plan. Following this review, university leaders identify key objectives for the upcoming year that align with the plan and these objectives subsequently are communicated to departmental leaders during periodic team meetings. Department heads are expected to set departmental goals in support of the overarching university objectives. Departments submit budget and staffing requests that align the university’s goals to the finance department whose managers work closely with academic leaders to aggregate and prioritize the requests. [See 2016 Budget Calendar.]

Chapter 15 (Assessment of Student Learning) describes how extensive course and term level academic reporting also are used to monitor short term results to ensure improvement efforts are progressing as planned and to spot trends that may be opportunities for intervention. One example, described here, illustrates the way in which faculty and administrators work in concert to use information for improving the curriculum. In winter 2016, the mathematics faculty reviewed course evaluation data and learned that students did not find undergraduate classes particularly relevant for their careers. These results were discussed with administrators and it was decided that alternations to a key math course should be implemented in the next term. Data from the spring course evaluation will be used as a measure to see if the intervention had a positive result. [See Winter Quarter 2016 Course Evaluation.]

Administrators at all levels have open channels of communication through regular team meetings where suggestions, challenges, and opportunities are discussed with departmental leaders. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) reviews progress reports from departments toward achieving goals and objectives of the strategic plan. The IEC provides a report of this information to university leaders who, in turn, make administrative decisions to ensure that the Strayer is achieving its goals and fulfilling its mission. The working group concluded that quarterly reports to university leaders would enhance the assessment process. [See 2014-2015 Institutional Effectiveness Committee Summaries.]

Clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority.

The 2015 reorganization completed a new administrative structure that aligned departments to achieve the goals and objectives of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The university’s organization chart [Appendix C] reveals the current structure.

As described in Chapter 7, the President of the University reports directly to the Board of Trustees. The president delegates authority for the operation of the university and the full range of its services his senior staff, as seen in the Figure 3: To be updated.

In addition to the Provost and the Chief Operating Officer whose responsibilities are described below, the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Services, the Senior Vice President for Human Resources, and the Senior Vice President and General Counsel, and the
Executive Chairman of the Jack Welch Management Institute also report directly to the President and serve as senior university leaders.

The Department of Academic Services oversees academic life at all of Strayer’s campuses. The Senior Vice Provost for Academic Services has a team of six academic leaders who oversee all of the Campus Deans and library staff at the campuses. This team is responsible for academic advising and for ensuring a rich and engaging campus experience for all students. The Vice Provost communicates regularly with the President and other senior leaders about academic matters at the campuses.

The Senior Vice President and General Counsel oversees all legal matters of the university and works closely with the President to ensure Strayer is in compliance with all state and regulatory requirements. The Senior Vice President for Human Resources oversees the hiring and recruiting of all employees. The Vice President also manages teams focused on employee relations, benefits and special events. The Vice President works closely with the President to build a strong employee culture and to ensure a true commitment to employee engagement.

Chief Academic Officer and Provost Dr. Andrea Backman has broad responsibilities for faculty, curricula, and student learning outcomes. She has eight senior leaders who oversee each of these areas and who are qualified for their positions. A brief description of responsibilities of each senior academic leader is provided below. [See Position Descriptions and Resumes of Academic Leaders.]

- The Vice Provost for Curriculum is responsible for the general education, business, accounting, management, health services administration, information systems/technology, criminal justice, public administration, and education programs. The VP is supported by 4 Deans of Curriculum and 19 department chairs who serve as content experts.
- The Vice Provost for Faculty oversees instructional quality, faculty culture and innovation in teaching and learning. The VP is supported by 28 Deans of Faculty who serve as leaders to the full-time and adjunct faculty. The team is also supported by five additional staff that focus on training and ongoing faculty communication and engagement.
- The Vice Provost for Nursing is responsible for the faculty, the curriculum and advising for Strayer’s new nursing degree program.
- The Vice President for Strayer Studios oversees a team responsible for producing content in ways that encourage students to engage often and learn best.
- The Vice President for Student and Faculty Resources has responsibility for library...
services, faculty training programs, materials acquisitions, tutoring, and career services for students.

- The Dean of Students leads a team focused on student problem resolution, disability services and student services.

- The Associate Vice President for Academic Insights and Operations oversees a team focused on continuous improvements to processes and services in order to best support the university’s academic goals and student success.

- The Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness oversees a team responsible for reporting, assessment, research, and evaluation efforts related to the strategic plan.

Each week, the provost hosts meetings with her direct reports where they review progress toward major goals and consider new and improved ways to serve both faculty and students. Dr. Backman also sends weekly video messages to both faculty and students to share news about events, important initiatives and key dates during the quarter.

The provost’s counterpart is Chief Operating Officer Chad Nyce who is responsible for Student Financial Services, and Regional Operations which includes admissions, physical campuses, and the Global campus that serves as the enrollment and services center for students who enroll online outside of a campus footprint. Mr. Nyce also has responsibility for the Onsite Division which encompasses all additional locations such as the Verizon Wireless corporate sites. Mr. Nyce and his senior administrators are all qualified to lead their departments. The complete organization chart of the Chief Operating Officer is found in Appendix C. [See COO Position Descriptions and Resumes of COO Direct Reports.]

The Chief Operating Officer conducts weekly meetings with his direct reports and includes other key university leaders, including the Provost, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Services, and the Chief Technology Officer. To Be Updated.

Prior to the 2015 reorganization, the academic structure was organized around two colleges, Business and Arts & Sciences, each containing schools where oversight of specific undergraduate and graduate degree programs rested. This structure was an evolutionary step in identifying ways to more precisely focus on the curriculum, faculty, and student services. By 2015, it was apparent that this structure was not aligned with changes occurring within the university, such as the growth in online enrollments, capacity to create more engaging course content, the need...
to intensify student advising, and the necessity of providing consistent oversight and leadership for our faculty.

The reorganization has had a number of positive outcomes. For example, for faculty the 2015 reorganization resulted in a reduction in the supervisor/faculty ratio. With lower ratios, supervisors are able to devote more time to supporting and evaluating faculty which is essential for an institution with a high percentage of adjunct instructors. Supervisor load was balanced to ensure that faculty teaching the courses with the highest enrollments, Business 100 and Computer Information Systems 105, had leaders who are focused only on those courses. Other improvements include earlier staffing of classes, handling of adjunct teaching contracts, and pre-quarter course preparation.

Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services.

Strayer is committed to evaluating the effectiveness of its administrative structures and services and has begun to assess the impact of the latest reorganization. The provost and president review the progress of administrative units towards achieving annual goals and objectives that relate to the strategic plan, and written reports are provided to the president each quarter for inclusion in his reports to the Board of Trustees.

As described in Chapters 14 and 15, Strayer also collects, analyzes and uses data on student and faculty satisfaction, employee organizational health, student engagement, library usage, student opinion polls, student complaint resolution, and audit data on admissions, student financial services, and other administrative functions.

There is, however, more work to be done in this area. For example, following the reorganization described above, the spring 2015 faculty opinion poll revealed that faculty both appreciate and value the new focus on faculty support and leadership. [See Spring 2015 CE-FOP Summary Tables.] However, the most recent organizational health survey revealed that faculty do not feel as connected to the overall university mission and community compared to other staff members. [See Human Resources Organizational Health Survey – Apr 2016 Academics.] Collecting and analyzing these data allows the Strayer to focus on action planning in needed areas.

The working group concluded that the assessment of the impact of the recent reorganization as well as future large-scale reorganizations should be ongoing and that adjustments should be made for continuous improvement.
Chapter 9: Faculty (Standard 10)

The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The working group began its focus on Standard 10 by reviewing the university’s strategic plan, the employee handbook, evaluative data on faculty performance (including Faculty Dashboard analytics, Civitas engagement data, and teaching reports), and other relevant documents. Each fundamental element was assessed to determine compliance and to identify opportunities for improvement. The research questions provided the framework to further evaluate compliance with Standard 10 and to ensure that our assertions regarding compliance were backed by evidence.

Research regarding the fundamental elements helped identify key analytical questions to further focus the group’s work, which broadly covered two areas: ensuring that faculty are highly qualified to teach in online and face-to-face environments, and evaluating the role and influence of faculty on all aspects of the academic mission of the university. The group examined the effectiveness of practices in hiring and retaining qualified instructors, the availability of training and resources designed to improve instruction, and the engagement of faculty in activities and initiatives to achieve institutional goals and improve student learning.

The answers to most research questions posed for Standard 10 are embedded in the following analysis of compliance with the fundamental elements of the standard. However, the questions related to faculty satisfaction and the balance between full-time and adjunct faculty warranted further analysis. These are specifically addressed at the end of this chapter.

Conclusions:
Analysis reveals that Strayer University meets the standards set forth in the fundamental elements for Standard 10. The working group concluded that the following recommendation and suggestion would enhance the role of faculty and contribute to instructional excellence.

Recommendation:
Create a standing Curriculum Committee comprised of adjunct and full-time faculty and academic administrators to review and recommend changes designed to improve all curricular offerings of the university.

Suggestion:
Faculty engagement in curricular development would be enhanced by including more faculty in the assessment and adoption of technologies for online instruction. Currently, this is primarily done at the management level and new technologies typically are introduced to faculty after adoption or as a pilot program.

Faculty Fundamental Elements
(Standard 10)

Faculty and other professionals who are appropriately prepared and qualified for the positions they hold, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined, and sufficiently numerous to fulfill those roles appropriately.

Assessment of policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified professionals to support the institution’s programs.

The importance of faculty in carrying out the educational mission of the university is apparent and is recognized in the strategic plan. Strayer University seeks to develop high-level faculty who are primarily classroom educators,
focused on student learning outcomes. The university values diversity and multi-ethnic perspectives, and seeks to employ a diverse group of adjunct and full-time faculty as illustrated in the above figure.

Institutional policies and procedures ensure that Strayer University’s faculty are appropriately credentialed and experienced. [See Credentialing Policy; Faculty Qualifications; Faculty Résumés.] In 2012, at the time of the periodic review, 83% of full-time faculty held terminal degrees.

Currently, nearly 88% have terminal degrees in their field. The percentage of faculty with terminal degrees is presented in Table 3.

Strayer employs a coding system for faculty to ensure that they have the appropriate credentials to teach specific courses in their respective fields. [See Credentialing Policy.] Individual faculty transcripts are reviewed and only faculty who meet established criteria to teach a particular course (usually 18 graduate course hours in a specific area) are permitted to teach those

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number of Faculty</th>
<th>Number holding terminal degree</th>
<th>Terminal Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>2326</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Readiness Instructor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Faculty</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor-Coach, First Year Experience</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onsite Dean</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Instructional Staff</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2647</strong></td>
<td><strong>1299</strong></td>
<td><strong>49.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
courses. As an example, holding a master’s in business administration (MBA) would not automatically qualify a faculty member to teach any business course. Only those selected individual courses that meet the criteria will be added to the list of courses a faculty member may teach. This process helps ensure that the most academically qualified instructors teach courses.

Recent changes in the faculty load policies reduce commitments outside the classroom to afford faculty with more time to concentrate on instruction. This change resulted in an increase in the percentage of credit hours taught by full-time faculty from 23.5% in the fall 2015 term to 29.8% in the winter 2016 term.

Since 2012, enrollments have trended consistently downward, and this is reflected in a decrease in faculty at both the full-time and adjunct levels. Since 2012 the number of adjunct faculty has decreased by 18.7% and the number of full-time faculty by 28.7%. Overall, the number of faculty has decreased by 19.6% since 2012 (see Table 5). Over this same period, overall student enrollment fell from 50,920 (fall 2012) to 41,729 (fall 2105), a decrease of 18%. Given these data, the university maintains faculty in sufficient numbers to carry out its academic mission.

Published and implemented standards and procedures for all faculty and other professionals, for actions such as appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline, and dismissal, based on principles of fairness with due regard for the rights of all persons.

Criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time, adjunct, and other faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty.

The employee handbook (section on faculty) which is available to faculty online, and faculty position descriptions outline the rights, roles, and responsibilities of faculty and contain important policies and procedures. Strayer also provides quarterly training for faculty on various topics including matters related to changes in policies and procedures such as appointment, grievances, and performance expectations. [See Employee Handbook; Faculty Position Descriptions.]

The university does not have a tenure or promotion system for its faculty. However, most administrators appointed to senior roles during the last four years have come from the ranks of the faculty. Prior to 2016, full-time faculty served on annual contracts. With the change in policy, faculty no longer execute contracts on a yearly basis. Adjunct faculty do have contracts and may be appointed for one or more terms. Adjunct faculty criteria for appointment, supervision, and evaluation are clearly spelled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Title</th>
<th>Percentage of credit hours fall quarter 2015</th>
<th>Percentage of credit hours winter quarter 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Readiness Instructor</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Faculty</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onsite Dean</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
theme 2: ensuring quality and capacity standards 5, 10, 11, and 13

out in the employee handbook and in the adjunct faculty contracts. [See Faculty and Adjunct Faculty Contract Examples.]

The effectiveness of Strayer’s processes and procedures to hire, train, and retain highly qualified adjunct and full-time faculty are validated by student survey data, supervisor evaluations of effectiveness, Civitas engagement data, and elements available in the Faculty Dashboard. [See Civitas and Faculty Dashboard examples.] Analysis of this information indicates that overall the faculty are properly credentialed and evaluated, and that they provide the instructional expertise that the strategic plan identifies as critical to the success of our mission.

Educational curricula designed, maintained, and updated by faculty and other professionals who are academically prepared and qualified.

Strayer faculty are directly engaged in creating and modifying course content. When a course-related issue arises, faculty course summits often are held to discuss data and develop plans to address any issues with a timely response. Such issues include unexpected changes in student outcomes discovered through assessment, changes in drop rates, or changes in student satisfaction data. Faculty content experts review and recommend changes to courses based on student and faculty survey data, student outcome data, and updates based on analysis of industry employment qualification standards. Faculty SMEs, who may be full-time or adjunct employees, also are called upon to develop new courses for existing programs or to participate in the development of new academic programs, degree concentrations, and the like.

### TABLE 5: NUMBER OF FACULTY 2012-2016, BY TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>2939.0</td>
<td>3406.0</td>
<td>3017.0</td>
<td>2706.0</td>
<td>2388.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>292.0</td>
<td>299.0</td>
<td>223.0</td>
<td>217.0</td>
<td>208.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Class Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 6: COURSE ALTERATIONS BY TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Course shell updates</th>
<th>Assessment rubric changes</th>
<th>Course design updates</th>
<th>Quiz &amp; exam updates</th>
<th>Total course change requests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012*</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Indicates that the data reflect only a portion of the year. The numbers for 2016 reflect only the start of the new term. For 2012, the data reflect July 1 to December 31. The decreasing numbers of changes and requests over time indicate that the system in place is creating better content and requiring fewer adjustments each term.
Faculty also recommend changes in a course in real time using the Course Change Request form. Only faculty can initiate a course change request. The number of faculty who have served or are serving as SMEs and the number of course change requests processed annually indicate a robust role for faculty in curricular design and improvement. The table below shows the number of course alterations over the past few years, broken down by change type. All of these course changes came from faculty or appropriately credentialed administrators who are actively teaching a course. These changes are usually real-time changes to courses, not complete redesigns.

A course development process is used to engage faculty in improving courses each quarter. Faculty suggest courses for revision for reasons including the following:

- Textbook needs to be updated to an updated edition or new textbook.
- Course is identified as low performing, so a redesign is necessary.
- The course has new learning outcomes resulting from program review and needs to be redesigned.
- A new technology (lab) is introduced and needs to be integrated into the course.

The table below provides a summary of the number of courses redesigned by faculty in recent years. These redesigns may occur as a result of faculty suggestions or as part of a regularly scheduled review of the course.

Additionally, Strayer conducts periodic program reviews to assure relevance of curriculum and outcomes as well as compliance with all accreditation standards. Faculty are involved in this

### Table 7: Course Redesigns by Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Redesign</th>
<th>Redesign due to textbook edition</th>
<th>Redesign due to new textbook or lab</th>
<th>Program review or new course</th>
<th>Total # of redesigns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2013</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2015</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
process and serve as committee members to review all aspects of individual programs within the university.

Faculty engagement in curricular development would be enhanced by including more faculty in the assessment and adoption of technologies for online instruction. The working group also concluded that a standing curriculum committee comprised of adjunct and full-time faculty should be created to centralize and coordinate faculty efforts in curricular improvement.

*Faculty and other professionals, including teaching assistants, who demonstrate excellence in teaching and other activities, and who demonstrate continued professional growth.*

*Appropriate institutional support for the advancement and development of faculty, including teaching, research, scholarship, and service.*

There are several ways in which Strayer facilitates the professional growth of its faculty. The iDevelop program (formerly eLearning University or eLU) was created to assist faculty in all aspects of teaching in multiple modalities. Included in iDevelop are webinars, training sessions, job aids, and other activities to enhance faculty teaching. Though participation is voluntary, faculty are encouraged to take part in as many of these opportunities as possible.

Mandatory professional development opportunities include New Faculty Orientation and quarterly training sessions, as well as annual training in sexual harassment, business ethics, IT policy, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliance. [See Faculty Development Funding; Center for Teaching and Learning Webinars; iDevelop, Annual Faculty Trainings.]

Strayer also offers faculty the opportunity to participate in external professional development and in 2015, 78.5% of requests for professional development funding were approved. Since 2012 more funds were allotted for professional developed than were requested by faculty and that not all funding approved was actually claimed and used by faculty. Funding budgeted for faculty professional development annually since 2012 is found in the table above. These numbers include funding provided for travel and lodging for internal faculty meetings.

*Recognition of appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning, research, and service.*

While Strayer does not consider academic research to be part of its institutional mission, the university does recognize faculty who contribute to their fields by publishing scholarly works. Two internal publications, *Forum* and *Scholar* magazines, announce the academic contributions of faculty. [See Excerpts of Forum and Scholar Faculty News.]

Each issue of *Forum* includes a section called “Faculty Footnotes” that highlights recent scholarly activity by faculty. In the winter 2015 term, 15 professors were noted for achievements and in winter 2014, 20 faculty members were highlighted. The number of faculty mentioned in each edition of these publications indicates a growing number of faculty who contribute in this manner. Strayer also recognizes faculty efforts in teaching, coaching, mentoring, and service to the university community.

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**Table 8: Faculty Professional Development Budget, 2012-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$495,500</td>
<td>$312,500</td>
<td>$377,000</td>
<td>$475,000</td>
<td>$690,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Donald Stoddard Award is based on student nominations of outstanding and impactful faculty, and winners are recognized at commencement ceremonies. Also, the Dr. Joel Nwagbaraocha Award for Faculty is presented annually to an outstanding faculty member who has demonstrated superior engagement and leadership. Other awards are presented regionally or at faculty meetings, such as the President’s Award for Service to the University, and the Irving Strayer Award for outstanding contributions by faculty and staff to the university community.

Faculty serve the university in a number of ways including involvement as subject matter experts, service on major academic committees, and participating in efforts such as the strategic plan and the self-study. For many years, fulfillment of service requirements was used in evaluating faculty performance. However, in response to data gathered from faculty surveys and the determination that instruction is the most important responsibility of the faculty Strayer removed the service requirement for faculty so they could focus more on teaching.

Carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented procedures and criteria for reviewing all individuals who have responsibility for the educational programs of the institution.

Faculty contracts and the faculty section of the employee handbook clearly spell out how faculty performance is evaluated. [See Faculty Contract; Employee Handbook.] Excellence in teaching is monitored in a number of ways. The university uses Civitas engagement data to assess students’ degree of involvement in their online courses, and correlates such data with the ability of faculty to effectively teach online. Strayer also uses a Faculty Dashboard, which includes additional information on student drop rates, attendance, credit hours earned versus credit hours attempted (CHE:CHA), and other metrics. Civitas data are available to the faculty in real time when they open their Blackboard shells. Faculty Dashboard data are emailed directly to each faculty member periodically during the term. The effectiveness of these methods of communication can be measured in terms of improvement on these metrics throughout the term as faculty are made aware of these data.

Adherence to principles of academic freedom, within the context of the institutional mission.

While the university uses prescriptive course guides for instruction to ensure consistency and to enable accurate assessment of student learning, in recent years faculty have had more opportunity to add or modify elements in their courses. Faculty are provided with cutting-edge technology and tools to experiment with changes. A video-based technology called Kaltura allows faculty to create their own video content to enhance their courses using both webcams and screen capture technology. The technology is being successfully adopted by Strayer faculty, with usage having risen from .737 terabytes per month in 2013 to 11.7 terabytes per month in 2015.

Recent innovative pilots have been conducted to determine the right balance while continuing to effectively measure learning outcomes. The first pilot was with the honors initiative, whereby placed high-performing students were placed into the same sections. Within these courses, faculty are invited to change the activities and assessments to make course more engaging. Another initiative involves having faculty design the course based upon pre-defined learning outcomes and instructional materials. The faculty member is responsible for writing the discussions, activities, and assessments, and building the course shell. Both of these pilots are ongoing, and we are still
actively reviewing student and faculty feedback, along with other metrics.

**Faculty: Research Questions**

*What evidence demonstrates that faculty members are qualified to teach at Strayer University?*

*Does the balance between full-time and adjunct faculty effectively carry out the educational mission and goals of the University?*

The working group looked at key data metrics that are collected to measure the success of faculty in meeting institutional goals. The group reviewed the Course Evaluation Survey Summary Results report, Faculty Dashboard data, and Course Stat data to assess whether student outcomes or experiences differ for courses taught by full-time versus adjunct faculty. On almost all metrics studied, there was no significant difference in either student perception of the educational experience or university metrics integral to the success of the educational mission.

Data suggest that during the period 2013 to 2015, adjunct faculty taught 70% to 73% of the credit hours offered by the university. [See Credit Hours by Faculty Type Table.] There are numerous reasons for this trend such as cost savings and the unique industry-relevant expertise that adjunct faculty bring to the classroom. Whether adjunct or full-time, the primary responsibility of Strayer faculty is instruction. In January 2016, Strayer leaders increased the number of courses taught per quarter full-time faculty and concurrently reduced service requirements so that faculty could focus on instruction and student interaction.

*Is faculty satisfaction and/or engagement measured? What evidence demonstrates that the University uses these assessments for improvement?*

Faculty satisfaction is often cited as a critical factor in the success of any educational institution, and Strayer University strives to develop a vibrant and collaborative faculty culture. Although Strayer does not generally perform surveys that assess overall job satisfaction, it does actively assess the degree to which faculty enjoy teaching their courses, and it uses these data to develop strategies to increase faculty satisfaction with teaching, which remains a core focus of the institution. Near the end of each term, the university posts the Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll (CE-FOP. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed for trends in faculty satisfaction relative to courses and the progress made by students.

As described in Chapters 14 and 15 data from these opinion polls is evaluated to ascertain faculty perceptions of student preparedness, student mastery of the learning outcomes, and rigor of the courses. [See Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll Report.] Other measures, such as the Organizational Health Survey, and Student Opinion Polls provide information used to improve faculty satisfaction and effectiveness.
Chapter 10: Educational Offerings (Standard 11)

The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

The Standard 11 working group focused its research and reviews on Strayer’s academic programs and concentrations, learning outcomes, nationally normed assessments and grade book data, program accreditations, and faculty coding. Also evaluated were the results of pilot courses and assessments, course summit outcomes, feedback from stakeholders, learning resources and library services, and transfer credit policies and procedures.

Team members were assigned fundamental elements to evaluate compliance, and subgroups examined the research questions. Finally, the entire working group examined available reports and strategic plans, and drafted the team’s response. The working group discovered that there was considerable overlap between the responses to the fundamental elements and those for the research questions. Therefore, evidence of compliance with the fundamental elements incorporates some, but not all, responses related to the research questions.

Conclusions:

The working group concluded that Strayer University is in compliance with the applicable fundamental elements for Standard 11, Educational Offerings, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The fundamental element pertaining to policies and procedures of accelerated degree programs is not applicable to our institution.

In the course of its research, the working group discovered that there is no analysis of the success of students who transfer in English and math credits in subsequent courses. This presented an opportunity to examine data and to report the results internally and in the response to one of the following research questions. In the course of its evaluation of compliance with Standard 11, the group identified the following suggestions for improvement.

Suggestion:

Regularly assess the progress of students awarded transfer credit or credit by alternative means such as challenge exams to evaluate their performance in subsequent classes compared with students taking these classes in residence.

Educational Offerings Fundamental Elements (Standard 11)

Educational offerings congruent with its mission, which include appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the programs and degrees offered.

Programs leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential that are designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning.

Program goals that are stated in terms of student learning outcomes.

Course syllabi that incorporate expected learning outcomes.

Strayer University offers 23 programs and a total of 69 concentrations. [See Program Approval Chart, March 2016.] Strayer University does not have accelerated degree programs. To ensure that current offerings are congruent with Strayer’s mission and relevant to the workplace, the university engages in regular program review, ongoing course reviews, program-level accreditations, and assessment of learning outcomes.
The academic program review, conducted every five years (or earlier if needed) describes what the graduates of a program should know and be able to do when they graduate. It is benchmarked against industry standards where appropriate. The primary purpose of the review is to ensure that all programs offered are current and relevant. The program-level review comprises two major segments of evaluation: (1) the program cycle review and (2) the curriculum mapping process. Both processes can occur simultaneously, following a specific timeline. [See Program Review Guidelines.]

The following are examples of program reviews completed and changes made since 2012 to ensure sufficient content, breadth, length, and rigor of the program:

- **MBA Program.** In the core components, Financial Accounting for Managers (ACC556) replaced Financial Accounting (ACC557); Business Statistics (MAT510) replaced Quantitative Methods (MAT540). The concentrations in International Business, Management Information Systems, and Hospitality and Tourism Management, and all concentrations of the Executive Graduate Certificate were retired. The concentrations in Accounting, Health Services Administration, and Marketing were revised, and new concentrations in Global Management and IT Security Management were added.

- **MSHSA (Master of Science in Health Services Administration) Program.** In the core components, Management in Health (HSA501) replaced Health Services Organization (HSA500), and Quantitative Methods for Health Services (MAT543) replaced MAT540. New concentrations in Clinical Care Management and Public Health Management were added.

The curriculum mapping process described in Chapter 15 consists of thematically aligning student learning outcomes within the curriculum offered. The process provides certainty that the curriculum offers students sufficient opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills associated with each of its outcomes. [See Student Learning Assessment and Course Mapping, 2012.]

Strayer also undertakes regular course-level reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the courses taught based on student learning assessment data. Changes are made to courses, and identified strengths are reviewed for possible application to other courses. [See Sample Course Assessment Report 2015; CE-FOP (Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll) Initial Results Spring 2015; Sample Day 0 Course Stat Report Summer 2015.]

In addition to the formal course-level review, academic leaders conduct ongoing course review through (1) the Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll (CE-FOP), (2) the textbook review process, and (3) the analysis of credit hours earned versus credit hours attempted (CHE:CHA). The CE-FOP collects feedback from faculty about course content, the analysis of which could lead to minor changes or full revision of the courses. Faculty and the academic teams periodically review textbook and lab options to ensure that materials meet learning objectives. The CHE:CHA is a statistical comparison of credits divided by credits attempted per student.

Strayer University has aligned its curriculum to meet the standards of specialized accrediting bodies. The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accredits our undergraduate and graduate business programs, in which the majority of our students enroll. The Teacher Education Accreditation Council...
(TEAC) accredits the Master of Education degree, and the National Security Agency’s Committee on National Security Systems accredits Strayer’s information system programs. [See Catalog, pg XX.]

All learning outcomes are clearly described in each course guide (syllabus) and are applicable to courses regardless of location or delivery mode. Students and faculty know what the expected learning outcomes are for each course. [See Sample Course Guides.] Strayer University also utilizes standardized assessments, such as those by Peregrine and the Educational Testing Service, to evaluate student learning.

Learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff that are adequate to support the institution’s educational programs.

Programs that promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources.

Collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and administrators that fosters information literacy and technological competency skills across the curricula.

Strayer University has an online library containing over 195,000 items indexed in more than 20 online databases. There are 76 learning resource centers (LRCs) managed by LRC managers. In total, the university maintains a circulating collection of 104,977 books available to users, a reference collection of 7,512 items, a reserve collection of 3,417 items, a DVD collection (for faculty use only) of 1,290 items, and 788 periodical subscriptions in hard copy. Strayer’s collection amounts to 4,522,207 resource materials owned, on subscription, or available through loan from the University of Michigan Document Delivery Service.

Central library administrators work closely with the LRC managers to ensure that service providers are appropriately trained, and also with the marketing team and campuses to promote use of the university’s online databases, LRCs, and research assistance offered by the library team. [See Conducting an Orientation in the LRC; Library Orientation Memo Spring 2012; How to Access Online Library Resources PowerPoint; Library Orientation and Information Literacy PowerPoint.]

When students first enroll, they participate in New Student Orientation, which includes an introduction to the university’s information and learning resources and library services. [See New Student Orientation 2015.] Regular communications through the student Web portal, iCampus, promote the availability of information and learning resources [See Strayer Student’s End-of-Term Tool Kit.] Course guides also promote the use of a variety of information and learning resources. [See Course Guides Winter 2016.]

From 2012 through November 2015, the university’s online database had a total of 7,531,975 accesses. Student use of combined online and on-grounds library resources declined slightly from 2013 to 2014 (from 2,135,317 accesses to 1,755,478 accesses). [See December 2015 Annual Library Usage Report.]

The strategic plan, Goal 4.1, requires that library resources, instructional materials, and software to support the Academic Quality pillar be maintained and upgraded. Library staff evaluates needs annually, and in 2016–2017, key stakeholders will conduct a full audit to determine any additional or future needs to support Strayer students, programmatic initiatives, and career readiness.

The Library and Information Literacy Advisory Committee (LILAC), a standing committee made up of library staff, programmatic vice provosts, LRC managers, faculty, and other key stakeholders, is charged with advising the university library on library development and utilization, learning resources needs, and
university support for information literacy. The committee works with the academic team to support library collection development and acquisitions, including electronic resources. Major charges to the committee include further development of the current information literacy initiatives, revision and oversight of the existing University Information Literacy Plan, review of and developmental input into library planning and training documents, and support of related accreditation activities. [See LILAC Memo, February 15, 2015.]

The University’s Information Literacy Plan ensures that the complexities of information retrieval and assessment and knowledge creation are part of student learning outcomes and institutional awareness. [See University Information Literacy Plan 2011–2015.] Strayer’s courses have stated information literacy outcomes. [See Course Guides Winter 2016.] Assessments reveal that students have ordinarily scored as fair or above in the area of information literacy. [See Information Literacy Rubric Assessment.]

Additionally, rubrics containing information literacy–related activities have been tracked since Spring 2012, and reveal that (1) up to five courses have been used per quarter to evaluate information literacy activities; (2) information literacy criteria are part of the overall rubric; (3) a high percentage of students score as proficient and above for most quarters; and (4) although there are variations in proficiency ratings by program, ratings overall are high. Improvements made to services since 2012 include a new service called Discovery, which provides a one-stop library page with access to combined searching across most resources.

Other academic resources available to students include online tutoring 24/7 through Tutor.com; online supplemental instruction (optional one-hour sessions with Strayer faculty highlighting challenging topics in specific courses); and an online, topic-based Computer Information Sciences / Security tutoring program (covering, e.g., Microsoft Office, database security, etc.).

Comparable quality of teaching/instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of its courses and programs regardless of the location or delivery mode.

Strayer utilizes internal coding standards to ensure that faculty at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are appropriately credentialed to teach courses to which they are assigned, whether on campus or online. [See Faculty Credentialing Standards for Information Systems & Technology, Criminal Justice, General and Developmental Education, Business, and Nursing.]

Strayer utilizes a scheduling model for online courses to ensure compliance with additional state regulatory requirements for faculty credentialing, and campus-based scheduling is manually driven to ensure compliance. [See Faculty Coding and Teaching Exceptions policy.]

Strayer evaluates the academic rigor and educational effectiveness of its courses and programs through program and course reviews. The university also reviews outcomes through course assessments and grading rubrics. Assessments are mapped to course and program learning outcomes. The curriculum maps thematically align student learning outcomes, and the process ensures that students are afforded sufficient opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills associated with each of its outcomes. [See Student Learning Assessment and Course Mapping, 2012.] Because course guides (syllabi), learning outcomes, and assessment rubrics are the same for both online and campus-based courses, students are provided with comparable educational opportunities regardless of mode of delivery. Chapter 9 (Faculty) and
Chapter 11 (Related Educational Activities) provide additional analysis on the comparability of instruction in the online environment and at Strayer’s campuses.

Published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit that describe the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution.

Transfer policy criteria that are fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated.

Students who have attended other post-secondary educational institutions and transfer to Strayer University may be eligible to receive transfer credit in one of Strayer University’s degree, diploma, and certificate programs, if appropriate. The policy for awarding of transfer credits provides guidance regarding eligibility criteria for external course work to be awarded transfer credit, along with requirements and limitations on application of transfer credits to the university’s course requirements. Transfer information is communicated to students and prospective students in the Catalog and on the Strayer University website. [See Awarding of Transfer Credit Policy; University Catalog, http://www.strayer.edu.]

To facilitate ease of transfer and promote student completion, the policy on awarding of transfer credit was revised in 2015 to permit categorization of existing general education requirements by subject area and total credit requirement, as part of the process by which Strayer evaluates and applies transfer credit. The revised policy includes specific course-matching tables for application of transfer credit to requirements in liberal arts / general education program areas, and also provides, where applicable, state-specific matching tables.

Beginning with new and readmitted students matriculating in summer 2015, general education transfer credits were evaluated and applied according to these tables. Students admitted or readmitted in a term prior to summer 2015 were able to request reevaluation of their transcripts for possible awarding of additional transfer credit under this policy, up to a maximum of any remaining course requirements in the student’s current program.

Similarly, the policy was updated in 2015 to outline requirements for external course work eligible for course-specific and block (area-specific) transfer credit into Strayer’s RN-to-BSN Completion Program, and now includes course-matching tables with requirements for that program. [See Awarding of Transfer Credit Policy.]

Today, a dedicated team reviews incoming transcripts in accordance with the transfer credit policy and determines the transfer credit to be awarded. Additionally, the university maintains transfer alliances with over 450 colleges and universities. Articulation agreements with these partner colleges include, where appropriate, course-by-course and/or program-specific course-matching tables. A dedicated team develops and maintains these transfer alliances. [See Articulation Agreements, April 2016.]

In addition to the policy requirements and criteria outlined in the transfer credit policy, the university is in the process of developing course-matching tables for our top 50 school sources of incoming transfer credit. These course-matching tables will be incorporated into a course-matching database, to be used by the University’s Transfer Credit Services Department to determine transfer credit awards, and made available on the university intranet for use by staff in conducting unofficial transcript evaluations.

The university provides opportunities for undergraduate students to obtain credit for prior learning and provides information in its catalog,
on the website, and in the admissions process to inform prospective and current students about these opportunities. [See Life Credit Portfolio.]

Undergraduate students also may earn credit by examination using the Challenge Exam program, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSSTs). [See Challenge Exam Policy.] The effectiveness of these policies and procedures is discussed in research question on transfer credit at the end of this chapter.

Practices and policies that reflect the needs of adult learners.

The university offers evening and weekend courses at its facilities, and students may take both undergraduate and graduate courses online as their schedules permit. Strayer University provides support services to meet the needs of its students, including online and on-campus tutoring, supplemental instruction, technological assistance through the IT help desk and LRC managers, and an online readiness course. Students are also assigned success coaches who are available to guide adult learners during their college experience. [See New Student Orientation 2015.]

Career services are made available to assist students in their professional goals. Outcomes are assessed through feedback from students, graduates, and as available, their employers. [See sample Office of Institutional Effectiveness reports on career benefits, employment outcomes.] Further information about the services provided to enrolled students is found in Chapter 12 of the self-study report, which addresses student support.

Examples of how data gathered are used for improvements include the following:

- Both faculty and student survey data are used to improve the quality of courses. As an example, the spring 2014 feedback on SOC300 was that the interactive webtext needed to better relate the material to sociological theories. As a result, the webtext publisher curated additional material to address this faculty concern. [See Spring 2014 Results for General Education.]

- Each quarter, our staff contacts students who have requested phone calls to ensure that their concerns regarding academic and operational issues are heard and resolved. In winter quarter 2015, for example, our staff resolved 2,204 issues to the satisfaction of students. [See Closing the Loop Update 1152.]

- Following a survey of faculty on what it means to teach at Strayer University, responses were distilled into foundational principles that led to the creation of the Faculty Charter. [See Faculty Charter.]

Course summits are another means through which Strayer University has evaluated the effectiveness of curricular experiences and
utilized evaluation results as a basis to improve its student development program. Course summits, held several times in 2014 and 2015, included faculty, instructional designers, and academic leaders, who formally analyzed student performance metrics and courses. [See Course Summit Presentations.]

These summits have resulted in significant changes to course curricula and improved outcomes.

Following a course summit in the summer 2014 quarter, 17 courses were updated to include changes such as the addition of video-based lectures covering critical topics and a new requirement to incorporate more student presentations in several online and campus-based courses. Improvements to the curriculum continued throughout the summer quarter with the result that a total of 151 courses were modified or revised.

Assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of both undergraduate and graduate programs, and use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness.

Chapter 15, Assessment of Student Learning, provides a detailed analysis of measures used to evaluate student learning and the use of results for improvement. As described above, program and course reviews form the basis for improving the effectiveness of Strayer’s degree programs.

At the course level, rubric data are analyzed based on the overall course and broken out by course delivery mode. In some assignments, there is disparity between the online and on-grounds experience. Other courses have less variability. Based on findings of assessment and rubric data, recommendations are made to improve learning outcomes.

For example, in our SOC100 course, we identified through assessment that students struggled with the first part of a multi-section writing assignment, which involved drafting a hypothesis, a concept not covered with any level of detail in the course. As an initial step to address this issue, we provided faculty with supplemental materials to support the introduction of this concept, but student performance did not improve. As a second step, a faculty member serving as a subject matter expert worked with faculty to create three new essay assignments, which were more closely aligned with the course and textbook. Student performance improved considerably. [See Course Stat Reports fall 2015 and winter 2016.]

The university has implemented the use of third-party assessments as a benchmark to measure student learning. Assessments from Peregrine Academic Services allow Strayer to compare its students’ learning with that of students at other universities. Additionally, when the content in the Peregrine assessment is linked to the learning outcomes in a particular class, the assessment serves as another data point to validate that Strayer’s course content and academic standards are valid measures of student learning. The most recent Peregrine results (fall 2015) revealed improvement over the prior term and in relation to comparable programs. The Peregrine exam is used in the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Program, both inbound and outbound. [See Peregrine Fall 2015 All Degrees Distributed.]

The university also administers the Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (the ETS-PP) assessment to students currently enrolled in MAT300 and ENG315. The ETS is a nationally normed assessment used to measure the effectiveness of our general studies program. It assesses students in the areas of reading, writing, critical thinking, and mathematics. The ETS-PP
was used in 2012, 2013, and 2014 to assess the proficiency levels of our students who successfully completed or received transfer credit for ENG115, ENG215, and MAT104. An example of changes made to the general studies program based on ETS results and other data points is the addition of two required communications courses to better support reading, writing, and critical thinking outcomes [See Course Guide for COM101, Effective Communication.]

Additionally, the data collected through the COGNOS grade book data report helps in assessing performance and the rigor of assignments. Grade book data since 2012 have been used to identify areas in which courses need additional or improved clarification, instructional approaches, materials, or supplemental instruction. [See COGNOS Gradebook Report.]

Strayer University’s pilot courses compare the effects of different curricula, instructional technologies, and teaching styles on student engagement levels and learning outcomes. Several courses were selected for evaluation. Based on assessments and pilot outcomes, necessary changes are made. For example, all sections of MAT104 now utilize ALEKS, and course statistics indicate improved student success rates el. [See Sample Day Zero Course Stat Report summer 2015; Sample Day Zero Course Stat Pilot Report summer 2015.]

Examples of courses evaluated in the pilots include the following:

- MAT104: Integration of the ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) adaptive learning program
- ENG090: Integration of growth mindset principles and teaching strategies to support inexperienced developmental English students
- PHI210, PSY105, ENG115: Integration of Soomo interactive webtext
- BUS302: Use of StrengthsFinder 2.0 (T. Rath, Washington, DC: Gallup Press, 2007) as the instructional text
- MAT300: Use of cohorts to group graduate students into one class
- MKT100: Use of industry-specific content relevant to students employed in the automobile sales industry
- CIS110: Integration of live meetings with asynchronous activities
- EDU542: Alignment of discussions and course assignments with content from Education Week.

Educational Offerings: Research Questions

What evidence demonstrates the coherence, academic content, and academic rigor of each undergraduate and graduate program? Does periodic review take place? What changes have been made as a result? What evidence is there that students are meeting the institution’s goal for student information literacy? How are such goals assessed, what have been the findings, and what actions have been taken in response?

As described in Chapter 15 (Assessment of Student Learning) the OIE conducts regular quarterly reviews to assess how students are performing in different courses. Academic leaders regularly select which courses will be assessed in their respective areas. Data are gathered through clickable rubrics and through student and faculty surveys. The areas that are measured in each course are assessment participation and assessment grades, including grade distribution and mean. Each individual rubric criterion for each assignment is assessed and mapped to the course outcomes, program outcomes, and university outcomes. Faculty
Opinion Poll and Student Opinion Poll data and comments are included in these assessments as well.

Based on the OIE findings, academic leaders develop action plans, including a responsible party and a due date, to address any areas of concern. Evidence including assessments, curriculum mapping and course guides, and program and course reviews demonstrate that Strayer University is meeting its goals of providing students a valuable education. Data points are gathered from internal assessments, nationally normed assessments (e.g., Peregrine), student and faculty feedback (e.g., CE-FOP), and others. Another tool used is the Civitas engagement application that combines student demographic, behavioral, and academic information with data modeling to provide recommendations that support management of the student life cycle. Student engagement is evaluated using metrics such as grade book access, login attempts, and assignment submittals. Faculty and staff use these metrics to analyze how well students are performing in our courses and to take appropriate action.

Using sampling from the ETS-PP, students are assessed in areas such as reading, critical thinking, writing, and mathematics. [See ETS-PP English and Mathematics Table.] Strayer University uses ETS-PP data to design initiatives to support students. Examples include supplemental instruction, Tutor.com, the Virtual Writing Center, the ALEKS math program, and START instructors. (The START acronym is used for Student-Focused Teachers with Advising, Retention and Tutoring responsibilities.) Supplemental instruction, Tutor.com, and the Virtual Writing Center are open resources available to students. Students can attend live, online sessions for specified courses, work directly with tutors online, and review a variety of writing resources.

The ALEKS program and START instructors are integral to developmental math education. START instructors serve as both instructor and advisor for inexperienced students, ensuring a high quality of instruction as well as a high level of student support and coaching. The ALEKS math program is an adaptive technology enabling students to start at the math level appropriate for them and then use a combination of practice problems and assessments to progress through the course. This program uses an algorithm to determine when students are ready to proceed to a new topic, and it tells students and instructors the amount of time needed each week to complete the program.

There have been a number of iterations of how these processes have been implemented and changed in order to better support students’ academic success. As a result of these programs, we have seen improvements in weak areas.

Information literacy is one of Strayer’s core competencies that students are expected to learn. The University facilitates the development of student information literacy through a multi-faceted approach, which is formalized in the Information Literacy Plan. [See University Information Literacy Plan 2011–2015.] The four major approaches to support and evaluate student information literacy are (1) inclusion of program-and-course-level information literacy outcomes, (2) library services outreach, (3) faculty teaching and support in information literacy activities, and (4) support staff who direct student support in information literacy activities.

Library staff conduct campus and online course outreach for the first four weeks of each quarter and teach library research skills to over 300 classes each quarter. Surveys indicate “high agreement” that the information presented by the library services staff was helpful. Finally, the library’s monthly usage reports over the last four
years indicate an increase in full-text retrievals in the EBSCOhost periodical databases, from 869,681 to 979,484. [See December 2015 Library Usage Report.]

Achievement of information literacy goals is measured using metrics on student achievement, use of resources, and evaluation of activities designed to teach information literacy skills. The above table depicts the number of assessments and the overall proficiency results for each quarter.

**In what ways does the University facilitate the use of new technology and tools to enhance student learning and faculty instruction? What evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of adopted technologies and tools in improving learning and instruction?**

Strayer University has taken a multi-faceted approach to using new technology and tools to enhance student learning and facilitate instruction in both the online and campus classroom environments. Improvements have been made to Wi-Fi capabilities at campuses and computer labs, and student laptop and tablet initiatives were deployed to improve student preparedness and efficiency with assignment completion.

Faculty training and development has included the adaptation of faculty video conferencing (GoToMeeting) and training accounts, and the deployment of Kaltura and LearnBig as instructional platforms. Consistent enhancements and improvements to Blackboard and iCampus have also served as a way to enhance student engagement and learning. By making these platforms more user friendly, stable, and socially interactive, we provide students with an insightful and collaborative learning experience. Similarly, instructional tools such as video assignments in classrooms, ALEKS, and Soomo have been adopted to supplement classroom material, provide students with individualized assessment, and improve overall learning outcomes. University-wide deployment of ALEKS and Soomo adaptations were initiated after a multi-quarter pilot with MAT104, PSY105, and PHI210.

### Table 9: Information Literacy Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Total assessments</th>
<th>% proficient and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2013</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2013</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adopted technologies are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessment strategies. Thus there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of adopted technologies and tools in improving learning and instruction. Blackboard reports, Civitas dashboard and analytics reports, OIE research reports, course statistic reports, specific user engagement reports, and SCI110 reports provide some of this evidence. When new videos are deployed, the instructional design team measures student engagement and tweaks videos based upon these data. New technology also is tested against other course sections and then measured via the overall course statistics. Based upon the results, the team looks at survey data and assessment data to determine improvements in student learning.

To facilitate ease of transfer and promote student completion, the transfer credit policy was revised in 2015 to permit categorization of existing general education requirements by subject area and total credit requirements. The revised policy includes specific course-matching tables for application of transfer credit to requirements in liberal arts/general education program areas, and also provides, where applicable, state-specific matching tables. Beginning with new and readmitted students matriculating in summer 2015, general education transfer credits have been evaluated and applied according to these tables. Students admitted/readmitted in a term prior to summer 2015 were able to request reevaluation of their transcripts for possible awarding of additional transfer credit under this policy, up to a maximum of any remaining course requirements in the student’s current program.

Similarly, the policy was updated in 2015 to outline requirements for external course work eligible to be awarded course-specific and block (area-specific) transfer credit into Strayer’s RN-to-BSN Completion Program. In addition to the policy requirements and criteria outlined in the policy on awarding of transfer credit, the university is in the process of developing course-matching tables for our top 50 school sources of incoming transfer credit. These course-matching tables will be incorporated into a course-matching database, to be used by the Department of Transfer Credit Services for the determination of transfer credit awarded, and will be made available on the internal website for use by staff in conducting unofficial transcript evaluations.

At the present time, the university does not undertake any regular inquiry to determine whether students who receive outside academic credit are academically successful in subsequent related courses. Therefore, the working group completed a study of students awarded transfer...
credit for ENG115 or MAT104, as well as those taking and passing these classes in residence. The analysis considered student success rates in ENG215 and MAT300, respectively. The results are summarized below. [See Report on Undergraduate Transfer Credit Analysis in English and Math.]

**English**

- 6,433 students took and passed ENG115.
  - Of these students, 2,565 took ENG215, and 2,157 (84.1%) passed.
- 6,529 students received transfer credit for ENG115, but not for ENG215.
  - Of these students, 1,837 took ENG215, and 1,443 (78.6%) passed.

**Math**

- 6,272 students took and passed MAT104.
  - Of these students, 750 took MAT300, and 537 (71.6%) passed.
- 4,232 students received transfer credit for MAT104, but not for MAT300.
  - Of these students, 614 took MAT300, and 467 (76.1%) passed.

The working group suggests that Strayer regularly assess the progress of students awarded transfer credit or credit by alternative means such as challenge exams to evaluate their performance in subsequent classes compared with that of students taking these classes in residence.
Chapter 11: Related Educational Activities (Standard 13)

The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

The working group began its focus on Standard 13 by reviewing the strategic plan and the course catalog. We also reviewed multiple course guides, vendor contracts, and our current policies on developmental/remedial education and experiential credit. To evaluate compliance with the fundamental element on noncredit offerings, we conducted a thorough analysis to ensure that all such offerings have clearly articulated goals, objectives, and student outcomes aligned to Strayer’s mission.

The university’s nomenclature for distance learning is “online programs.” Students who are not affiliated with one of Strayer’s campuses enroll through the Global (virtual) Campus and take all of their courses online. The working group focused on compliance with the fundamental elements to evaluate the way online learning is delivered, to determine whether services and academic support for online students are comparable to those for on-grounds students, and to investigate the differences in student outcomes in online and campus-based courses. The working group’s response to the research question regarding the possible impacts of growing online enrollments is incorporated in Chapter 16 of the self-study report.

Conclusions:

Analysis reveals that Strayer University meets the standards set forth in the fundamental elements for Standard 13, Related Educational Activities, within the context of its institutional mission for each of the sections addressed. While we concluded that the university provides adequate services students who need remedial services students, there are opportunities to benchmark best practices and adopt strategies that will help to ensure student success. The specific areas for improvement that our research revealed are suggested below and described further in the Standard 13 research questions.

Suggestions:

1. Raise awareness about and provide support for experiential learning credit opportunities among prospective and current students. Consider the viability of continuing the rarely used Life Credit Portfolio or revising it to make it a more attractive option for students. Investigate the viability of using free diagnostic exams so that students may evaluate the likelihood of passing standardized tests such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSSTs), and the like.

2. Ensure that remedial courses accurately measure student learning and provide a foundation for success in credit-bearing courses. Benchmark best practices and adopt strategies to further assist students who need remediation.

Related Educational Activities (Standard 13) Fundamental Elements

Basic Skills

- Systematic procedures for identifying students who are not fully prepared for college-level study.
- Provision of or referral to relevant courses and support services for admitted under-prepared students.
Strayer University is an open access institution and, as such, sets admissions standards that consider the needs of prospective students who wish to enroll as undergraduates but are not fully prepared academically to undertake many of the introductory-level courses required of first-year students. The university has adopted and refined admissions requirements for prospective students who have academic deficiencies in mathematics and English. These policies ensure that students who need remedial courses and support services are identified and provided with the assistance they need. [See Developmental Education and Online Readiness Requirements, pp. 1–4.]

The requirements for admission to the university are found in the Strayer catalog. [See Catalog, pp. 21–27.] Specific requirements for English and math proficiency can be satisfied by enrolling in remedial classes ENG090 or MAT090. These courses are considered pre-collegiate-level courses and do not carry academic degree credit. [See Course Guides, ENG090 and MAT090.]

Admissions personnel and Student Academic Services (SAS) coaches work in tandem to identify and assist students who need to take remedial courses ENG090 and/or MAT090, as described in further detail in the response to a research question on general education in Chapter 13. SAS coaches evaluate the admissions applications of prospective students and provide guidance to those who appear to need remedial courses. The coaches help students to understand that taking developmental math and English courses will improve their opportunities for success when they begin to take college-level courses.

Prior to the spring 2013 term, new students were allowed to take ENG090 and or MAT090 without having to take the College Board’s Accuplacer assessment tests. In 2013, Strayer began using a different assessment tool (from McCann Associates) and required that all students who potentially needed remediation to first take the McCann English and/or math assessment prior to being placed in remedial classes. University faculty were able to refine the McCann assessment through a detailed calibration process, and the English and math exams were aligned Strayer’s learning outcomes. Using McCann, we discovered that a number of applicants passed the exams and were able to be placed in regular English and math classes. The percentage of students who are placed in remedial courses has decreased since the university introduced the McCann test requirement. [See Remedial Seats Chart 2012–2016.] Subsequent assessment has revealed that these students perform well in the credit-bearing courses. [See Board of Trustees OIRAE Presentation (October 2014).]

The university carefully reviews outcome assessment data for students who enroll in remedial math and English courses to determine ways to improve programs and services for under-prepared students. In math, students are further evaluated through an assessment in the ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) adaptive math learning product produced by McGraw-Hill. ALEKS uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine exactly what a student does and does not know, and then provides individualized instruction as needed. Strayer math instructors guide students through ALEKS, provide instruction and tutoring, and lead class discussions. [See ALEKS.com/about_aleks.]

Data provide insights into opportunities for improving remedial education. [See New Students and Developmental Education at Strayer University Draft Summary and Representative Tables in Preparation for a
Certificate Programs

- Certificate programs, consistent with institutional mission, that have clearly articulated program goals, objectives, and expectations for student learning and that are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures.
- Published program objectives, requirements, and curricular sequence.
- Program learning goals consistent with national criteria, as appropriate.
- Available and effective student support services.
- If courses completed within a certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution, academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses.

Strayer University’s certificate programs meet the fundamental elements of this section of Standard 13. Currently the university offers under the Jack Welch Management Institute (JWMI). Certificates are designed, approved, administered, and evaluated by faculty and JWMI administrators.

The certificates are consistent with the university’s mission and goals, and like other academic offerings, have program goals, learning outcomes, and regular assessment to ensure quality and student learning. [See Strayer University: Mission, Vision, and Core Values, noted in the 2015–2020 Strayer University Strategic Plan (pp. 7–8); JWMI (Strategy)Course Guide (pp. 1–3); JWMI Leadership Course Guide (pp. 1–2); Leadership Bootcamp Program Guide 2016 (pp. 2–4); FedEx JWMI International Business Course Guide; FedEx JWMI Business Communications Course Guide (pp. 1, 3); FedEx JWMI Financial Acumen Course Guide (pp. 1–4).]

Strayer University’s certificate program learning goals are consistent with national criteria, as appropriate, and are offered in the areas of leadership development, strategy, finance, international business, and business communication. The goals of these courses are consistent with those of courses taught in business programs both domestically and internationally. [See Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University American Council on Education Review Report (May 12, 2015).]

Strayer University provides available and effective student support services as evidenced by the Strayer University course catalog [pp. 63–67]. Strayer University offers academic tutoring and learning resource centers both online and on campus. All certificate programs have faculty support. Certificate courses are delivered via a blended learning approach that includes live synchronous sessions and written feedback/grading for assignments. Prior to enrolling in the certificate program, prospective students have access to JWMI admissions officers to explain program requirements and to answer questions.

Courses completed within a certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution, and academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses. [See American Council on Education’s Credit Recommendation for Leadership, Strategy, and Business Essentials (pp. 1–4).]

Experiential Learning

- Credit awarded for experiential learning that is supported by evidence in the form of an evaluation of the level, quality, and quantity of that learning.
• Published and implemented policies and procedures defining the methods by which prior learning can be evaluated and the level and amount of credit available by evaluation.

• Published and implemented policies and procedures regarding the awarding of credit for prior learning that define the acceptance of such credit based on the institution's curricula and standards.

• Published and implemented procedures regarding the recording of evaluated prior learning by the awarding institution.

• Credit awarded appropriate to the subject and the degree context into which it is accepted.

• Evaluators of experiential learning who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and about the institution's criteria for the granting of college credit.

Consistent with its strategic plan [Educational Access, Goal 1.4], Strayer provides opportunities for prospective and current students to receive academic credit for knowledge and skills acquired outside of a higher education institution. Strayer recognizes college-level experiential learning, and provides opportunities for students to demonstrate competencies by taking CLEP, DSST, and Challenge Exams. Students also may be evaluated for credit by completion of StraighterLine classes and LCPs. Strayer uses guidelines set forth by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and other recognized agencies to evaluate corporate or other educational training.

The Strayer catalog describes the various ways that a student may apply for and receive college credit for experiential learning, and the methods used to evaluate prior or experiential learning. The university requires evidence of the level, quality, and quantity of experiential learning and accepts such credit based on Strayer's curricula and standards. The credit awarded is appropriate to the subject and the degree context into which it is accepted. Although few students submit Life Credit Portfolios for consideration, submissions are evaluated by CAEL. Policies and procedures are established for the submission of LCPs through CAEL's Learning Counts portal. Strayer records prior learning credit on student records and transcripts in accordance with standards set forth in the policy on awarding transfer credit and the CAEL guidelines. [See Strayer Catalog; Propero Policy; Awarding Transfer Credit Policy; Life Credit Portfolio Application Form; University LCP Policies and Procedures; CAEL Prior Learning Assessment Policy.]

Noncredit Offerings

• Noncredit offerings consistent with institutional mission and goals.

• Clearly articulated program or course goals, objectives, and expectations for student learning that are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures.

• Academic oversight that assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses, if courses completed within a noncredit or certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution.

• Periodic assessment of the impact of noncredit programs on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

Strayer University currently has only two noncredit courses designed for students who need remedial education in mathematics (MAT090) and English (ENG090). These noncredit offerings are consistent with the institution's mission and goals to provide post-secondary opportunities to adult learners. The remedial math and English courses are designed, taught, and evaluated by university faculty, and academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses. [See ACE Credit Recommendations (pp. 1–4).]
Course guides (syllabi) clearly describe course goals, objectives, and expectations for student learning. Outcomes are systematically assessed, and revisions to the curriculum, instruction, and support services are made as needed to enhance student success. [See ENG090 Student and Faculty Course Guides; MAT090 Student and Faculty Course Guides; New Students and Developmental Education at Strayer University Draft Summary and Representative Tables in Preparation for a Formal Report, OIRAE (July 8, 2014); OIRAE—New Students and Developmental Education—Representative Tables (July 2014).]

The university’s academic leaders, financial officers, and governing body evaluate the impact of noncredit courses on institutional resources as part of the overall review of institutional resources described in Chapter 6 of the self-study report. Supporting students who need remedial assistance is central to Strayer’s mission, and it is expected that such efforts will continue well into the future.

**Branch Campuses, Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites**

- Offerings at branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites (including study abroad locations and programs offered at business/corporate sites) that meet standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness comparable to those of other institutional offerings.

- Activities and offerings at other locations that meet all appropriate standards, including those related to learning outcomes.

- Adequate and appropriate support services.

- Periodic assessment of the impact of branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites on the institution’s resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

The university is in compliance with the fundamental elements of this section of Standard 13. The geographical footprint is extensive, with more than 70 campuses in 15 states and the District of Columbia. Additional locations are geographically apart from the main campus, which is located at 1133 15th Street, Washington, D.C. [See Appendix D, Maps.]

Students who enroll at these locations may complete 100% of their studies in a combination of campus-based and online courses, or totally online. Therefore, the campuses are considered “additional locations” under MSCHE guidelines. Through these campuses, students have access to standardized curricula, student services, and instruction as offered throughout the university, and institutionalized policies and procedures are applicable at all facilities. University compliance in these areas is described in the responses to the other standards in this self-study report.

Strayer offers educational opportunities to students enrolled at facilities provided by certain corporate partners. While many companies make Strayer education possible for their employees by providing tuition assistance, in 2005 a partnership was developed with Verizon Wireless to allow Verizon call center employees to earn their degrees onsite at company locations. As of 2016, there are 29 of these locations in 22 states. Internally, the nomenclature used to describe these locations is “on-site programs,” and they are classified as “additional locations” because students enrolled there may earn more than 50% of the credit toward their degrees. [See Appendix D, Verizon Site Map.]

As on its campuses, educational offerings at these locations meet standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor, student support, and educational effectiveness. Activities and offerings at these sites meet all appropriate
standards outlined in the Strayer catalog as well as the requirements specified by the states within which they are located. [See Illinois Verizon Enrollment Agreement (p. 2); North Carolina Board of Governors (pp. 10–13, 13–17, 17–20, 22–23); Verizon Onsite Admissions Application (p. 10).] Strayer University provides the same adequate and appropriate student support services to the Verizon Wireless students as provided to all other Strayer students. Student support services are described in Chapter 12 of the self-study report. [See Onsite Programs Academic Structure (p. 1); Onsite Programs Operations Structure (p. 1); Onsite Field Guide (p. 1).]

The university annually assesses the impact of its additional locations and other instructional sites on Strayer’s human, fiscal, and physical resources. The analysis evaluates enrollments, facilities costs and maintenance, and other factors, and uses this information to make strategic decisions regarding the ability of the institution to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals. Chapter 6 of the report describes how data are used to determine when to add, close, or consolidate new locations, determine appropriate staffing levels, and improve its facilities and services to students. With the closure or consolidation of a number of campuses in recent years because of declining enrollments and the growing shift to online enrollments, it is apparent that Strayer is diligent about considering the impact of its additional locations and other instructional sites on the overall health of the institution.

**Distance or Distributed Learning**

- Distance learning offerings (including those offered via accelerated or self-paced time formats) that meet institution-wide standards for quality of instruction, articulated expectations of student learning, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness. If the institution provides parallel onsite offerings, the same institution-wide standards should apply to both.
- Consistency of the offerings via distance learning with the institution’s mission and goals, and the rationale for the distance learning delivery.
- Planning that includes consideration of applicable legal and regulatory requirements.
- Demonstrated program coherence, including stated program learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- Demonstrated commitment to continuation of offerings for a period sufficient to enable admitted students to complete the degree or certificate in a publicized time frame.
- Assurance that arrangements with consortial partners or contractors do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational offerings.
- Validation by faculty of any course materials or technology-based resources developed outside the institution.
- A system of student identity verification that ensures that the student who participates in class in course work is the same student who registers and receives academic credit, and that students are notified at the time of registration or enrollment of any additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity. The verification process also protects student privacy.
- Available, accessible, and adequate learning resources (such as a library or other information resources) appropriate to the offerings at a distance.
• An ongoing program of appropriate orientation, training, and support for faculty participating in electronically delivered offerings.

• Adequate technical and physical plant facilities, including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support electronic offerings.

• Periodic assessment of the impact of distance learning on the institution’s resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

At Strayer University, distance education courses and programs are referred to as “online.” Students who are not affiliated with one of Strayer’s campuses enroll through the Global (virtual) Campus and take all of their courses online. In 2007, Strayer began a concerted effort to ensure that the programs, courses, instruction, and student services delivered to students online were comparable to those received by students who study at Strayer’s campuses. At that time more students were enrolled in campus-based courses; today the trend is reversed. Chapter 16 of this self-study describes in greater detail the implications of the trend toward more online enrollments.

Because of past and current efforts to ensure comparability of its programs and services in all modalities, the university is in compliance with the fundamental elements related to distance education in Standard 13. The 2011–2015 and 2015–2020 strategic plans emphasize commitment to providing educational offerings in multiple modalities to meet the needs of working adult students. The online programs of the university are consistent with Strayer’s mission and goals. [See Appendix B, Strategic Plans.]

Programs and courses offered at campuses and in the online environment have identical program outcomes, use the same course guides, and have the same expected student learning outcomes. The standardization of course guides and outcome measures across both modalities allows the university to acquire meaningful assessment data and use these data for improvement. Of considerable interest are comparative data on student learning by modality. [See Strayer Catalog, Course Guides; OIRAE Course-Based Assessment of Student Learning: An Update for the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (Jan, 9, 2015).]

There is no difference in the level of access to learning resources between campus-based and online students and faculty. Faculty have access to onboarding and training appropriate to the modality (campus-based or online) in which they will be teaching. Similarly, Strayer students are offered onboarding and training that is appropriate to the modality (campus-based or online) in which they will be learning. University faculty are engaged in the development and evaluation of online courses and the selection of course materials as described in Chapter 9. However, the working group determined that there is an opportunity to further engage faculty in researching and vetting course materials or technology-based resources developed by outside vendors.

The Office of Student Affairs ensures that support services for online students, including disability services, are readily available and accessible. Strayer ensures adequate technical support and access to library and information literacy resources. Chapter 12 describes student support services available to students regardless of modality of study.

Strayer leverages an in-house application, Splunk, to verify a student’s identity. Splunk provides advanced analytics against student activity logs and systematically generates alerts of potential fraudulent activity by performing back-end pattern matching. The application allows the university to proactively identify and verify a student’s identity across a multitude of key...
indicators with no false detections. Currently, the university is considering additional ways to strengthen student verification processes.

A fraud monitoring committee has been established, which consists of members across IT, Student Affairs, Student Financial Services, Legal, Internal Audit, and the Registrar’s Office. The team strives to meet biweekly to review any incidents, determine the appropriate course of action, and track outcomes. [See Fraud Monitoring Policy.]

The university’s online offerings in various states are governed by the regulatory agencies within those states, where applicable. Plans to offer educational programs online are in compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements, and prior approval is sought from the appropriate regulatory agencies as required. The university also provides reports to these regulatory bodies as requested. Strayer’s presence in Kentucky is online only. An annual renewal is filed along with annual data reporting. [See screenshot of Strayer University’s renewal application for Kentucky programs (2015–2016).]

Strayer has eliminated some academic programs due to low enrollments, lack of market relevancy, and other such reasons over the years, but it makes provisions for the students who are enrolled in those programs to complete their studies. In the majority of cases, the university undergoes a generous teach-out period wherein the students are allowed to complete the program, and the program continues until the last student who was active at the time that Strayer decided to phase out the program either graduates or withdraws from the program. When a decision is made to close a program without a teach-out period, Strayer prepares a plan to discontinue the program immediately. Prior to discontinuation, Strayer consults the Commission to ensure the sufficiency of the discontinuation plan and receives approval, where necessary, of the discontinuation plan and the discontinuation itself, from the relevant regulatory bodies in the states prior to ceasing enrollment. Strayer is currently in the process of placing a time limit on the process for ending any program, but will ensure that such a time limit permits most, if not all, students to earn a degree in a reasonable amount of time. A draft policy for adding, modifying, or discontinuing a program, concentration, or minor has been circulated to university leaders for comment.

The policy will be presented during an upcoming University Policy and Curriculum Committee meeting.

The university assesses the impact of online education on institutional resources and makes changes as necessary to shift resources to where they are most needed, as evidenced by recent reorganizations, campus consolidations, and campus closures, described in Chapter 6. Further analysis of this topic is found in Chapter 16 of this self-study in response to a research question about the trend in online growth and its implications for the university’s resources.

**Contractual Relationships and Affiliated Providers**

- Contractual relationships with affiliated providers, other institutions, or organizations that protect the accredited institution’s integrity and assure that the institution has appropriate oversight of and responsibility for all activities carried out in the institution’s name or on its behalf.

- Consistency of any course or program offered via contractual arrangement with the institution’s mission and goals.
Adequate and appropriate accredited institutional review and approval of work performed by a contracted party in such functional areas as admissions criteria, appointment of faculty, content of courses/programs, instructional support resources (including library/information resources), evaluation of student work, and outcomes assessment.

Strayer has a systematic process for creating, maintaining, altering, or discontinuing contractual relationships with external vendors. The relationship between external vendors and Strayer University is reviewed internally to monitor adherence to policies and procedures. The university does not contract for any course or academic program. However, we do contract for student support services such as Lynda.com, Grammarly@edu, and Tutor.com. Strayer prescribes the nature of services to be provided by the vendor and subsequently reviews the services to determine student usage of support services, cost effectiveness, and so on. Chapter 12 provides information on student usage of contracted student support services. [See Recent Vendor Contracts folder for Standard 13.]

Related Educational Activities:
Research Questions

How effective is the University in meeting student demand for prior learning credit? Should the University expand opportunities for students to earn credit for experiential or prior learning? How does the University ensure that credit currently awarded for prior learning is appropriate?

The working group conducted a comprehensive analysis effectiveness in meeting the demand for prior learning credit. Research included examining the external website (Strayer.edu), employee website (SUNow), the Strayer catalog, relevant policies, and available reporting on alternative credits posted. Interviews were conducted with staff who have responsibility for the admissions and registrar functions and with SAS coaches.

Many students who come to Strayer are unaware that we offer alternative credit options. Detailed information about how to earn extra-institutional credit is available on Strayer’s external website, on the student website (iCampus), and in the Strayer catalog. Admissions officers and SAS coaches are trained to mention alternative methods of obtaining credit with each new applicant for admission, and student academic success coaches remind admitted students about alternative credit options regularly. The Transfer Credit Services team reviews transcripts to ensure that students are receiving credit for appropriate prior learning experiences. [See Transfer Credit Policy.]

Despite efforts to publicize alternative credit options, our analysis revealed that most applicants and current students do not apply for credit earned by examination, Life Credit Portfolio, or other means. For example, in the spring and summer 2015 terms, only 259 and 290 students, respectively, took advantage of these opportunities for credit through CLEP, DSST, or StraighterLine. Only rarely does a student submit a portfolio for evaluation.

The working group concluded that Strayer should do more to raise awareness among applicants and currently enrolled students about ways to earn alternative credit and should explore the viability of continuing the LCP process. The group agreed that a free diagnostic exam for students who are intimidated by taking the CLEP, DSST, Challenge, or other examinations would be of value to students in determining whether or not to proceed with applying for credit earned through such means.

How effectively does the University manage relationships with external vendors in relation to course content and design to ensure appropriate
content, rigor, and consistency with the University’s mission?

The working group conducted a comprehensive analysis of Strayer University’s relationship with external vendors through interviews with relevant department managers and examination of contractual agreements. [See Recent Vendor Contracts folder.] Also reviewed were the overarching methodologies for managing vendor relationships; the process for ensuring alignment with the university’s mission; and processes for continuing, changing, or discontinuing relationships with vendors.

An analysis of recent contractual agreements for several products documented the processes used to ensure appropriate content, rigor, and consistency with the mission. These agreements vary depending on the nature of the product. After sourcing and vetting prospective vendors, the university determines the most appropriate contractor and develops a contractual agreement for a product that is appropriate to the university. Once a product is received from the vendor, it is evaluated internally to ensure that it meets institutional standards. If the product seems acceptable in terms of content, rigor, and consistency, the first step is to implement the new course or application in a controlled pilot study. If the study is successful, then the product will be implemented where appropriate within the university.

Assessment follows product implementation. Strayer determines whether the product is meeting or exceeding institutional expectations, or needs to be modified or revised in concert with the vendor. If the product is acceptable, the university continues to benchmark with comparable or new products to determine whether upgrades or new products are required to meet ever-evolving institutional needs or the changing needs of our students. New technology or content from an external company goes through several review cycles prior to deployment. The Instructional Design and Technology Department reviews the product in four main areas:

1. End-to-end user experience from both the faculty and student standpoints
2. Technical integration into the learning management system
3. Accessibility and 508 compliance
4. Whether the content and technology address the known gap or intended goal

An example of a product that recently went through this process was Yellowdig, a platform that allows students to collaborate with one another in a way that is similar to Pinterest. This method seems more natural to students and offers enhancements over the traditional Blackboard collaboration tools. The product was tested in a few sections of CRJ100 in the fall 2015 quarter. During the pilot, we noticed an increase in student activity and in the quality of the discussion posts. We also received positive feedback from the faculty teaching the courses. During this first quarter of piloting, we identified some new challenges with the product and worked closely with Yellowdig to address the issues. In the winter 2016 quarter we expanded the pilot and continued to receive positive feedback. Currently, we are finishing our third quarter of using the product and determining implementation options.

Although academic leaders drive the identification and adoption of new products to enhance curriculum, instruction, student support, and technology, the working group discovered that faculty are infrequently engaged or consulted in this process. Because faculty are the end users of the products adopted, they should consult on products that will impact
curriculum and instruction as they do on textbook adoptions. Therefore, we suggest that a group of faculty be trained on evaluating external vendor products and brought into the process at appropriate points.
In the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan two foundational pillars Educational Access and Student Success directly address Standards 8 and 9. The Educational Access pillar describes goals to provide opportunities to a diverse student body and to offer multiple modalities of instruction and relevant academic programs that enable students to achieve their professional goals. The commitment to making higher education affordable for our students is addressed, as is the commitment to helping students better understand and appropriately manage their finances. In admissions, there is a clear focus on ethical behavior, transparency, and institutional integrity.

In the Student Success pillar, the strategic plan addresses improvements to enhance existing services with new activities to create a comprehensive, service-based student support program. Goals and objectives focus on the student experience within the physical and online classroom, and in other university contexts. The plan’s focus is to improve student satisfaction and make strides in improving continuation, retention, and graduation rates.

In Theme 3, we acknowledge that admissions and enrollment practices, policies, and processes, and the support services provided to students once they are enrolled, are strongly linked to retention and student success.

The university also acknowledges the importance of general education (Standard 12) in student success. Strayer uses the term “general studies” to describe its range of courses and support services that focus on the core competencies that the university expects students to acquire: communication skills, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, information literacy, ethical behavior, and professional competence.

These competencies, embedded in many undergraduate and some graduate courses, align with the mission, central values, program goals, and course objectives of the university’s degree offerings. General studies courses also are designed to broaden students’ perspectives and challenge their assumptions, and to serve as a foundation for student success in more advanced courses.

To acknowledge the particular importance of these standards in ensuring student success, the steering committee grouped admissions and retention, student support, and general education under Theme 3: Ensuring Student Success.
Chapter 12: Admissions, Retention, and Student Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals.

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.

The working group charged with evaluating Standard 8 began by reviewing the strategic plan, the Strayer catalog, and Viewbooks to ensure that policies and program descriptions are mission-appropriate and accurate. Job aids created for employees who work in admissions functions were evaluated to ensure that the policies and procedures are accurate and that compliance with appropriate policies was emphasized.

Strayer employed an external company to evaluate and provide information about the compliance of admissions officers with policies and procedures through a “mystery shopper” program. Data from this program were examined to determine areas for improvement and used for training purposes. The working group evaluated the data to ensure compliance with Department of Education and Strayer standards relative to student financial services processes, and confirmed that the student success coaches, campus deans, and others use appropriate student progress data to encourage, support, and advise students.

The methodology also involved a review of the periodic federal and state audit criteria and results, a review of the quarterly internal audit criteria and results, and a review of internal policies and operating procedures measured against prescribed standards. The working group also analyzed relevant student survey data.

The Standard 9 working group began with an examination of the fundamental elements of student support services. Using these standards as a guide, the working group created a comprehensive list of services and resources available at Strayer University that provided evidence of student support. The strategic plans, student handbook, catalog, and various quarterly and annual reports also were examined. The team also discussed functions, roles, and leadership of the units or services that directly support student success.

The working groups found that some of the assigned research questions duplicated information included in the responses to the fundamental elements of the Standards. Only those research questions requiring additional study are included in this report.

Conclusions:

Compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 8 is a priority at Strayer University. We ensure that admissions processes, policies, and procedures are clear and useful to prospective students in making educational decisions, that students who are identified as needing remediation receive it, and that prior learning and transfer credit are fairly evaluated. Both the 2011–2015 and the 2015–2020 Strategic Plans list goals and objectives related to the Educational Access pillar, and progress toward achieving these goals and objectives is reported at the quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees. The goals and objectives are also reviewed in an annual progress report conducted by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), most recently in December 2015. [See
Strategic Plans, Appendix B; IEC Strategic Plan Annual Report.]

Related to Standard 9, Strayer University is deeply committed to fostering student support services that contribute to the academic and professional success of students, as noted in the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. Strayer has implemented services and resources that are specific to the needs of our students, provided in a timely manner, and delivered in multiple modalities. Student services are appropriately communicated, assessed, and evaluated with attention to using collected data as a means to reinvest in and strengthen our model.

Recommendation:
Although the university has adopted several strategies and tools to support students, and collects student usage data, detailed assessment of the effectiveness of student services on academic achievement is lacking. The team concluded that studies should be undertaken to correlate usage with retention, continuation, and student satisfaction rates.

Suggestions:
1. Direct, specific, and targeted intervention for struggling students has assisted in improving student outcomes. The university should conduct short-term and long-term assessment of the effectiveness of coaches and advisors to ensure the optimal ratio of coaches/advisors to students for improving student outcomes.
2. Embed career-relevant content into curricula and evaluate its impact on student and alumni satisfaction.

Admissions (Standard 8) Fundamental Elements

Developed and implemented admissions policies that support and reflect the mission.

Strayer’s mission for more than 120 years has been to make higher education accessible to adult learners. The 2015–2020 Strategic Plan includes a vision statement relative to the Educational Access pillar: “We make post-secondary higher education available to a diverse population of qualified adult learners.”

The plan describes goals to provide access and to offer multiple modalities of instruction, relevant academic programs, and student support services that enable students to achieve their professional goals. It addresses the commitment to making higher education affordable for our students as well as the commitment to helping students better understand and appropriately manage their finances. An important focus of the strategic plan is building a comprehensive, service-based student support program. Goals and objectives emphasize the student experience both within the classroom and in other contexts, as well as improvements in student continuation, retention, and graduation rates.

[See Appendix B.]

Admissions policies, found in the catalog (both print and online versions) and on the Strayer intranet, support and reflect the mission of the institution. These policies include basis of admission, attendance, English and math readiness, transfer credit, and grade requirements. [See 2015–2016 Catalog, pp. 15–29.]

Admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions.

As an open access institution committed to student success, Strayer strives to provide prospective students with information needed to
make informed choices about their educational options. Undergraduate and graduate students must understand admissions policies, tuition and fee requirements, remedial education requirements, transfer credit options, program requirements, and expected learning outcomes. The primary source of important information for prospective students is the Strayer Catalog, which is available online and in print at Strayer campuses. [See Strayer Catalog, Admissions section.]

Admissions officers also provide information to prospective students about admissions policies and criteria, and offer useful material on admissions requirements, financial aid, program requirements, transfer credit options, alternative credit options, and so on. Job aids have been designed to assist admissions officers in providing details to students regarding specific programs of study as well as admissions processes, such as the interview checklist (to ensure all information is communicated) and instructions for using DocuSign (for students not physically at the campus when enrolling) and Strong Start, a Strayer-built program designed to promote new student success.

To ensure adherence to the policies, new admissions officers participate in mandatory training focused on policies and appropriate practices in informing and serving prospective students. The admissions officers participate in coaching sessions in which their understanding of admissions policies and procedures is evaluated. In addition, new admissions officers receive a workbook containing all admissions practices and policies. Strayer evaluates the performance of admissions personnel in complying with prescribed policies and procedures as fully described in response to the Standard 8 research question later in this chapter.

Programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet qualifications achieve the expected learning goals and outcomes.

Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including required placement or diagnostic testing.

When prospective students seek admission, qualified personnel provide materials and discuss the expected learning goals and higher education outcomes. All admissions requirements are made available on the Strayer.edu website, in the catalog [strayer.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2015-2016/Catalog], and in Viewbooks available to enrolling students. [See Viewbook Example.]

Because of changing enrollment preferences and progress in closing the achievement gap between campus and online developmental education students, Strayer is amending its developmental education policy. Students arriving at Strayer with no previous college transfer credit are evaluated for proficiency in college-level English before enrolling in their first course(s). Moreover, students who expect transfer credits for college-level English and Mathematics may enroll in select credit bearing courses while awaiting transfer credits.

Students have one attempt at the English McCann assessment and will place into credit bearing courses or developmental education courses after that attempt. As described in chapter 10, The Math McCann assessment will be deferred from the admission process but is required prior to the student’s second term at Strayer.

Each new student is assigned a coach who assists in the transition to college. The coach provides an overview of the student website; advises on using the Strong Start program; guides the student in purchasing needed books and materials; and discusses options such as the College
Level Examination Program (CLEP), Proporo self-paced online courses, StraighterLine classes, tutoring services, coaching, and advising.

Strayer has created a new first year experience (FYE) program that is designed to help students with little to no previous college experience become more successful transitioning into the university and successfully completing their first year of study. The new FYE has four key design elements:

1. All students must take Foundations of Success (FOS100) as their first course. This research and writing course requires students to develop a success plan. Lessons and exercises are designed to motivate student to diligently apply themselves to their studies and to understand the connection between effort and positive results.

2. To create a support system, the students’ FOS100 instructors become their coaches for the entire first year.

3. All students are assigned to cohorts and take all of their first year classes together to create a sense of community.

Both oral and written communication skills are extensively addressed during the first two quarters of enrollment.

The new first year experience has been piloted in selected campuses throughout the university and at our global campus. The results have positively impacted student learning outcome metrics including improved work ethics, success in credit math courses, and improved course completion and continuation rates.

One of the pillars of the strategic plan, Student Success, includes goals around improving the one-term passing rate as well as one-year persistence rates. The FYE for new students is designed to improve both of these metrics. Currently, newly enrolled students at campuses and online receive timely first-quarter advising. Coaches and Academic Services administrators follow up with those who are at mid-term risk. [See 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, Appendix B]

Statements of expected learning outcomes and information on assessment results available to prospective students.

Statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, are available to prospective students. Viewbooks provide an overview of each program offered, including core components, concentration components, specialized accreditation, the application process, and system requirements for online students. Program outcomes also are provided, as in the following example: “The Computer Security Management concentration is likewise aligned to the program outcomes of critical analysis, ethics, technical acumen, technical analysis, technical communication, technology competence, and technology leadership.” Learning outcome data for individual courses are not provided to prospective students; however, enrolled students have access to the expected learning outcomes for each course which are specifically described in their courses guides. [See Strayer Catalog; Viewbook; Course Guide Examples.]

Accurate and comprehensive information and guidance regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds.

The Student Financial Services team provides accurate information and appropriate guidance to students regarding ways to finance their education. Financial aid information is also included in the Strayer catalog and on the university’s website. [See Strayer Catalog, pp. 23–29; Strayer.edu.] Such information includes tuition charges; payment requirements;
no-show, add, drop, and withdrawal feels; refund policies; and special information applicable to students who reside in certain states. Also provided is information about federal financial aid, Title IV funding, tuition reimbursement, loans, grants, corporate discounts, payment plans, and the Graduation Fund scholarship program.

New and continuing students have access to a Student Financial Services specialist on campus or online through a 1-800 toll-free number. The specialist walks the new student through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. The student applies for financial aid for three quarters. This assistance includes help in completing the FAFSA form as well as providing information regarding loans, grants, scholarships, and employee-funded tuition assistance.

New and returning students who are applying for financial aid spend time with a Student Financial Services specialist. The specialist counsels students about financial aid options (including responsible borrowing), responds to questions, and assists with the FAFSA and Student Needs Analysis Profile questionnaires and worksheets. Each student who receives financial aid has an individualized financial worksheet that illustrates repayment options and the financial ramifications of taking more financial aid than the cost of attendance requires. The university also employs proactive communication regarding aggregate borrowing limits. Students receive email notifications when they reach 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of their aggregate borrowing limits.

Strayer also provides short educational videos in both English and Spanish for students who wish to review information learned in their financial counseling sessions. Throughout the quarter, students receive informational email messages that are tailored to their specific situation, for example, Pell grants, federal Direct Loans, military/VA benefits, employee-funded tuition assistance, the Graduation Fund, or other scholarships. [See Sample Financial Aid Worksheet; brochures; Must Know messages.]

Published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college-level learning.

The Strayer University catalog and website describe policies on undergraduate and graduate transfer credit, experiential learning credit, credit by examination, and credit from international institutions. Procedures for initiating a credit review also are explained. [See Strayer Catalog, Admissions section; Strayer.edu.] An unofficial transcript evaluation service is offered for prospective students wishing to better understand how many credits will transfer from their former institution prior to enrollment. The university uses an outside transcript evaluation service to analyze requests for the transfer of credit from international institutions. To ensure that students have a thorough and efficient review of their transcript requests, the transcript department reports daily on progress made in transcript processing and in posting credits to student academic plans.

Ongoing assessment of student success, including but not limited to, retention that matches the attributes of admitted students and the institutional mission and programs, and reflects findings in admissions, remediation, and other related policies.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for providing assessment reports on student outcomes to academic leaders, faculty, and others for review. How these data are used is described in Chapter 14 (Institutional Assessment and Chapter 15, Assessment of Student Learning. One metric used a calculation that measures credit hours earned (CHE) divided by credit hours attempted (CHA). The
Outcomes by Program report takes the form of a table that indicates five important metrics for retention (measured year over year on a quarterly basis): start rate; drop rate; at risk rate; CHE:CHA; and continuation rate. We have seen considerable improvements in all categories between the 2013 winter quarter and 2016 spring quarter. [See CHE:CHA Chart 2013–2015; Outcomes by Program Report]

Student Support Services (Standard 9)
Fundamental Elements

Student support services appropriate to student needs, reflective of the mission, consistent with learning expectations, and available regardless of place or method of delivery.

Procedures to equitably and sensitively address the varied spectrum of student needs through direct service or referral.

Qualified professionals to supervise and provide student support services and programs.

As an open access institution with many first-generation college students, Strayer recognizes the unique needs of its student population whether they enroll at a campus or online through the Global Campus. Support services are available to students regardless of modality of instruction. Two pillars of the current strategic plan, Student Success and Customer Service, specifically address support services for students. Student services also were a major focus of the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan. [See Strategic Plans, Appendix B.]

In the current strategic plan, Goal 1 of the Student Success pillar mandates that Strayer provide students with appropriate and comprehensive support that allows them to achieve success. Objective 1.1 is to provide an effective and consistent academic advising process and program for undergraduate and graduate students, focusing on new student preparation, identification of at-risk students, ensuring satisfactory academic progress, and assistance with course scheduling.

Various departments and areas provide support services including: Student Academic Services, Office of Student Affairs, Student Financial Services, Admissions, Student and Faculty Resources (including the Library), the Registrar’s Office, and Information Technology. Each of these departments is staff by qualified professionals who have the knowledge, expertise and experience to provide outstanding support services to Strayer students. [See Representative Position Descriptions and Resumes.]

Because Strayer acknowledges that many students, especially undergraduates without prior college credit, need tutoring in a variety of subjects, the university provides online services through Tutor.com (including on-call technical writing assistance) and also offers campus-based tutoring. Students may obtain additional tutoring support from faculty using the Collaborate feature of Blackboard or GoToTraining; and live webinars, videos, interactive software, and downloads.

Other tools include Grammarly@edu (an automated grammar and revision tool for academic writing); SafeAssign (a tool that helps students maintain academic integrity); and Online 101 (a Blackboard demonstration to assist students in understanding and reviewing functionality in Blackboard). Academic advising, information literacy, technical assistance, career services, disability services, and financial counseling are made available to online and campus-based students. Opportunities to create social networks at the university are made possible through approximately 30 student organizations coordinated by the Office of Student Affairs.

Evidence that the support is comprehensive and appropriate to the mission is found throughout
the self-study report. Students are apprised of support services via the catalog, the student handbook, the student web portal (iCampus), weekly communications via the Student Academic Services team, campus-based activities developed and carried out by the staff of the learning resource centers, and regular quarterly communications from the Office of Student Affairs, as described in the responses to the Standard 9 research questions. [See University Catalog, pp. XX; Student Handbook.]

**Appropriate student advisement procedures and processes**

The university has consistently provided high quality advising services. At the beginning of 2016, Strayer undertook a full review of academic advising services. This resulted in an updated academic advising policy, which Strayer adopted on January 29, 2016. [See Academic Advising Policy] Campus Deans are responsible for providing academic advising services to students in accordance with the policy. During the winter 2016 term, Campus Deans underwent training in preparation to launch revamped advising services during the spring 2016 term. Key features of the newly implemented policy included enhanced new student advising, Alert Advising, and Graduation advising. [See Alert Advising Launch.pptx]

Strayer tracks academic advising activity within its information management system, Strayer360. Campus Deans record advising activity within the student’s information record for future reference. Recent changes to the academic advising policy also prompted changes to the information management system to appropriately capture advising activity. These enhancements allow the university to obtain data about advising activity for later analysis and evaluation. Following the first full quarter of implementation of Alert Advising and revamped new student advising the university observed statistically significant improvements in start rates, drop rates, attendance, mid-term at-risk rates, and credit hours earned. [See Course Stat 1164 Pivot, third tab] Outcomes improvements for the spring 2016 term are also likely driven by recent changes related to classroom and faculty strategy. The university is attempting to develop additional tests to isolate the impact of academic advising activity.

During the spring 2016 term, the university also made an initial attempt to measure student satisfaction with academic advising services by adding an academic advising question to the Voice of the Student Survey, resulting in an overall rating of 8.4 out of 10. [See Voice of the Student NPS results - 5.3.16] Likewise, the Student Satisfaction Survey as a whole shows overall improvement in satisfaction for new and continuing student advising for both graduates and undergraduates. [See OIRAE, SSS2015—Multiyear Trend Tables 2012–2015 (July 2015); OIRAE, Student Satisfaction Survey 2015, Tables 26 and 32.]

In addition to academic advising services provided by Campus Deans, Strayer also provides success coaches within the Student Academic Services department, which was created in 2013. Each student is assigned to a success coach who will help them navigate through enrollment and class registration, show students how to use our online education tool, iCampus, help students set educational, career, and life goals among other things. This change of organizational structure has helped students realize greater success inside and outside of the classroom. Usage statistics will be used as a baseline for future effectiveness analysis. [See OIRAE (Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Evaluation)—Results from SSS15 (July 21, 2015).]
Reasonable and widely disseminated procedures for equitably addressing student complaints and grievances.

Records of student complaints and grievances.

In the event a student needs to file a complaint or grievance, the Strayer catalog and student handbook provide detailed instructions on the complaint resolution processes. Procedures for filing different types of complaints and ensuring timely resolution of grievances are described in the response to a Standard 9 research question. [See Grievance Procedures, University Catalog and Student Handbook.]

The tracking and timely resolution of academic complaints was significantly enhanced in 2011 with the implementation of the Strayer 360 learning management system. Using this system, students create “cases” that are automatically routed to OSA. Records of student complaints and grievances are maintained in the Strayer 360 system and may be retrieved as needed. This system enables in-depth analysis of the type and frequency of complaints received. OSA personnel use this information to design information sessions and webinars for faculty and staff.

Policies and procedures for safe and secure maintenance of student records.

Published and implemented policies for the release of student information.

It is Strayer University’s policy to administer its educational programs, both on-grounds and online, in a manner that is fair, reasonable, academically sound, and in accordance with the appropriate regulations and criteria of its board members, accrediting agency, and federal and state laws and regulations. Strayer observes the provisions of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to ensure full protection of all student records. A student must complete a FERPA release form and have it on file in the University Registrar’s Office in order to have his or her educational records released. In addition, the university has converted to a randomly generated student identification number (in lieu of social security number) to identify student records. Policies for the release of student information are published in the catalog and the student handbook. [See Catalog, p. XX; Handbook, p. XX]

Ongoing assessment of student support services and utilization of assessment results for improvement.

As addressed in the Standard 9 research question, Strayer engages in regular assessment of metrics on continuation rates, first-term persistence, advising, tutoring, and alumni and student satisfaction. The 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report and the president’s reports to the Board of Trustees describe programs, services, and initiatives that have resulted from assessment studies. Examples include standardization of advising training and procedures, creation of new student support positions (student success coaches), adoption of support tools such as Tutor.com and Online 101, and pilot programs such as the Foundations of Success (FOS) course. [See Strategic Plan Close-Out Report; President’s Reports to the Board of Trustees; OIRAE—Results from SSS15; Student Satisfaction Survey; Voice of the Student Survey.]

Student Admissions and Retention: Research Questions

How does Strayer ensure that students who are admitted to the University are qualified for admission? How do we ensure that applicants are fully informed about the educational and financial requirements, program options, modalities of instruction, and academic support services available to them?
To answer this question, the working group evaluated admissions processes and procedures, compliance, and internal controls. Compliance is considered to be actions taken to meet the requirements or expectations of external regulatory authorities. Internal controls are established to ensure that the university adheres to its established policies and procedures consistent with its mission and goals. For example, Strayer’s Internal Audit Department ensures that campus personnel follow established procedures and evaluate student qualifications for admissions based on the university’s standards.

Online and campus admissions officers are required to collect basis-of-admission documentation for all new and readmitted students and to scan the documentation into the document management system (Singularity). If the basis file is determined to be valid and complete, the campus may admit/matriculate the student directly into a program. If, however, the basis documentation is not sufficient or complete, or the campus is unsure, the student is admitted in “awaiting basis of admission” (ABOA) status. For such students, the Office of the Registrar will review basis documentation subsequently collected by the campus once it has been entered into the electronic system. The Office of the Registrar then makes determinations on the sufficiency of basis and is responsible for putting ABOA students into the program once basis is met. ABOA students have until the end of the first quarter to submit sufficient basis, unless a state regulation dictates a shorter time period. As a secondary check, Internal Audit conducts quarterly audits to ensure that students enrolled at Strayer have appropriate basis documentation on file.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education conducted four periodic program reviews (each on a different campus) during August and September of 2014. The focus of the reviews was the primary eligibility items and a subset of the Department’s “critical elements.” The reviews comprised a statistical random sampling of 30 student records from each of the four campuses for examination of students receiving Title IV funding, as well as face-to-face interviews with program managers and senior leaders about various processes, including admissions. There were no admissions-related findings. [See Department of Education Audit Analysis; Final Determination Letters.]

The university meets state requirements (where applicable) for basis of admission, verified through periodic internal audits as depicted in the internal audit analysis. Strayer admits students who reside in nearly all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and is subject to different admissions standards and policies in many jurisdictions. In some states, there are no applicable admissions regulations because Strayer has only an online presence.

Strayer is subject to regulations covering admissions standards, policies, and practices primarily in states in which Strayer has a physical campus or instructional site. The university is subject to scheduled or unscheduled campus audits of admissions documentation taken from randomly selected students’ files, as well as reviews of admissions policies and procedures. The states of Florida, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, and Tennessee regularly conduct audits. While state-level audits have occasionally turned up minor deficiencies in a student’s admissions paperwork, Strayer has resolved any and all compliance issues to the satisfaction of each state. Our legal department maintains documentation of these state-level audits. [See State Audit Examples: 2015.1.5 Palm Beach Gardens (Florida) Department of Education Audit Results; 5.6.25 letter from State Council of Higher Education for Virginia closing out Henrico audit.]
Online and campus-based applicants have two primary sources for their information about Strayer. The first is through the Admissions tab of the Strayer.edu website, which provides information on our programs, admissions requirements, financial aid, accreditation, and credit-earning options. The second is through our admissions officers (AOs). AOs are centrally trained and evaluated prior to activation of their role with prospective students. We have two processes to ensure that they are presenting information to the prospective student in the best way possible. First, we have a process called Live Observe, whereby a manager listens to calls or, for students who are on campus observes live interviews. The manager coaches the AO on opportunities for improvement.

The second evaluation, which used to be through a mystery shopper process, was upgraded and is now done through the Genesys system. Using Genesys, the university records all inbound and outbound phone calls and the manager randomly selects calls to review. The manager then provides the AO with appropriate feedback to ensure that we are providing accurate information in areas such as finance, cost, available programs, and modalities of instruction.

The working group concluded that resources on the intranet site need to be regularly updated so that admissions officers have the most current information. A regular review process and a designated process owner would ensure consistency.

To what extent do we measure and understand the drivers of retention, and to what extent do we design, implement, and evaluate strategies to maximize retention and student success?

In fall 2013 the university expanded its efforts to examine the drivers of student continuation and graduation. The findings were that in order to increase graduation, we had to increase continuation. In order to increase continuation we had to increase CHE:CHA. In order to increase CHE:CHA, we needed a lower percentage of students at-risk at the mid-term. In order to have fewer students at-risk at the mid-term, we needed to reduce the drop-rate and improve the attendance and start rates. In order to improve attendance and start rates, Strayer needed to determine ways to motivate students. We also determined that students who were successful attended at very high rates and submitted their work. In other words, they were engaged.

The institution subsequently developed extremely robust analytical capabilities to measure the level of each student’s engagement in each class. Components driving this strategy include a partnership with Civitas Learning, the development of internal analytical capabilities, and training and development of faculty in the student engagement process. Also developed were daily/weekly/quarterly reports to measure all facets of student engagement at the student and course level. Report examples include:

- Civitas dashboard (daily; faculty-facing)
- Course Stat Report (weekly for academic leadership)
- Outcomes by Program (quarterly for academic leadership)
- Alert advising dashboard (weekly for academic leadership)

Various faculty and staff members utilize information from these and other reports to make decisions that will help drive student engagement.

What evidence is used to ensure that academic and financial advising are effective?
A review of research projects was conducted to better understand how we could evaluate the effectiveness of academic advising separately from other initiatives and services designed to promote student success. Financial advising programs were reviewed separately, and the data available were more conclusive than the data on academic advising.

The Student Financial Services team provides individual entrance counseling as well as personalized financial worksheets for each student. Helping students understand how to manage student loans is important. Strayer sends email communications to students when they reach 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of their aggregate borrowing limit. Since these programs have been implemented, there has been improvement in the cohort default rate and a reduction in student complaint escalations internally and to the Department of Education.

The working group was unable to isolate academic advising as a variable to evaluate effectiveness because there are several initiatives underway to improve student success, retention, and satisfaction. All key student success metrics have been improving for several years. Available data do not disaggregate academic advising from other factors. The working group concluded that Strayer should begin to collect targeted data on the impact of academic advising on student success. The university should assess the effectiveness of academic advising to determine the impact on student continuation, retention, and academic success.

**Student Support Services: Research Questions**

*How effectively does the University communicate policies and procedures, and promote its student support services to both online and campus-based students?*

With multiple modalities for course delivery and an on-grounds footprint covering numerous states, effective communication is fundamental for student success. The working group examined the organizational structure and modes of communication as the basis for assessing how important information is communicated to both online and on-grounds students. The team also reviewed publications and other tools used for communicating with students. The working group concluded that Strayer effectively communicates with students both online and at campuses.

Strayer provides students with appropriate information using email, phone, text, iCampus notifications, Blackboard, and Citrix GoToMeeting. The student information portal, iCampus, is updated frequently to ensure that students have ready access to the academic and support information they need. Through iCampus, students have real-time access to their financial accounts, a link to the learning management system, and the ability to submit help tickets for assistance in a number of areas. With the implementation of student success coach initiative each student has a direct contact who will address issues such as orientation, academic advising, tutoring, and career services. This change of organizational structure has helped streamline communications. Usage statistics will be used as a baseline for future effectiveness analysis. [See OIRAE—Results from SSS15 (July 21, 2015).]

Student Financial Services (SFS) was centralized in 2012–2013. This team handles all student questions regarding financial aid and is not involved in academic support or registration. The volume of communication that the SFS team has with students is significant. [See SFS Call Data 2014 and 2015.] Since the centralization of services and communications, there has been improvement in the cohort default rate.
and a reduction in student complaint escalations internally and to the Department of Education.

The Student Academic Services (SAS) team plans, creates, and distributes global emails on targeted topics. The first global email of the quarter is a welcome email with information about important dates for the quarter, resources available, attendance requirements, and how to reach a professor. Before midterms and finals, information regarding resources such as tutoring and studying tips is shared with students. Motivational and work-life balance emails are also sent throughout the quarter and refer to informative videos available on iCampus, the Strayer Buzz blog, and YouTube. The SAS team also sends official notifications such as satisfactory academic progress (SAP) notifications and SAP appeal instructions.

To increase student engagement, SAS sends out at least one global email per week. [See SAS Sample Email to Students 2014.] Recipients are filtered as needed when the message is for a specific group of students, such as campus-based, undergraduate, or graduate students. SAS tracks the open rate of the emails to determine effectiveness of the medium. Open rate information and email delivery effectiveness data are obtained through the Eloqua platform and Return Path (an email data solution provider). [See Emails to SAS and SFS Students fall 2016; Eloqua Report.]

The SAS team is also interested in tracking the effectiveness of the message. If an email is sent promoting support services such as tutoring or SOAR (Student Outreach, Assistance, Resources) student assistance from ACI Specialty Benefits, usage of these services is monitored for any increase. Feedback from academic departments during biweekly meetings is also considered in evaluating the effectiveness of our email communications.

The SAS team continuously explores ways to assess and track the effectiveness of the message being communicated to students and adjusts communications based upon the needs of our students. Because SAS and SFS use the same communication platforms to reach students, the reporting capabilities provide overall reporting. [See Emails SAS and SFS Students January 2014 to June 2015.]

The success coaches use sophisticated phone and email tracking dashboards to record and track the primary means of communication, which are emails and phone calls. [See Dashboard Template.] In 2015, based solely on the 844-SAS-Help phone line, SAS received 130,477 incoming calls from students (see Table 10). The coaches made 493,122 outgoing phone calls to students. The average conversation was 4 minutes, 7 seconds. On average, incoming calls were answered in 21 seconds.
TABLE 10: STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES PHONE DATA, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Incoming Calls to 844-SAS-HELP</th>
<th>Outbound Calls</th>
<th>Average Call Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>Average to Speed Answer (Seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>13,859</td>
<td>49,872</td>
<td>04:11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2015</td>
<td>7,830</td>
<td>48,410</td>
<td>04:25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>15,705</td>
<td>38,590</td>
<td>04:23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>14,568</td>
<td>52,483</td>
<td>04:05</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>9,413</td>
<td>42,810</td>
<td>03:56</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>15,570</td>
<td>35,962</td>
<td>04:21</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>10,298</td>
<td>36,083</td>
<td>03:58</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2015</td>
<td>8,105</td>
<td>38,583</td>
<td>04:14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2015</td>
<td>11,487</td>
<td>39,402</td>
<td>04:09</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2015</td>
<td>8,707</td>
<td>43,001</td>
<td>03:47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>5,402</td>
<td>30,985</td>
<td>03:54</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>9,533</td>
<td>36,941</td>
<td>04:08</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL 2015</td>
<td>130,477</td>
<td>493,122</td>
<td>04:07</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What evidence demonstrates that the University regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its student support services and uses the assessment for continuous improvement?

Strayer tracks student satisfaction using a number of methods, including Net Promoter Scores from the Voice of the Student survey, student satisfaction surveys, town hall meetings, and alumni surveys. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) is responsible for disseminating survey data to academic leaders. Recognizing that student engagement is an important component of academic success, Strayer now has 30 active student organizations. Strayer also offers students the opportunity to join several professional organizations, such as the Association of Information Technology Professionals and the American Society for Public Administration.

Student satisfaction is an important statistic to track because it has been shown to correlate positively with student retention. Recent survey data obtained by OIE revealed that many of Strayer’s students with high grade point averages are leaving the university. Because none of the current tools focus on this population, OIE created a new survey to determine the factors that influence this trend. In summer 2015, OIE completed the Non-Returning Student Survey. [See Non-Returning Student Report.]

Based on its analysis of the effectiveness and assessment of student support services, the working group concluded that Strayer has adopted a number of strategies and tools to support students and collect student usage date. However, detailed assessment of the effectiveness of student services on academic achievement is lacking. Studies should be undertaken to
correlate usage with retention, continuation, and student satisfaction rates.

The university is in the process of developing measures to isolate the effectiveness of academic advising, student coaching, and tutoring. Steps to date include:

• Utilizing technology to begin analyzing online tutoring data to drive future strategy
• Developing a report to give insight into advising activity and type by campus
• The creation of Faculty and Student Resources team, led by a vice president, to focus on maximizing use of student support resources. Data will be collected and analyzed as it becomes available.
• Comparison of advising data to student outcomes data
• System adjustments to more accurately capture advising activity

How does the institution ensure timely resolution of student complaints for both online and campus-based students?

In the event a Strayer University student finds that he or she needs to file a complaint, the Strayer catalog and student handbook provide detailed instructions on the complaint resolution processes. [See Grievance Procedures, University Catalog and Student Handbook.]

As described in the response to the fundamental elements, tracking and timely resolution was enhanced with the implementation of the Strayer 360 enterprise resource management system. Complaints fall into several categories as described below.

**Academic, Nonacademic, and Academic Integrity Complaints**

Academic grievances may involve final grade disputes, academic integrity issues, or concerns about the quality of instruction. Students appealing final grades must contact the course instructor within 10 days of the end of the quarter or of the day the grade was awarded. Once a dispute is received, the faculty member has up to 10 business days to investigate and respond to the student. Students may then appeal to OSA within 10 working days of the disputed response. Prior to 2015, campus-based disputes were handled by the local campus, and only disputes from online courses were escalated to OSA. The procedure was changed to provide centralized tracking and ensure timely responsiveness. OSA must investigate and respond to the student within the timeline outlined in the policy, and OSA’s decision is final.

Student complaints related to harassment, discrimination, or unfair treatment are filed directly with OSA and are investigated and responded to according to timelines described in the complaint resolution procedures. Both students and faculty may report allegations of academic dishonesty to OSA using the online reporting system. After initial review by the OSA team, allegations may be reported to the Academic Integrity Committee, and once the investigation is complete, OSA notifies parties of the outcome of the investigation including sanctions as outlined in the procedures. Students may appeal the decision to the provost, who must respond to the student in a timely manner as outlined in the appeal process. The decision of the provost is final.

**Quality of Instruction Complaints**

Procedures for filing complaints about instructional quality have been revised to ensure timely resolution and uniformity in tracking. Such
complaints are filed with the campus dean or success coach, who guide the student through appropriate processes and ensure that timelines are met. Students can escalate complaints to OSA by creating a case in the online tracking system or by emailing studentaffairs@strayer.edu. OSA has 10 working days from receipt of the escalated complaint to do further investigation and provide the student a response in writing.

Financial Grievances

Complaints may be filed in writing within 60 days of the occurrence and must receive a response from the university within 30 calendar days of receipt. The appeals process includes specific timelines for responses from Strayer representatives. Financial complaints from students are tracked in the Student Dashboard.

The working group concluded that the university’s grievance processes are fair, consistently applied, and that data from these reports are used to improve services to students.
Chapter 13: General Education (Standard 12)

The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

The working group charged with Standard 12 (General Education) examined how Strayer University's program (internally referred to as General Studies) helps students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

Research surrounding the university’s compliance with the fundamental elements shaped key guiding questions for the group’s analysis, which covered three main areas ensuring that: general studies is central to the Strayer’s mission and goals and the program adequately supports students’ work in their majors or concentrations; the outcomes of this general education program are adequately assessed and measured; and, the results of those assessments are used in the improvement of the curriculum.

The research questions specific to this standard addressed the effectiveness of the university’s general education programs, improvements that have been made since the periodic review, and the extent to which general education skills and competencies are incorporated into upper-division courses in the university’s undergraduate degree programs.

The group began its analysis by reviewing the strategic plan [see Appendix B], the university catalog, documents from the 2010 and 2015 program review process, data from both internal and nationally normed assessments, and other relevant documents. Each fundamental element was evaluated for compliance and opportunities for improvements.

Conclusions:

Strayer University maintains a robust program of general education to enhance students’ intellectual growth. Analysis reveals that Strayer University meets the standards set forth in the fundamental elements for Standard 12 within the context of its institutional mission for each of the sections addressed.

Recommendation:

Place additional emphasis on assessing essential skills and general education competencies that are important for student success in upper-division courses and employ these data to make improvement in curricula and instruction.

Suggestions:

1. Adopt a comprehensive assessment tool for use in general studies. Further investigate the discrepancy between current Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS-PP) and Peregrine test results.
2. Undertake a survey of the curriculum in each of the majors to identify how we currently embed critical thinking into the curriculum. Among other things, this survey will help to analyze and assess existing assignments. Further, it is proposed that Strayer should assess student outcomes in critical thinking, using a value-added methodology, so that we can ascertain the extent to which our programs improve critical thinking skills.
3. Incorporate more performance task–style assignments in courses to ensure that students are performing a diverse range of cognitive tasks in our courses.

General Education Fundamental Elements (Standard 12)

A general education program of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth, and equivalent to at least 15 credit hours for associate degree programs and 30 for baccalaureate degrees.

General education requirements that are clearly described in the institution’s official publication.

Skills and abilities developed in general education that are applied in majors or concentrations.

General education that incorporates the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.

Strayer requires that students complete a general studies component of 22.5 quarter hours in each associate degree program and 54 quarter hours for baccalaureate programs. In addition, each associate and baccalaureate program requires 4.5 quarter hours of college composition as part of the core component, for a total of 27 quarter hours for associate degree programs and 58.5 quarter hours for baccalaureate degree programs.

The scope and purpose of general studies at the university is described in the 2015–2016 Strayer Catalog (p. 80). In harmony with Strayer University’s mission, the General Studies program is designed “… to enable adult learners to develop core competencies in communications, critical thinking, collaboration, and quantitative reasoning and to prepare them to ethically address the complex challenges and choices of today’s world.”

Basic general education requirements for each degree program are accurately described in the Strayer catalog, which is posted publically on the university’s website and also is available on the student web portal, iCampus. [See Strayer University 2015–2016 Catalog, pp. 70–145.] Faculty have access to this information on the Strayer intranet for faculty and staff, SUNow.

While the general studies curriculum emphasizes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives, particularly in our sociology, humanities, philosophy, and English courses, specific program outcomes were added during the 2014–2015 program review to enhance this focus, and courses will be revised beginning in fall 2016 to ensure continued alignment with these programmatic goals. [See General Studies Program Review Changes.]

Assessment of general education outcomes within the institution’s overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that assessment is used for curricular improvement.

Strayer conducts regular and rigorous assessment of student learning using both internally devised and nationally normed instruments. Within general studies, multiple courses are selected for assessment and the data gathered from those assessments are used to target courses for changes. In addition to our regular course updates resulting from assessment when necessary the university takes steps to make more dramatic changes to curriculum to improve outcomes, as we did with course summits in November 2013 and May 2014.

In the May 2014 course summit, approximately 60 faculty and academic leaders came together to review and present improvement plans to the president for 17 courses, including 7 general education courses. Short-term strategies and long-term recommendations were discussed for the identified courses, with enhancements and changes to some courses implemented as early as the summer 2014 term. The following general
education courses were discussed in the course summit:

- ENG315
- HUM111
- HUM112
- MAT540
- PSY100
- REL212
- SCI110
- SOC300

Changes made to three courses are illustrative: PSY100, HUM111, and HUM112. These courses received all-new video-based lectures that cover the critical topics for each unit. Top faculty members were chosen as the presenters and were recorded in the “smart classroom” studio. Changes were also made to course guides, some writing assignments, exams, and recommended unit topics in those courses. The changed classes were then monitored to evaluate student learning outcomes, and several courses showed marked improvement in student success, as measured by the ratio of credit hours earned versus credit hours attempted. [See General Education CHE:CHA Ratio Table; Former and Current Course Guides for PSY100, HUM111, and HUM112.] Revision is underway for courses where outcomes did not significantly improve.

The School of General Studies conducts self-evaluations in the form of program reviews. A program review was conducted in 2009–2010, and again in 2014–2015. The purpose of these reviews is to periodically assess the program’s alignment with the university’s mission and goals, its effectiveness, and its integration with degree and concentration offerings. The program review overview document from the most recent (2014–2015) review illustrates how program outcomes were revised to better align programs with institutional mission and strategic goals. [See General Studies Program Outcomes Revisions, Slide 4; Strategic Plan 2011–2015 Close-Out Report, p. 32, Appendix B.]

Institutional requirements assuring that upon degree completion, students are proficient in communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competencies.

The university’s use of nationally normed assessments to evaluate student proficiencies, and related opportunities to improve compliance with this fundamental element are described in the Standard 12 research question. Recently, a number of general education requirements were revised to address the results of our nationally normed assessments, which indicate that students struggle with writing and communication skills. These changes will give students more practice in broadly applicable skills such as written and oral communication and critical thinking. The overall impact of these changes has not yet been evaluated, since they will not go into effect until fall 2016, pending approval by the individual states within which Strayer operates.

These changes also align to the expectations of employers, as indicated by recent research, particularly the 2015 McKinsey Center for Government study Education to Employment: Designing a System That Works mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf.

General Education: Research Questions

How does the University evaluate student achievement of the stated core competencies?
What evidence demonstrates that assessment results are used to improve the curriculum, instruction, and student support services relative to the core competencies?

Strayer University evaluates students’ achievement of core competencies using course-level assessments as well as nationally normed tests. As detailed under Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning), the university uses a robust system of course-level assessments as well as the nationally normed Proficiency Profile from Educational Testing Service (ETS-PP) and the Peregrine exam.

Course-level assessments are the same across all sections of any given course because we use standardized course guides. To grade these assignments, faculty use identical rubrics, which serve a dual role by providing a fair basis for grading and a way to measure core competencies in the context of the course. The rubrics for different assignments, and across different courses, vary according to the level of the course and the nature of the assignment. Typically, at least one of the rubric criteria pertains to writing, and one pertains to information literacy, just to give a concrete example of rubric criteria that align to core competencies. [See HUM111 Course Guide, Assignment 1, p. 29; HUM112 Course Guide, Assignment 1, p. 28.]

The ETS-PP was administered in 2012 to students in SOC300 and in 2013 and 2014 to students in MAT300 and ENG315. These upper-level general education courses were chosen to provide data from a wide range of students, since these courses are taken at different points in their programs. Extra credit was used as an incentive for participation. However, in 2013, additional extra credit was offered to students who scored above the 50th percentile, as an incentive for putting forth their best effort. The basic finding from the ETS-PP results was that student performance on the English, math, and critical thinking scales is below that of other institutions. That basic finding is true regardless of whether students are offered an incentive for performing well. A number of initiatives, detailed in the remainder of this report, have been undertaken since 2013 to address these deficits. [See ETS-PP Fall 2012 Report; President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, June 14, 2014, pp. 3A6–3A7.]

The Peregrine exam is a nationally normed assessment that we have been using every quarter since fall 2012. The exam targets business majors and is incorporated into the capstone course (BUS499). It provides scores on a range of topics that are relevant to business majors, from accounting to marketing. The Peregrine area of Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics maps directly to the university’s core competency of analytical reasoning, which is also an essential program outcome in general education. During the period of testing (fall 2012 through fall 2015), Strayer University students have improved in the analytical reasoning area as well as in all areas of the test. [See Peregrine Fall 2015 Report, BBA tab.]

As shown in Figure 7, total scores improved from 49.7 in fall 2012 to 54.5 in fall 2015.

Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics scores saw the greatest improvement, from 39 in fall 2012 to 53 in fall 2015. Furthermore, Strayer University students performed above average when compared with all other Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) schools: 54.5 (Strayer) compared with 51.5 (ACBSP) for total score, and 53 (Strayer) compared with 46 (ACBSP) for Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics. The improvement in analytical reasoning is clear evidence of the effectiveness of our MAT104 and MAT300 courses. During this period, we
transitional to a new lab-based Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) program in these courses as a result of the initial low scores: MAT104 transitioned to ALEKS in spring 2015 and MAT300 in winter 2014.

Course-level assessments in many general studies classes indicate that students do not perform as well on writing and information literacy. As a result, support structures such as the Virtual Writing Center were created. We also added additional resources such as Grammarly and Tutor.com to assist with writing feedback. Further analysis of students’ writing was completed in an internal study conducted beginning in the fall 2014 quarter and concluding in spring 2015, in which faculty evaluated approximately 1,000 student papers from ENG115 and BUS100 using an independently designed rubric. This study indicated that students struggle with understanding the prompts, as well as with issues involving citation and formal citation style. As a result, instructions for writing assignments were rewritten to provide more clarity, and the new versions are being tested. [See Standard and Pilot Course Guides for BUS100 and ENG115.]

FIGURE 7: PEREGRINE TEST RESULTS

Note: ACBSP = Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs.
Critical thinking is another area we would like to improve. Therefore, as a result of the program review, we’ve added a general education capstone course, SOC450, which is intended to synthesize the skills learned throughout the general education curriculum. This course will be taken in a student’s final year and will incorporate a cumulative general education assessment; the course is slated for development in 2017.

The self-study group has thoroughly analyzed this question, and while we find the university in full compliance with the fundamental elements, we also find opportunities for improvement. We need to identify better comprehensive general education assessment tools. The Council for Aid to Education’s CLA+ was evaluated and found not to be a good fit for us as an institution, so we continue to look for a better option. [See President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, June 2015, pp. 3–14.] Increased focus on critical thinking within courses is an opportunity. We plan to incorporate more performance task–style assignments to ensure that students are performing a diverse range of cognitive tasks in our courses.

**What evidence demonstrates that the University’s general education courses prepare students for upper-level course work in their degree programs? How is assessment used for improvement?**

All of the findings previously discussed regarding our assessment of core competencies in general education are also applicable here. In fact, some evidence, such as the evidence from Peregrine tests, was obtained from evaluation of upper-level classes. Briefly, results for the core competency of writing are mixed. Course-based assessments have generally suggested that student writing ability is reasonably good. However, the results of the ETS-PP, a nationally normed exam, indicate that only about 30% of students are proficient in writing. This compares with an average of about 60% across all baccalaureate institutions.

Assessment of quantitative abilities also gave mixed results. The ETS-PP results indicate that only 22% of students are proficient at the lowest level of math ability that the ETS-PP measures (ETS’s Level 1). This compares with a national average of 53%. On the other hand, on the Peregrine Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics exam, Strayer students exceeded the national average. This seems to be one of our best success stories, with the results improving over time. [See ETS-PP Fall 2012 Report, Table 5; Peregrine Fall 2015 Report, BBA tab.]

Our students do not score well on the ETS-PP’s abstract critical-thinking problems. However, the ETS-PP may not be the best instrument for measuring this ability, since even the national norm shows only 7% of baccalaureate students are proficient. Such a low national norm creates a floor effect that renders the results suspect. Moreover, abstract problems of this nature may not measure the skills that our career-oriented students learn. Further discussion about critical thinking can be found in our discussion of a subsequent research question.

In addition to internal and external assessments, we also have results from Faculty Opinion Polls, which include questions about the readiness of students for courses, broken down by skill set. One final observation bears mentioning. In addition to predetermined survey questions, faculty were invited to answer the following question: What one thing can Strayer do for you to help our students learn and improve their careers? When these answers were classified according to content, the majority of comments (across all disciplines) were about writing. This suggests that developing student writing ability continues to be an area where we have room for improvement. Academic programs are now
collaborating with the Student and Faculty Resources Department to introduce additional training for faculty and support resources for students. [See CE-FOP Fall 2015, One Thing Coded tab.]

This research question revealed opportunities to acquire additional data that will be of value in improving general studies. We should further investigate the discrepancy between our ETS-PP and Peregrine results, and we recommend emphasis on assessing general studies competencies that are important for student success in upper-division courses. While we have broad evidence that the writing ability of students continues to be an area of concern, we need to further identify and employ strategies that will improve student communication skills in writing.

What improvements to the general education curriculum have been made since the periodic review? Has the impact of the changes been assessed? What modifications or further assessments have been implemented or should be considered?

In addition to the program review activity discussed at length above and course summits described earlier in this chapter, the university has continually improved the general education curriculum since the periodic review. As well as having significantly revised nearly all courses, the program has explored a variety of new technologies to help students learn, to bridge gaps in preparedness, and to make full use of the online environment.

**Adaptive Learning Technologies**

Since 2012, Strayer has explored adaptive learning technologies for a variety of general education courses by piloting such approaches in many of our courses. Adaptive learning technologies accommodate a wide range of levels of student preparedness by customizing the course delivery for each individual student. They “meet students where they are” and then guide them through the curriculum. We’ve explored the use of these technologies in math, English, and social sciences.

**ALEKS**

Our most notable successes with adaptive learning technologies have been in the teaching of mathematics using McGraw-Hill’s Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) adaptive software. [See ALEKS.com.] Our first use of ALEKS was undertaken as part of a concerted effort to reform our developmental math course, MAT090. We took a multi-pronged approach to this effort, which involved hiring a corps of full-time faculty dedicated to teaching developmental math courses, utilizing a different placement process than what was previously in effect, and incorporating ALEKS technology.

We assessed the efficacy of ALEKS-based courses during our initial pilot tests of ALEKS and during each step of a gradual changeover to ALEKS. Since several aspects of the curriculum were changing at about the same time, we took care to make only valid comparisons at each stage, by comparing ALEKS courses against non-ALEKS courses. Such comparisons showed that with the use of ALEKS technology, we improved the pass rates by about 15%. [See Course Stat Reports 2012–2016.] Over a period of approximately one year, we eventually converted all MAT090 sections to ALEKS.

Based on our successes in improving the pass rates of students by using ALEKS in MAT090, we decided to incorporate ALEKS into other math classes. It is now used in MAT104 Algebra with Applications; MAT200 Precalculus; and MAT300 Statistics. From the process of moving courses into the ALEKS environment, we learned that there is typically some fine-tuning
necessary to optimize the settings in ALEKS. In the case of MAT104, we piloted the ALEKS version of the course prior to releasing it to the entire university. Data from ALEKS give us an objective index of student learning. We use that information, along with faculty insights, to fine-tune and improve these courses when we roll them out to all sections.

Building on these efforts, the recently implemented Foundations of Success program includes a newly designed version of MAT104, which uses ALEKS and includes remedial content within the credit-bearing course. This allows students to be assessed at the beginning of the course and then follow a custom learning path that includes only the amount of remediation each student needs. While still in the early testing phase, this method is expected to allow us to place all inexperienced students directly into credit-bearing courses while also providing them the support and tools they need to be successful.

**Soomo**

In our pursuit of engaging methods for content delivery, we have collaborated with Soomo Publishing Company, a vendor of “webtexts,” in which much of a course’s content is embedded in an e-book. Soomo provides texts that deliver content digitally and are fully interactive. Content is delivered in easily digestible chunks, and students frequently interact with the text by watching videos, answering questions, or writing short responses. The use of this and other digital tools continues to improve the classroom experience for online students. In general, students and faculty respond well to Soomo, and outcomes have improved. However, in some cases, on-grounds faculty struggle with integrating the digital tool into their classes, and in some cases it has been challenging to calibrate the workload appropriately because these courses require students to read the webtext to be successful, and not all students are proficient at or accustomed to doing so.

In a Soomo pilot for ENG115, the webtext incorporates interactive tools that assist students in the writing process, from writing a thesis statement to building an outline for their papers. As the table below shows, this pilot performed as well as the standard course online, and it significantly outperformed the standard on-grounds class. The course is continuing to be revised and improved, and it will be tested again in spring and summer 2016, with a full rollout planned for fall 2016 if results continue to improve.

![TABLE 11: SOOMO PILOT, ENG115](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality/Pilot/Section</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Start %</th>
<th>Attend %</th>
<th>Drop %</th>
<th>At Risk %</th>
<th>CHE:CHA</th>
<th>Cont %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Ground</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>-16.3%</td>
<td>-32.9%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>-11.8%</td>
<td>-25.8%</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Pilot</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>-22.5%</td>
<td>-43.6%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>1618</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>-28.3%</td>
<td>-46.6%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>-27.2%</td>
<td>-37.2%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Pilot</td>
<td>1202</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>-28.7%</td>
<td>-49.9%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2035</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>-25.9%</td>
<td>-43.7%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: CHE:CHA = Ratio of credit hours earned to credit hours attempted.*
The working group concluded that while changes have produced significant improvements in math, we continue to see students struggle in English. We need to continue to research best practices around teaching composition to a diverse body of students with a range of levels of preparedness. Students also need to be better prepared in the use of webtexts and e-books as these tools are increasingly being used. Faculty, too, need additional training to ensure that can effectively employ the technological tools we have adopted to improve student outcomes in general studies.

*To what extent are general education skills and competencies incorporated into upper-division courses in the University’s undergraduate degree programs?*

General education requirements support the development of essential skills in communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking. They also meet the expectations of society that college-educated persons be well rounded. One of the motivations for this research question is to find out how general education skills tie in with advanced courses in student majors.

**Communication Skills**

The required English courses in the general education program are intended to cover the basics of effective writing, so that students have a foundation to build on as they advance through their programs. Given the importance of communication skills for business and the professions, Strayer University has embraced a writing-across-the-curriculum approach, in which all courses (except for selected math courses) contain one or more graded writing assignments, all of which include rubric criteria specifically for writing. [See MAT540 Course Guide; Guide;; BUS302 Course Guide.]

Therefore we are confident that all upper-division courses in student programs contain a writing component. In addition, as discussed above, a recent revision to the general studies program adds courses in both oral and written communication. These changes are based on long-term studies on writing conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. [See Writing Rubric and Assessment Tipping Point, March 2015; Writing Rubric Spring 2015 Course Examples; OIRAE Six-Month Informal Update on Meta-Analysis of Writing Rubric.]

**Quantitative Skills**

The required math courses in the general education program are intended to prepare students for quantitative thinking in their major area of study and especially any math they encounter as part of their programs. As previously noted, all students in baccalaureate programs take MAT104, Algebra with Applications, as well as a course in statistics. [See MAT300, Statistics, or MAT304, Statistical Concepts for Healthcare.]

Quantitative information is an inescapable part of professional life in our information-age society, and accordingly, it is an intrinsic part of the curriculum for all baccalaureate students. However, the extent to which such quantitative skills are applied in upper-division courses depends on the student’s major area of study and concentration. For instance, the criminal justice curriculum contains very little quantitative content, while in the business and information systems curricula, the extent of quantitative content depends on the area of concentration.

All baccalaureate business students take the BUS499 capstone course in their senior year. As previously noted in our response to an earlier research question, business and accounting students take the Peregrine standardized tests of business knowledge in BUS499, one of which is Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics.
Beyond that, the extent of quantitative content covered depends on the student’s chosen area of concentration.

In the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program, the finance concentration clearly is the course with the most quantitative content. For example, one of the required courses in the finance concentration is ECO320 Money and Banking. In the ECO320 textbook, 13 of 18 chapters contain equations that are highlighted as “key equations.” A few of these equations are purely definitional (such as the definition of the “real exchange rate”) or define well-known conventions (such as the fact that under accounting rules assets = liabilities + equity capital). Yet most are formulas for various financial computations (such as the formula for calculating the present value of a series of payments). The complexities of these formulas are in line with what we cover in MAT104, Algebra with Applications. [See MAT104 Course Guide; MAT104-ALEKS List of Topics.]

Other concentrations in the BBA program have less mathematical content, but most concentrations have at least one course with significant quantitative content. For instance, the highly popular Management concentration requires BUS430, Operations Management, which includes many quantitative concepts and techniques. Correct application of these techniques depends on math at the level of what we cover in MAT104. The course also includes forecasting techniques that build on statistical concepts that we cover in MAT104 as well as MAT300 Statistics. [See BUS430 Course Guide; MAT300 Course Guide.]

Undergraduate students in information technology courses use math concepts to some extent. For instance, in the lower-division CIS175, Introduction to Networking, students must understand how to convert numbers from decimal to hexadecimal to binary in order to apply the concept of subnet masking [See CIS175 Course Guide]. The extent and exact nature of quantitative material depends on whether the student is in the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) or Bachelor of Science in Information Systems (BSIS) program, as well as the specific concentration in each program.

The BSIT is the more technical of the two degree programs in information systems. It is the only program at Strayer University that requires MAT200, Precalculus, in addition to MAT104. Furthermore, BSIT students take MAT311, Discrete Math, instead of MAT300, Statistics. This course gives students a deeper appreciation of the mathematical and logical principles behind the technology they are learning. For instance, it helps students understand why some approaches to routine tasks, like searching and sorting, are inherently more efficient than other approaches. [See MAT311 Course Guide.]

In both the BSIS and BSIT programs, math embedded in course work generally relates to what students learn in MAT104, such as interpreting algebraic expressions. For example, a commonly used exercise in teaching programming languages is to have students convert temperatures from Fahrenheit to Celsius, or vice versa. Other exercises that require mathematical proficiency in the BSIS and BSIT programs include calculating area, computing cabling costs, determining how many routers are needed, and so forth.

**Critical Thinking Skills**

The general education program at Strayer University has several program outcomes relating to critical thinking. We want students to be able to critically evaluate arguments, evaluate claims of causation, consider multiple
perspectives, and understand the scientific method. All of these are covered in some form within our required courses in the sciences and social sciences. One of our required courses is PHI210, Critical Thinking, which is entirely devoted to evaluating arguments, recognizing fallacies, identifying biases, and the like. [See PHI210 Course Guide.]

One of Strayer University’s competencies relates to critical thinking, and every program has at least one program objective that maps back to that competency. Each of these is very specific to the subject matter of the major. For instance, the program outcome of the Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC) program that maps back to the critical thinking competency is to “prepare, analyze, and interpret internal managerial accounting data and reports to make relevant business decisions.” Generally, we believe that this mapping is not granular enough to encompass all the ways in which critical thinking is embedded into the curriculum. [See BSAC Program Mapping.]

In many of our programs, components of the student experience have been designed with the intention of stimulating critical thinking. Courses encourage critical thinking skills by asking questions that do not have a predetermined answer or response. Instead, students must review and analyze course concepts and apply them to the real world. To date, we have not undertaken a formal survey of embedded critical thinking across all of the disciplines.

**Arts and Sciences Knowledge**

While we feel that knowledge of the arts and sciences has intrinsic value, there is no doubt that course work in the arts and sciences complements and supports the curricula in student majors. For instance, our general education requirement for a course in American history (HIS105, Contemporary U.S. History) or government (POL110, U.S. Government) provides background for understanding the history and constitutional basis of governmental regulations. Similarly, our requirement that students have one course in international issues, such as SOC300, Sociology of Development, provides background for studying international trade and other global issues. [See SOC300 Course Guide.]

Of the various programs we offer, only the BBA program has a course in the major that is completely dedicated to understanding societal issues in that field. A required course in the core BBA program is BUS475, Business and Society, which covers a broad range of social issues connected with business enterprises, such as social responsibility, environmental impacts, and the like. Our programs in accounting and information systems do not have a course dedicated to societal impacts of these professions. The criminal justice program touches on societal issues in several courses. [See BUS457 Course Guide.]

While we know that communication skills are embedded into almost every course, and it is fairly obvious where math is applied in upper-division courses, we currently know little about how critical thinking is embedded into the upper-division curriculum. Furthermore, we know little about what value our programs add to the critical thinking capability of our students.

We therefore suggest that Strayer carry out two studies of critical thinking. First, we propose that we undertake a survey of the curriculum in each of the majors to identify how we currently embed critical thinking into the curriculum. Among other things, this survey might analyze existing assignments. Second, we propose that Strayer should assess student outcomes in critical thinking, using a value-added methodology, so that we can ascertain the extent to which our programs improve critical thinking skills.
As an adult-focused teaching institution, Strayer University must meet the needs of its students by offering high-quality instruction, relevant academic programs, and the appropriate support services to enable students to acquire the competencies needed to succeed personally and professionally. To fulfill its mission, the university undertakes thoughtful, consistent, and rigorous reviews of its short-term and long-term goals and objectives, and progress toward achieving those goals.

An effective program of institutional assessment informs planning, policy development, program enhancements, resource allocation, and decision making at all levels of the university. Students benefit from improvements made to the curriculum, instruction, technology, support services, policies, and procedures resulting from the use of institutional assessment data. These institutional changes should result in improved learning as measured by a thorough, coherent, and useful program of student learning assessment.

The Steering Committee approached the self-study with assurance that assessment data needed to evaluate institutional effectiveness and student learning would be readily available, and that evidence of progress made to achieve the goals and objectives of the university and improve student learning would point to compliance with the fundamental elements of Standards 7 and 14. One working group was assigned to evaluate the university’s assessment efforts and the use of results, and it was envisioned that one report would cover both assessment standards.

However, during its review of draft research reports, the Steering Committee determined that substantial evidence of institutional and student learning assessment and the use of assessment results was incorporated in the several research reports that addressed compliance with other standards, such as admissions, general education, student support, institutional renewal, and others. To avoid unnecessary duplication in the responses to the research questions, the working group was tasked with creating separate reports focused primarily on compliance with the fundamental elements of Standards 7 and 14.

Without question, organizational changes have impacted assessment since 2013, including changes in the leadership and structure of the primary administrative office charged with designing, implementing, and reporting on assessment activities and results. However, Chapters 14 and 15 underscore the evidence found throughout the self-study report that Strayer engages in continuous improvement by assessing institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes.
Chapter 14: Institutional Assessment (Standard 7)

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

The Self-Study Steering Committee charged one working group with both Standards 7 and 14, and asked it to ensure that the two sets of research questions and fundamental standards informed each other. At core, the effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling its mission cannot be assessed (Standard 7) without a deep analysis of student learning (Standard 14). The new MSCHE standards effective in 2017 recognize this by tightly integrating these lines of research.

The team met monthly to explore the standards and the data resources used across the university. The members of the working group represented a wide range of data-focused staff, including the chief analysts for admissions, academic operations, campus operations, financial aid administration, internal audit, and institutional effectiveness. The working group explored many of the reports Strayer uses to align its day-to-day operations with the strategic plan. It also reviewed the president’s reports to the Board of Trustees, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee’s (IEC’s) work, the current and former strategic plans, and the reports of the other working groups.

Conclusions:

Strayer is in compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 7. Previous research completed for MSCHE, the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and several state and federal government agencies demonstrates that Strayer University is successful in employing data to improve institutional assessment and student learning. There are at least four keys to that success:

1. The clarity of the mission (teaching, not research)
2. The structure of the courses (centralized content and grading standards)
3. The technology of the courses (one learning management system for all courses, irrespective of modality)
4. The integration of all admissions processes (one organization implementing the policies for each program), enabling collection of consistent admission and outcome data

Given the centrality of teaching and learning to our mission, it is data on exactly those processes that we need and use to make changes in policies, processes, training, and resource allocation. Standard 7 focuses on the assessment of institutional processes that is enabled by Strayer’s unique system. The working group concluded that the university meets the fundamental standards for our areas of inquiry. This report shows that we

1. have a robust process for assessing our progress toward the strategic plan,
2. use assessment data to improve our pace of progress toward our strategic plan, and
3. document our strategic plans and annual progress toward achieving their goals and objectives.

Strayer broadly uses assessment results from its myriad daily, weekly, and quarterly reports. The
extensive web of admissions, advising, financial, and academic reports creates a rare case in which assessment happens not just in a top-down fashion—for example, from Board of Trustees to IEC to business units—but also in a “distributed assessment” model in which thousands of employees know their role in, and the data about, the university’s success toward the priorities of the strategic plan.

The working group found that answers to the research questions significantly overlapped with analyses of compliance with the fundamental elements. Therefore, the research questions at the end of this chapter address only areas that were not covered.

**Suggestions:**

The working group makes the following suggestions to improve compliance with MSCHE's Standard 7:

1. While distributed assessment is very effective at aligning a dispersed organization around the goals of the strategic plan, Strayer may benefit from centralizing reporting procedures in a department with primary responsibility for collecting annual assessment information linked to the strategic plan, documenting actions taken or changes resulting from assessment, and preparing an annual report to the university president. This process would require annual reports from departments throughout the institution such as admissions, human resources, financial services, information technology, student affairs, and so on. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) would serve as a resource for departments and monitor quarterly process toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

2. Strayer needs more information about the career success of its alumni and should invest accordingly. Current surveys could provide better assessment information if we reward alumni for the time they spend responding, and other strategies such as industry-related focus groups would be beneficial. As the alumni network is just emerging, funding alumni participation in the range of networking opportunities would be of benefit to Strayer students.

**Institutional Assessment (Standard 7) Fundamental Elements**

*Documented, organized, and sustained assessment processes to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services; achievement of the mission, goals, and plans; and compliance with accreditation standards that meet the following criteria:*

- Assessment processes that have a foundation in the mission; have clearly articulated institutional, unit-level, and program-level goals to encompass all programs and services; and are integrated with one another.
- Written strategic plans that reflect consideration of assessment results.

The University's 2010–2015 Strategic Plan was in place at the beginning of our 2012–2016 review period. That strategic plan was around three overarching pillars: Educational Access, Academic Quality, and Student Success. The overarching pillars had nine goals and 57 sub-objectives spread out across all goals and all three pillars.

As mentioned in the Standard 1 and Standard 2 narratives, Strayer carefully managed the goals of the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan. When it came time to close out that plan, a broad range of staff and faculty wrote final updates and published the completed Strategic Plan 2011–2015 Close-Out Report in May 2014.
This process highlighted the successes under that plan and the work that remains. For example, the close-out report noted progress in serving students who have remedial needs. Under the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, the university assessed the competencies of inexperienced students with the McCann College Success exams rather than relying only on the standard basis-of-admission information. By having such students take the McCann exams, we found that many placed directly into credit-bearing English courses, skipping unneeded developmental/remedial courses, into which they would have otherwise defaulted. As a result, success and continuation rates showed marked improvements.

However, we discovered that additional interventions were needed to serve this vulnerable population, especially those inexperienced students who chose to enroll online. In 2015, Strayer launched an extensive listening, writing, and editing process to ensure that we developed a vital and action-oriented plan that could set both vision and metrics for the next five years. The new strategic plan was built from the work and foundations laid in the preceding effort. It considered unfinished efforts, and the teams looked at logical next steps. The result was the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, which was formally communicated to the community. This plan maintained the exiting pillars of the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan and added a new fourth pillar, Customer Service.

The new plan details 18 goals and 70 objectives that guide institution-wide efforts and initiatives. The 2015–2020 Strategic Plan recognized both the success we had accomplished and the challenges ahead. It prioritized supporting inexperienced students both in and out of the classroom. From this detailed assessment process, the First-Year Experience Program, Foundations of Success course, and the role of the vice provost for early programs emerged.

Strayer’s robust strategic planning process with periodic updates ensure alignment demonstrates compliance with two of the three fundamental elements for this standard: written institutional strategic plans reflecting consideration of assessment results and a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process. Strayer University has invested and continues to invest much senior staff time in the creation, updating, and refinement of its strategic plan. Progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the plan are captured in an annual close-out process spearheaded by the provost and the IEC.

The first annual close-out of the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan is underway. In March 2016, the IEC assigned the 18 plan goal sections to senior leaders who sit on the IEC. [See Progress toward Strayer University’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, March 2016 Institutional Effectiveness Committee.] The IEC members worked over six weeks to collect data and consider evidence of progress against the current goals and objectives. The committee determined that 61 of the 70 objectives had evidence of effort and progress during 2015. The OIE team analyzed, evaluated, assessed, and scored the quality of the evidence. [See Progress toward Strayer University’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, May 2016 Institutional Effectiveness Committee.]

Table 12 shows an example of this analysis.

This process of annual check-ins against the plan aids the university in identifying any plan goals for which we might not have allocated enough resources and time. For example, the first annual close-out process found that we need to do a better job of engaging faculty in academic and student support initiatives. As a result, the IEC and the provost immediately asked the vice president for student and faculty resources to
create the Faculty Advisory Council, which had its first meeting on June 7, 2016.

Also, the review process highlighted that one of the emerging priorities, expanding our corporate partnerships to increase the career impact of our degrees, did not get the attention it should have during 2015. The IEC recommended that we provide updates on corporate partnership initiatives in all further annual updates. It also suggested adding a business-to-business measure to the annual key performance indicator dashboard update for the Board of Trustees, as described below.

This annual review also helps us to identify the goals and objectives where we are performing well against the Plan’s goals and objectives. For example, Strayer’s School of Nursing has structured 19 strategic goals for the new RN-BSN program that squarely align to the university’s strategic plan. In keeping with the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the School of Nursing faculty and administration have identified strategic goals for the new RN to BSN program related to Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success and Customer Service. The program has developed goals that align to the most appropriate and applicable goals of the university’s broader strategic plan.

The School of Nursing 2015-2020 Strategic Goals demonstrate alignment with the goals identified in the university’s strategic plan and outcomes to date. In the 2015 annual close-out process, this example provides strong evidence of progress in achieving the university’s goals to expand its programs to meet evolving market demand, and explore additional programmatic accreditations. [See Strategic Plan 2015-2016 Annual Close-Out Report]

The first annual close-out effort will conclude by the end of the second quarter. The report will be shared with the senior leaders and the Board of Trustees. The IEC members, who are likewise responsible for university departments and areas, will use this information to work on initiatives within their teams that continue to align with the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

As described in Chapter 7 of the self-study report, the Board of Trustees ensures that Strayer University is focused on delivering against the outcomes in the strategic plan. The trustees review a quarterly report from the president that documents progress toward achieving institutional strategic goals and objectives. The report is intended to update the board on progress since the prior meeting and is organized, as the board requested, to link activities and initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar: Educational Access</th>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1: Admit all qualified students</td>
<td>Kristine Kimble, Kees Bol</td>
<td>Initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2: Provide flexible delivery methods</td>
<td>Joe Schaefer, Richard Pinsk</td>
<td>Partially achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3: Serve a diverse population</td>
<td>Nicole Morris, Hannah Hughes</td>
<td>Partially achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 4: Make school affordable</td>
<td>James Foster</td>
<td>Partially achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 5: Expand programs to meet demand</td>
<td>Chad Nyce</td>
<td>Partially achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan within the areas of Educational Access, Academic Quality, Student Success, and Customer Service. A summary chart of the goals and objectives of the strategic plan is regularly included in the appendix of the president’s report to the Board of Trustees. These written documents detail results against the broadest range of functions: student learning and student support, marketing and admissions, alumni success, and faculty and other human resources. [See President’s Reports to the Board of Trustees, 20xx-20xx.]

The Board of Trustees’ annual objectives are provided to the president and the institution’s progress is managed, measured and assessed against these objectives. That process and those goals are detailed in the Chapter 7 of the self-study report. The expectation from the Board of Trustees is that those annual goals be cascaded from the president to the entire university.

The working group was able to identify that the president’s goals have been shared with the university teams. Direct reports of the president were asked to write their annual and team objectives to help deliver the goals set for the president by the Board of Trustees. [See Inside Academics, January 18, 2012; Office of Faculty Affairs 2012 Goals and Related Projects, 2012 Academic Goals] Team reports are incorporated in the president’s quarterly reports to the trustees, and in the annual summary report. [See December 2014, President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, 2012 Strayer University Objectives, 2013 Strayer University Objectives and Measures of Progress and Success]

Systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that

• maximize the use of existing data and information,

• clearly relate to the goals they are assessing; and

• are of sufficient quality that the results can be used to inform decisions.

Under the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, the board identified and received annual updates on the key performance indicators (KPIs). Those data are core to providing context for myriad decisions taken by the Board of Trustees and a strong documentation of institutional assessment during the entirety of the self-study period. [See Institutional Effectiveness Indicators, October 2011; Institutional Effectiveness Indicators, September 2012.]

The KPI reports for 2012 and for 2013 prioritized the following five measures:

1. Fall-to-fall persistence rates of new students
2. Graduation rates
3. Satisfaction rates of current students and Strayer graduates
4. Placement and performance of developmental students
5. Student opinions on instructional effectiveness

Using the data from those annual assessment reports, the Board of Trustees and university leaders chose to prioritize many large projects. A prime example among those was a redesign of admissions and processing for inexperienced students, the results of which were brought back to the board in 2014. [See Institutional Effectiveness Indicators 2014.]

The KPI on student satisfaction led to an institutional commitment to track, understand, and fix the core problems. Through the Student Satisfaction Survey, we learned that a sharp “pain point” for our students was the perception of bad customer service with the administration of financial aid. The board committed to a
multiyear, $8 million investment to bring the ownership of financial aid administration back from an outsourcing arrangement. The board’s focus on assessment data and the allocation of resources over several years worked. The new systems went fully operational in 2012, and since we had frequent and robust assessment tools in place, we saw results quickly. For example, 40% of new students rated the financial aid application process as “excellent” in 2011–2012; that increased to 62% by 2012–2013. [Student Satisfaction Survey Multi-Year Results.]

Students also were concerned about the quality and responsiveness of their advisors. The network of regional faculty who had the responsibility of advising new and continuing students did not always have the time or the training to respond to student questions quickly and with sufficient accuracy. Moreover, many of the most important student questions related to critical elements outside of classrooms and programs that faculty lacked the depth and expertise to most effectively address. For example, students often asked about financial aid and life coaching, including child care and time management. The faculty was ill equipped to meet these broad needs of adult students.

Driven by the assessment KPIs, the university experimented with centralized and multi-faceted advising. The College Readiness–START (student-focused teacher with advising, retention, and tutoring roles) experiment of 2012–2013 showed enough promise that the president decided to centralize advising into an organization informed by faculty but staffed by employees who had broader training. The change took some time to get right, but the results have been strong, as shown in Table 13.

Another example of an assessment measure that spurred institutional investment and focus relates to recruiting students with a higher likelihood of persisting and graduating. The Board of Trustees’ KPI measures on persistence and graduation rates clearly showed higher success chances for students who transferred in academic credits at the beginning of their tenure with Strayer. In an attempt to support those students as fully as possible, the board asked the president and provost to build a broad strategy to welcome them. Among the strategies in which we invested:

A reexamination and expansion of our alternative credit policies (2012–2014), including:

1. Revamping and discounting Challenge Exams,
2. Partnering with the industry-leading Council for Adult and Experiential Learning on our inline portfolio creation tutorial,
3. Investing in a streamlined transfer credit process to ensure that all students start in the right first classes for them, and
4. Expanding community partnerships, including substantial tuition discounting for highly-qualified students.

---


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor effectively and promptly answered questions</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor’s suggestions for succeeding in class were helpful</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A third strategic plan KPI measure on which the board focused was the academic and instructional quality of online courses. As students began to voice their preference for online sections, Strayer redoubled efforts to ensure that the online experience was the equal of the on-grounds experience. As detailed under Standard 14, the student learning outcomes were always equivalent, as ensured by centralized program ownership and course content. But when the Board of Trustees and the assessment KPIs focused the university on the potential challenges, academic leaders perceived a need to improve the caliber of the overall online experience.

A broad coalition of regional, college, and support service deans invested in faculty training, course refinement, and tutoring services around the overall online experience. The results have been both steady and dramatic. Both modalities improved their share of “excellent” endorsements, but the improvement among online students was quite impressive, as Table 14 shows.

Based on the successes the institution had against the 2012 and 2013 KPIs, the president and the OIE evolved the 2014 KPIs to focus efforts toward all of the strategic plan goals.

The KPI report for October 2014 included an in-depth analysis of the impact of the new remedial education policies. The board saw data that, at least by one metric (nine or more credits earned by the second term), the success rate of remedial-eligible students improved by 50% at the same time that the same metric was almost unchanged for non-developmental students. The assessment of a strategic plan goal had led to a sustained university initiative with long-term results.

The 2014 KPI update also highlighted a growing concern discovered through extensive surveying of recent alumni. Less than 60% of survey respondents indicated that their careers had been enhanced by their education at Strayer, and those who saw little or no benefit were likely to be unhappy with their educational experience. This was true irrespective of whether a career benefit was the primary motivation for earning the degree. The awareness of the importance of seeing a career benefit was front and center during the drafting of the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. As a result, the new strategic plan re-prioritized around creating career impact for all students “from the day they enroll.”

The KPIs from 2012 to 2014 were extremely useful in helping the board drive assessment and progress against the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan. In 2015, at the request of the trustees, President Jones collaborated with the OIE to create a broader dashboard of annual progress measures based on the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. He proposed 12 measures to evaluate the range of the student experience at the university.

The OIE presents the dashboard for these 12 measures to the board. [See Annual Progress toward Strayer University’s 2015–2020 Strategic Plan: Update for Board of Trustees December 2015.] A snapshot of the dashboard used at the board’s December 2015 meeting is provided in Table 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic quality of courses</th>
<th>New students responding “excellent”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus courses</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online courses</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quarterly and annual work by the University’s Board of Trustees ensures accountability for progress toward and achievement of strategic goals.

Historically, the KPI results were not broadly shared within the university, but the new strategic plan dashboard is being shared with the IEC and other senior leaders. Also, the ownership of the measures has expanded from just OIE or the President’s Office to the full IEC. The IEC now has the responsibility of updating (adding or subtracting) high-priority metrics on that annual update. The committee is to finalize the 2016 measures at its summer 2016 meeting.

Support and collaboration of administration and faculty in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results.

The institutional assessment process has many participants and an appropriately broad distribution. The pieces of assessment that focus on student learning are particularly inclusive, as detailed under Standard 14. The OIE provides student learning data to inform the program owners, deans of faculty, and department

### TABLE 15: BOT KPIS 2016 TWELVE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARD PLAN GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Plan Pillar</th>
<th>Primary Annual Goal</th>
<th>Status as Plan Began</th>
<th>First-year Progress, If Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Access</td>
<td>1. Grow new student enrollments</td>
<td>Flat after years of decline</td>
<td>Growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Access</td>
<td>2. Expand share of experienced new students</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>3. Improve student satisfaction</td>
<td>Current students happy</td>
<td>Current students even happier, former students not satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Excellence</td>
<td>4. Maintain academic expenditure per student</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Excellence</td>
<td>5. Build a personal education plan for all</td>
<td>Infrequent use</td>
<td>Pilot under development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Excellence</td>
<td>6. Build personal career plan for all</td>
<td>Not yet developed</td>
<td>Pilot under development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>7. Improve one-term passing rate</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>CHE/CHA by course level is mostly flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>8. Improve one-year persistence rate</td>
<td>Improving for undergraduates</td>
<td>Dramatic improvement for undergraduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>9. Improve six-year graduation rates</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>10. Measure graduates against national norms</td>
<td>Majority measured</td>
<td>Participation improving, scores dropping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>11. Maintain low cohort default rates</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Strong improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>12. Increase share of graduates improving careers</td>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Alumni survey in field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: CHE:CHA = Ratio of credit hours earned to credit hours attempted.
chairs. The provost and president also receive these analyses. The data include assignment outcomes, course outcomes, program outcomes, and student feedback.

Many of these data exist because the faculty is deeply involved in their creation and collection. To enable that role, OIE frequently trains instructors in the process and importance of standardized rubrics, learning outcomes, and end-of-program exams such as the Peregrine assessments. OIE also routinely collects detailed faculty opinions about the content and rigor of their courses in the Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll (CE-FOP). The results of the CE-FOP are distributed widely to faculty, as noted in Chapter 9, and are a critical element of the course assessment process. [See CE-FOP, Date.]

Once the academic leadership team, in concert with faculty and administrators, has chosen the refinements to implement, an even broader community helps execute the recommendations. The full circle will include tutors, advisors, instructional material designers, and admissions officers.

For example, when assessment results coalesced around the idea that our FIN100 course was unnecessarily ambitious for the vast majority of students required to take it, the academic leaders asked that

- the textbook be reviewed (students indicated in the Course Evaluation—Student Opinion Poll that they didn’t find it helpful enough);
- the sequence of the course be changed (many students dropped early in the term, as shown in Course Stat report);
- the learning outcomes be focused on the critical elements mapped to the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program (suggested by data from the CE-FOP); and
- the tutoring and advising infrastructures prepare students for the quantitative rigor of that class (suggested by advising and tutoring data).

Clear and realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate resources.

Assessment processes of sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable.

Strayer has made significant investments in institutional assessment. The university collects, analyzes and shares detailed information about the student experience to inform decision-making. There are two surveys of current students every term, and three sampled surveys of specific student populations. The collection of these data is critical to the myriad assessment practices both in and outside of the classroom.

Two Major Student Surveys Every Term

1. **Voice of the Student (VOS)** survey not only provides data regarding student opinions about their experience at Strayer, but also provides another avenue whereby students may request special assistance. The current version runs in the third and fourth week of each quarter. [See VOS Survey.]

   Strayer University uses the Net Promoter Scale in many of its surveys. The scale is a tool widely used to understand the strength of customer/student loyalty. Students are asked whether they would recommend or have confidence in a statement, and they score their answer from 10 (absolutely) to 0 (absolutely not). Those scoring 9 or 10 are “promoters,” those scoring 7 and 8 are “passives,” and those scoring 6 or less are “detractors.” The detractor percentage is then subtracted from the promoter percentage to sharpen the expectation that great institutions have devoted customers. The current overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) as measured by the
quarterly VOS Survey is above 50—a very high number. That number drops when specific questions are posed, but in general the students responding to the survey are strong supporters of the university.

Student responses to the winter 2016 VOS survey were confidential unless a student requested help to resolve an issue. Of the survey respondents, only 15% asked for a call from a campus leader, advisor, or instructor, and all of these students were contacted within two weeks. This Closing the Loop process is a critical follow-through step to which the university is committed. The documentation of these processes is extensive and published on Strayer’s intranet site. [See VOS Survey Processes.]

Every term the VOS has immediate impact in the operation and execution of student-facing functions. It focuses many employees on excellent customer service, a key pillar in our strategic plan. It also provides a view into campus-by-campus variability, including whether our students taking courses online are receiving the same levels of service and support as those taking them at one of Strayer’s campuses.

Senior leaders immediately focus more attention on campuses with the lowest quarterly VOS scores, asking whether the campus needs more resources, better central support, or new leadership. The Chief Operating Officer uses the VOS to make those investment decisions and judgment calls. As a result, for example, training budgets have shifted and new campus leadership has been installed. The data from the VOS survey also had substantial impact on the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. The effectiveness of connecting students to those who can help them underscored the critical need for Customer Service to be elevated to one of the four pillars of the strategic plan.

### 2. The Course Evaluation—Student Opinion Poll (CE-SOP)

Enables immediate (and long-term) improvements in instruction, andragogy, and curriculum.

Since 2008, Strayer has asked all students to complete the 20- to 25-question survey for each course they take in a given term. The survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>NPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe my faculty instructors this term are responsive to my requests</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the learning resources (library, tutoring, textbooks) I need to succeed in my current classes</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand how my classes relate to my career goals</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the sequence of courses I should take during the next year</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand how I will fund the rest of my degree</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the admissions process prepared me well for the academic experience</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like someone to call? Yes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response rate 57.5% of those enrolled in the third week of the term

Net Promoter Scale is 0–10 calculated as % promoters (9s and 10s) less % detractors (0–6).

Note: NPS = Net Promoter Score.
poses detailed questions about the content, materials, and instruction. The results of this survey have been an integral part of our faculty, course, and program reviews. Typically, we get response rates of 35% of all student seats, including more than 10,000 written comments per term.

The myriad questions immediately provide actionable data. For example, when students consistently complain about an opaque Course Guide (syllabus), academic leadership is expected to quickly revise the Course Guide to remove ambiguity or misinformation. [See OIE publication Course Guides Most in Need of Improvement, from the 2015 CE-SOP results.]

OIE publishes the results each term, grouping them into calculations related to faculty (Part A) and courses (Part B). The Part A calculation is an amalgamation of 10 questions in three groupings: instructional effectiveness, instructor attributes, grading and availability, and one overall rating—student effectiveness. The results are published for faculty each term. The combined Part A score is an element in the review and assessment of full-time and adjunct faculty.

Deans of faculty review the Part A results for each of their instructors to understand who is connecting well with students. Faculty with significant negative student feedback are counseled and offered additional training. However, if the broadly negative pattern continues, the instructor is removed from the classroom by following established procedures. Questions related to the course are published as three distinct measures:

- Course-related measures include responses to textbooks, course guide, and intellectual stimulation.
- Preparedness measures reflect the confidence students had before and after the course.
- Course relevancy measures suggest the degree to which students can apply course learning to their careers.

These results are a core part of each course review, and any effort to amend courses must reference student reactions.

The university, however, does not immediately implement every student request; students are not always right. For example, there is a distinct trend in student reviews to label quantitative-heavy classes as far less valuable to their career; national data and employer surveys demonstrate otherwise. This trend does provide an important insight to all of our staff: many of our students struggle with the content and relevancy of such courses. Such survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Student Satisfaction Survey 2015</th>
<th>Alumni Survey 2014</th>
<th>Non-returning Student Survey 2015 (only high GPA, out between 2 and 5 terms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Promoters&quot;</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NPS = Net Promoter Score.
would not, of course, result in a removal of quantitative courses from a program of study.

**Three Sampled Surveys of Student Satisfaction**

The OIE conducts three annual surveys: the Student Satisfaction Survey, the Recent Graduate (Alumni) Survey, and the Non-Returning Student Survey. These statistically sampled explorations provide valuable data on a range of priorities in the strategic plan. They are also the source of some of the Board of Trustees’ KPIs and dashboard items. While each survey explores different experiences, there is enough consistency to compare results across the three (see Table 17).

In the most recent Survey of Recent Graduates (Alumni Survey), Strayer graduates underscored the criticality of securing career benefit from the degree. This was true whether or not the primary motivation for getting a degree related to career advancement.

Results like these underscore challenges in meeting the goals of graduates and the strategic plan. It was also the impetus for the specific plan goal that by 2020 every student will complete a personal career plan during her or his studies to improve the likelihood that the Strayer degree does indeed impact the student’s career. The use of our survey results to inform action, and the subsequent prompt inclusion of resulting changes in the strategic plan and university goals illustrates compliance with the fundamental element of written institutional and strategic plans that reflect consideration of assessment results.

The annual Student Satisfaction Survey asks a sampled set of new and continuing students a wide range of questions on the student experience and aspirations underlying the strategic plan. Based on that methodology, the results usually have a very low margin of error. This methodology and low margin of error demonstrate the fundamental element criterion that our measures are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions. The results are distributed widely each year.

We repeat some of the questions each year to see progress toward the strategic plan. For example, we consistently ask about the academic quality of online and classroom courses. The results prove that we are making progress in both modalities but that our success with improving the online experience has been dramatic. This improvement has given the institution confidence that we are ready for the students’ preference shift to online instruction and illustrates that we can support this modality shift while maintaining the Strayer’s overall effectiveness. We have immediately put these results into practice with an online-heavy 2016–2017 course schedule.

Student Satisfaction Surveys also suggested the critical need to insource our financial aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18: Alumni Survey 2014, Selected Measures of Satisfaction, Respondents Perceiving Benefit from Strayer Education Versus Those Perceiving No Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>If any benefit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Very satisfied&quot; with educational experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A “promoter” on Net Promoter Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Very satisfied&quot; Strayer is a good value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
administration, as described earlier in this chapter.

But there are student voices missing from the Recent Graduates and Student Satisfaction Surveys: those who drop out before completing their programs. Based on challenges by the Board of Trustees during the annual KPI discussion of graduation rates, in 2015 the OIE launched a new annual survey, the Non-Returning Student Survey. The Board of Trustees correctly pointed out that we need to understand better why academically successful students choose not to complete. We asked all students with at least a 3.0 GPA who had been

TABLE 19: STRAYER UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES’ EVALUATION OF THE ACADEMIC QUALITY OF THEIR COURSES, BY STUDENT STATUS, ACADEMIC YEAR 2011/12 TO 2014/15

| Item                                    | Response | AY 11/12 | AY 12/13 | AY 13/14 | AY 14/15 | AY 11/12 | AY 12/13 | AY 13/14 | AY 14/15 | AY 11/12 | AY 12/13 | AY 13/14 | AY 14/15 |
|-----------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Academic quality of online courses      | Excellent| 36.2%    | 35.1%    | 47.5%    | 62.5%    | 29.5%    | 30.9%    | 39.2%    | 52.3%    | 30.5%    | 31.6%    | 40.4%    | 54.6%    |
|                                        | Good     | 36.4%    | 41.5%    | 34.4%    | 29.7%    | 40.2%    | 41.4%    | 39.0%    | 35.5%    | 39.6%    | 41.4%    | 38.4%    | 34.2%    |
|                                        | Adequate to poor | 27.3% | 23.4% | 18.0%    | 7.8%     | 30.4%    | 27.8%    | 21.8%    | 12.2%    | 29.9%    | 27.0%    | 21.2%    | 11.2%    |
| Total                                   |          | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   |
| (N)                                     |          | (538)    | (482)    | (244)    | (256)    | (3130)   | (2188)   | (1488)   | (887)    | (3668)   | (2670)   | (1732)   | (1143)   |
| Academic quality of classroom courses   | Excellent| 44.6%    | 47.3%    | 53.0%    | 54.3%    | 36.8%    | 43.1%    | 49.6%    | 54.1%    | 37.9%    | 43.8%    | 50.0%    | 54.1%    |
|                                        | Good     | 33.4%    | 37.5%    | 35.4%    | 39.0%    | 42.5%    | 41.9%    | 36.6%    | 37.5%    | 41.2%    | 41.1%    | 36.5%    | 37.8%    |
|                                        | Adequate to poor | 22.0% | 15.2% | 11.6%    | 6.7%     | 20.7%    | 15.0%    | 13.8%    | 8.4%     | 20.9%    | 15.0%    | 13.5%    | 8.1%     |
| Total                                   |          | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   | 100.0%   |
| (N)                                     |          | (455)    | (421)    | (164)    | (105)    | (2802)   | (1928)   | (1089)   | (355)    | (3257)   | (2349)   | (1253)   | (460)    |

1Includes student respondents with a readmitted or reinstated student status at the time of the data collection


TABLE 20: NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY, PRIMARY SEGMENTS DISCOVERED, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-returning segment</th>
<th>Returning “soon”</th>
<th>Out of education market</th>
<th>Enrolling elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-GPA students</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary reason for leaving</td>
<td>“Temporary setback” such as family illness</td>
<td>No access to funding</td>
<td>Concerns with much of Strayer experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative grit level</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch phrase</td>
<td>“I’m offended you think I quit—I haven’t.”</td>
<td>“Strayer should help pay for me to continue.”</td>
<td>“I’m so glad I left that school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What might help?</td>
<td>Success coach</td>
<td>Financial aid advisor</td>
<td>Greater return on investment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
out between two and six terms to tell us why they left, and more than 18% did so.

We learned that the vast majority of our former students had not enrolled elsewhere. They had dropped out of schooling either temporarily or permanently. A quarter of these students did report a bad experience across multiple elements, with the primary concern being whether or not the degree would have a positive return on investment.

The potential solutions for these three emergent segments became four important initiatives for Strayer:

- For those who hoped to return soon, we refined and expanded the role of success coaches. [See Standard 9, Student Support Services.]

- For those who might eventually drop “out of the education market,” we instituted a financial sufficiency review of each student’s financial aid position. Financial aid counselors then expanded their contact centers to engage many in deeper conversations about making their resources last through graduation.

- For those who might not find a return on investment in the degree, we expanded our services for excellent students (the Honors Program) and stepped up the career-relatedness resources available for courses and programs through Strayer@Work.

- This segmentation and understanding of the causes of dropping out also informed the design of a new VOS Survey.

The Non-Returning Student Survey is a strong example of Strayer’s meeting the fundamental elements of Standard 7:

- We funded the research to ask ourselves hard questions.

- We documented and disseminated the findings widely.

- We changed long-accepted practices based on that learning.

Assessment that happens only in the BOT, the President’s office, or the IEC does not include other opportunities to make the small corrections that can immediately refine our operations both inside and outside of the classroom. Strayer University, however, is uniquely situated to take immediate actions based on an array of daily and weekly reports that are directly aligned to the strategic plan and the analyses of the IEC. This distributive assessment is perhaps unique to Strayer, and it is a great source of competitive advantage in improving institutional effectiveness.

Institutions as large as Strayer need daily and weekly views into activities across the breadth of our functions and locations. Our students cannot wait a term or a year for help. When clearly defined by the strategic plan and broadly disseminated, these “drumbeat” reports enable immediate action linked to Strayer’s long-term goals. Our unique array of aligned daily and weekly reports demonstrates the fundamental standard for program-level goals that encompass all programs, services, and initiatives and are appropriately integrated with one another.

Following are some examples of widely disseminated reports that enable distributed assessment.

**Student Engagement Scores in Civitas: Are Our Faculty Engaging Students?**

Since 2013, Strayer has partnered with a “big data” partner to gather information about online student activity and synthesize it into an online “student engagement score.” The student engagement score is derived from the analysis of more than 5 million historical data points and reflects the profile of students across the entire
range of predicted outcomes from successful to at risk. The most important factors include, in aggregate, discussion board activity, attendance (number and timing of course shell logins), and gradable item completion. Information is available about 100% of student activity in their online Blackboard course shells. The student engagement score has become an integral part of Strayer’s management of advising, student intervention by faculty, and faculty engagement assessment.

Faculty use an engagement application that allows them to understand the engagement score and activity level of their students across the key activity areas mentioned above. The application also allows faculty to click directly through icons for each student and make direct contact, as well as create instant group emails they can use to engage five to 10 students at a time.

Strayer and Civitas recently released an analysis suggesting that the university’s most at-risk students experienced a 5% increase in attendance, 8% decrease in course drop rate, 12% increase in course success, and 17% decrease in their overall numbers, compared with a control group identified using propensity score matching. These positive results came from an improvement in faculty engagement and not from a watering down of standards.

The Maximum Threshold Review Report: Is Our Financial Aid Administration Effective?

It is a goal in the strategic plan to help as many students as possible afford college. The Degrees@Work programs (Verizon, Fiat Chrysler Affiliates) represent one approach to meeting that goal—employers’ providing an educational benefit to their employees. Another is ensuring that our administration of the federal Title IV financial aid program is accurate and helpful to those who are eligible. One critical piece of that execution is to review immediately any draft aid package that has an unusually high credit balance—hence the Maximum Threshold Review Report. [See Maximum Threshold Reports, Dates.]

When students receive Title IV funding, the financial aid will be used to pay for the student’s tuition charges, fees, and books for the quarter. Once the debits are paid, any remaining credit balance is eligible to be released to the student as a refund. Depending on the student’s grade level (year in college), the average refund will range from $1,673 for grade level 1 (first-year) students to $2,661 for grade level 4 (fourth-year) students. In addition to the common undergraduate refund amounts, graduate students will typically receive a $4,160 credit balance refund after all of their expenses are paid.

However, when a projected refund is greater than these typical amounts, there is an increasing likelihood that the financial aid package for the student is incorrect—that is, the student is being over-awarded. As a way to flag these accounts and ensure that students have access to the appropriate funding, Strayer University has developed the maximum threshold indicator. These indicators are created any time a student’s credit balance exceeds either $5,000 for graduate-level students or $3,000 for undergraduate-level students.

The Maximum Threshold Report is run twice daily. All accounts that are flagged with this indicator are exclusively reviewed by a highly trained team to ensure that the student’s account is accurate. Within this report, we can identify the credit balance amount and when it was generated, the student’s grade level, what term the credit balance is located in, and whether or not the credit stems from Title IV funding.

When the maximum threshold review process was created, it worked well, with accounts being modified before a high-dollar refund was sent to the student. However, there were opportunities
for improvement. The university researched the average refund amounts and at what threshold student accounts were more likely to be adjusted. These data indicated that we should lower the threshold to capture a larger population for a more in-depth final review. Since the scope was increased, we are better equipped to ensure that students are receiving the appropriate amount of financial aid while adhering to our strict compliance with regulations.

In addition to the positive effect on compliance, Strayer University is also experiencing a positive impact regarding our student service. By catching and correcting any financial aid package error prior to the release of a student refund, we are significantly reducing the probability that a debit balance will be created on the account at a later date. Students can now focus on succeeding in the classroom and working toward their goal of graduation instead of worrying about paying back a debit balance from an over-award.

The All Students in a Program Report: Do All Students Have the Courses Needed to Graduate?

It is a primary goal of our strategic plan to offer career-relevant and in-demand programs to our students. As described in Chapter 15, program review helps us ensure that we review, update, or end programs that do not meet institutional or student learning goals. To ensure that students are able to finish programs that are being phased out, the university developed the All Students in a Program Report. [See All Students in a Program Report, Date]

Each quarter Strayer monitors enrollment in programs that are being “taught out,” that is, programs or versions of programs that the university is no longer offering to its new students but is continuing until all currently enrolled students either complete their program or exit the university. The All Students in a Program Report provides a list of all students in a particular program, with information pertaining to their progress toward degree completion. This report is monitored and used to counsel students appropriately to ensure that graduates are achieving the most relevant outcomes from their degree programs.

This report provides a list of students who have completed the program, those who have stopped attending, and those who are still in pursuit of the program. In the case of a program that is no longer being offered, this report provides information to advisors that assists with enrollment conversations, such as whether the student should change to a new program, change to a newer version of the program, or enroll in specific courses this term that may be discontinued in future terms.

These mechanisms are critical given the rapidity of changes in the marketplace and our commitment to refreshing our programs. It is also necessary given that most of our students take their courses on a part-time basis and take many years to complete.

The SAS Grade at Risk Report: Are We Effective in Our Interventions with At-Risk Students?

Campus deans use the Student Academic Services (SAS) Grade at Risk Report to assist in identifying and addressing obstacles to student success and continuation. The report contains key student data, including the student’s name and ID number, academic career point (undergraduate or graduate), preferred email and phone number, major, prior cumulative GPA, prior academic and financial standing, currently enrolled classes with midterm and final grades, and classes enrolled in for the following quarter. [See SAS Grade at Risk Reports, Dates??]

Following are several examples of how this report is used to support student academic success and thereby improve institutional effectiveness:
• Upon posting of midterm grades each term, the SAS Grade at Risk Report is used to identify students who are not succeeding and need academic support and advising. Campus deans review the class progress for these identified students and reach out to them to discuss opportunities for improvement and to connect them with needed support resources.

• Upon posting of final grades, the SAS Grade at Risk Report is used to identify students who were not successful. Students are then contacted to assist them in getting enrolled in the classes that are needed to support academic recovery and to maintain academic policy compliance. For example, students who are enrolled in a course but failed a needed prerequisite are identified and contacted, and then their enrollment is changed to support both student success and academic policy compliance.

• The SAS Grade at Risk Report includes students’ prior academic standing, which allows campus deans to determine whether any academically at-risk student is registered for the following term. Any registered at-risk students are then withdrawn from future terms because they are not permitted to be registered beyond the current quarter. Similarly, students who are not permitted to be enrolled in the current term can be identified and advised, and their enrollment changed.

• This report can also be used to match up students enrolled in the same class who are looking to form study groups. For example, this quarter two graduate students at the Savannah campus were struggling with ECO550. With their prior permission, they were connected with one another, and both students experienced improvement in the class. Similarly, groups of students who need assistance can be identified and appropriate tutoring opportunities scheduled to provide needed support outside the classroom.

Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of institutional assessment processes.

Despite all of the assessment tools in place, the voices of employers are missing. The 2014 KPI assessment process highlighted that no assessment directly addressed the needs of this core constituency: those who employ our students and our graduates. Our identification of this missing employer voice is an example of application of the fundamental element for periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution’s assessment process.

Unlike those of some schools or programs, our graduates are not concentrated among a limited number of employers, and none gets post-graduation employment directly through a Strayer placement office. We provide no on-campus job placement services, which might provide a direct window to solicit the thoughts of employers.

Given the range of employment of our graduates, traditional survey methodology was sure to fail. Instead, Strayer decided to invest heavily in interviewing scores of Fortune 1000 companies to understand what attributes successful graduates should have. Research indicated that employers thought the following:

• The soft skills matter a lot—teamwork, oral communication, presence.

• Personal traits are critical to long-term success—grit, flexibility, curiosity.

• Problem solving is often more important than content—critical thinking, analytical reasoning.

Employers also indicated that full degrees are not always the most effective way to educate
employees for job effectiveness. Sometimes micro-skills may be all that are needed.

This research confirmed our need to create Strayer@Work in 2015–2016 to bridge the divide between traditional education and 21st-century employer needs. Employer feedback also refined our thinking about 21st-century core competencies Strayer should address in each of its academic programs.

Evidence that assessment results are shared with appropriate constituents and used in planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal to improve programs, services, and processes, and other activities specific to the institution’s mission.

Under distributed assessment, powerful assessment tools are used daily throughout the university to make progress in achieving institutional goals. One example is the Strayer Stat Report. [See Strayer Stat Report, Dates.]

**Strayer Stat: Are Our Admissions Operations Helping Us Toward the Strategic Goals?**

One of the strongest daily assessment tools is the Strayer Stat Report, produced by the Office of the COO. The purpose of the report is to determine the alignment of our admissions processes and procedures with the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. The report is distributed daily to more than 100 employees, who use it to make daily improvements in time allocation and efforts. The University COO reviews these reports daily and discusses the details with a wide circle of marketing and admissions leadership.

The Strayer Stat Report, produced six days a week, provides the IEC and many others with a view into the following areas:

- Daily inquiry, application, and enrollment counts
- New, readmitted, reinstated, or true continuing status for all enrolled students
- Campus counts for the current recruiting term and the previous year’s comparable quarter

The measures we track include how each campus is performing with each piece of the enrollment process: inquiry, application, interview, and enrollment. Many ratios allow us to view campus variation and year-over-year changes. We use those ratios to determine the following:

- Where we need more employee training
- Where we should reallocate staffing based on current needs
- How well recent marketing campaigns may be attracting potential students with whose goals Strayer is a good fit

**Institutional Assessment: Research Questions**

What evidence shows that institutional assessment is ongoing and informed by the appropriate data and metrics, and that assessment results are used for continuous improvement of the University?

The distributed assessment system successfully involves hundreds of employees in the process of continuous improvement. A good example of that functioning system is the Course Stat Report. The purpose of the Course Stat Report is to provide the leadership team with weekly updates on student progress within the term. (It is predicated upon the centralized curriculum and grading standards process described in Standard 14 and further below.) The report often identifies sections or courses in which something or someone needs immediate help. We do not wait until the term ends to identify students with challenges to their learning; each
week deans of faculty are making hundreds of contacts by phone and email to understand how they can help. The report is distributed to the academic leadership team members on a weekly basis during each term.

For each course section, we track the number of student seats, the percentage of enrolled students who start the course, the percentage attending each week of class, the percentage dropping before receiving a grade, the percentage of failing students at midterm, the engagement rate for online sections, the passing rate for students who started the course (ratio of credit hours earned to credit hours attempted, or CHE:CHA), and the continuation rate to the next term.

To make the tool specific to each user, we can present the data analyzed along many different measures:

- School
- Degree program
- Region
- Modality (online, on-grounds)
- Student campus
- Student career level (graduate, undergraduate, developmental)
- Course career level (graduate, Jack Welch Management Institute, undergraduate)
- Course change
- Experience (transfer credit)
- Student status (new, continuing, etc.)
- Student level (graduate, undergraduate)
- SAS group
- Session (full, mini)
- Overall section performance

We can compare data on the current term against comparable data for the prior quarter and prior year. In addition, we can look at how certain sections compare with peer sections within a specific course. Sections with measures that are more than 1 standard deviation below or above their peer sections are highlighted so that the academic and support teams can reach out to the instructor and offer their assistance or learn from their success. Through the hundreds of weekly uses of this report and the dissemination of its summary insight to the faculty and administrative support teams, the university demonstrates that assessment and progress happen through hundreds of actors.

We also use the Course Stat Report as a guide to help determine which courses should be explored carefully during the next course assessment process. Before implementing course changes for all sections of a course, we designate certain sections as pilots. We then compare those pilots with similar sections or students and review the results before implementing the change more broadly. For example, in the Chrysler Fiat Marketing 100 pilot we ran in summer 2015, the test group outperformed the control group on every metric. The test students were more likely to pass the course and ultimately continue into the next term. Given that the pilot was created to meet exactly the same learning objectives as the control course, we can make apples-to-apples comparisons. Further explanation is provided in Chapter 15, Assessment of Student Learning.

Is University support adequate for institutional assessment, including communication of expectations for assessment, policies and governing structure to facilitate assessment, administrative technical and financial resources, and professional development opportunities and resources?
As suggested in the answers above, Strayer has invested in myriad ways in a robust assessment process. One area, however, does appear to need specific additional investment. Strayer needs more information about the career success of its alumni and should invest accordingly. Suggestions include these:

- Current surveys could provide better assessment information if we reward alumni for their investment of time to respond.

- Our alumni network is just emerging, and it might be a good investment in our assessment tools to fund alumni participation in the range of networking opportunities.

The OIE is engaged in providing data, conducting research, administering surveys, and reporting on student learning outcomes. OIE personnel also manage most external reporting requirements, such as the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, state reports, specialized assessment of pilot programs, and so on. Furthermore, staff receive numerous requests for ad hoc reports from the president, provost, and other academic leaders.

Does institutional effectiveness assessment incorporate results of student learning assessments? How are these related to areas of emphasis in the institution’s plans and priorities for resource allocation and budgeting?

As demonstrated elsewhere in this chapter and throughout the self-study, student learning is at the forefront of Strayer’s assessment priorities. Closely linked to the strategic plan, the various assessments include not only classroom learning but also student satisfaction and engagement. Regular weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports drive decision making at all levels of the institution. Institutional resources and planning are linked to student outcomes, and the university’s ability to experiment with different strategies to improve student learning results from its willingness to invest in new ideas and programs.

One piece of striking evidence is the transformation of undergraduate math. Strayer first implemented the Peregrine assessment with our BBA graduating class in fall 2012, as described in greater detail in the response to Standard 14. One of the critical insights was that our students were performing much worse in mathematics (“quantitative research techniques and statistics,” in Peregrine’s terms) than their peers at other institutions; the nationally normed score was above 50 and our students scored 39.

When the School of Arts and Sciences reviewed Peregrine assessment results captured during the Business School’s capstone course (BUS499), the results were disappointing. The faculty was confident that Strayer’s math curriculum prepared students fairly well for the Peregrine assessment. Through the assessment process, the team further discovered that some of those scoring low on the Peregrine exam had received A grades in their math classes (MAT090, MAT104, or MAT300).

The department chair for mathematics and sciences proposed piloting a new way to deliver the curriculum created by faculty. The Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) learning system, from McGraw-Hill Education, is adaptive and self-paced; using a pre-test, it starts students on the content for which they are correctly prepared. Students then proceed to master the material at their own pace, in the unique order suggested by the system and with the tutoring help of their instructors. Through a two-year trial, this new strategy was employed in all sections of all undergraduate math courses (MAT090, MAT104, MAT200, and MAT300).

There were several critical features to making this new system work, including redesigning math curricula to be overlapping, training math faculty to use ALEKS, and coaching faculty to
adapt instruction to small groups and individual tutoring with struggling students. All of the progress made by students using ALEKS can be observed centrally in real time. Students, faculty, and administrators are given frequent updates on each student’s progress toward the 100–250 learning objectives in the course. That transparency enables all in the system to identify immediately who needs help and to employ new strategies to help them succeed.

BBA graduates currently are testing above national norms in math. The table below illustrates that the improvement was slow and steady as students taught under the new curriculum neared graduation. Math scores were also an important element of the overall improvement for total scores, from below to at national averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peregrine assessment area</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Strayer trend</th>
<th>All others in the U.S.</th>
<th>Strayer students compared with all others</th>
<th>Primary class taught?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>Improving</td>
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<td>Even</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>ACC100</td>
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<td>Business Ethics</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>BUS309</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Finance</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>FIN100</td>
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<td>Business Integration and Strategic Management</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Ahead</td>
<td>BUS499</td>
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<td>Business Leadership</td>
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<td>Economics: Macro</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>ECO100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics: Micro</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Behind</td>
<td>ECO100</td>
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<td>Global Dimensions of Business</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>None?</td>
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<td>Information Management Systems</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>None?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Environment of Business</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>LEG100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>Improving</td>
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<td>Management: Human Resource Management</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>BUS302</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management: Operations/Production Management</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>None?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management: Organizational Behavior</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Ahead MKT100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>MKT100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Research Techniques and Statistics</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>MAT104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: TBD = to be determined.
The success of this learning model is enabling us to pilot a true co-remediation course for remedial math, allow students with lower McCann scores to enter MAT 104 directly in their second term, with the requirement to complete both MAT 104 work as well as any topics from MAT 090 that they need. Students are placed directly into credit-bearing MAT 104 courses, rather than into developmental courses. Using the adaptive ALEKS platform, students are individually assessed, and provided with a custom learning plan that delivers the correct remediation. Our hypothesis is that almost all students currently assigned remedial math can successfully take a co-remedial MAT104 and improve their chances of graduating. Early evidence supports that conclusion, and expanded pilots are underway during the summer and fall 2016 terms.

The success of retraining instructors toward tutoring and away from lecturing spurred the design of the Faculty Charter, which underscores the primacy of student learning above faculty tradition. This clarity of purpose has helped faculty self-select whether Strayer is where they want to teach; those who cannot live without their lecture time, despite its negative impact on student learning, have mostly chosen to move on to other institutions. The success with undergraduate math has not been mirrored among our graduate students. Strayer will address graduate-level math skills as comprehensively as it tackled undergraduate math.
Chapter 15: Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14)

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Like some other working groups, this team was asked to examine evidence of the university’s compliance with multiple standards and to create one report that covered all aspects of institutional assessment and student learning assessment (Standards 7 and 14). During the course of the self-study, however, the Steering Committee requested that the working groups create separate reports on each standard. Concurrently, there were changes in the membership of the working group resulting from an institutional reorganization. Ultimately, it was determined that a subset of the team would concentrate on the fundamental elements of Standard 14 with the goal of creating a report specifically addressing student learning while acknowledging that overall effectiveness is inextricably linked to student outcomes.

The team met monthly to identify and evaluate data related to student outcome assessment. Program reviews were reviewed, as were applications and reports for the specialized accreditations of various programs. The working group analyzed admissions information, discussed policies and practices for serving students who need remedial education, and focused on the drivers of student retention. It studied reports on course-based assessment, student and faculty opinion and satisfaction surveys, the work of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), and the quarterly reports of the president to the Board of Trustees. Key performance indicators such as continuation, retention, and graduation data, and data gleaned from nationally normed tests helped the working group frame progress within the larger context of adult-focused higher education institutions.

Because the working group researched Standards 7 and 14 together, and subsequently developed separate, but related, reports on each standard, there was considerable overlap between the standards and the responses to the research questions and fundamental elements. It was determined that separate responses to some of the research questions were unnecessary because the answers are embedded in the narratives addressing the fundamental elements.

Conclusions:
The university’s mission makes it clear that Strayer’s focus is on teaching rather than research, and the goals and objectives of its strategic plans ensure that institutional resources, academic programs, and student support services are designed to help students achieve expected learning outcomes. To assess progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plans, Strayer has institutionalized policies and practices that establish a culture of assessment and continuous improvement. Faculty and other academic leaders have ready, consistent access to assessment data and use those data to inform decision making to improve student outcomes.

Whether taken online or face to face, all courses have standardized content and grading standards, and are hosted on the same learning management platform. Assessment data are collected and aggregated using Strayer’s clickable rubric system so that faculty and students understand the extent to which students are mastering the content and concepts of individual courses.
Course outcomes are linked to program outcomes and the university’s mission, strategic plan, and core competencies. Student mastery of core competencies and the intended outcomes of each program are assessed with regularity, and there is evidence that these data are used to improve curriculum, instruction, and the full range of services for students. Therefore, the working group concluded that the university meets the fundamental elements of Standard 14 and that assessment is an integral and important element of Strayer’s culture.

Because the responses to the research questions mirrored the information provided in addressing the fundamental elements, they are not duplicated in this chapter. That research, however, and the investigation into compliance with the fundamental elements led the working group to make the recommendations and suggestions to enhance the assessment of student learning.

Suggestions:

1. Launch “whole-course assessment” (WCA) to supplant the current course-based assessment. WCA will review all learning objectives in a course at once. Our current process can focus too deeply on individual assignments and learning outcomes. This evolution will help academic leaders to understand which assignments are critical for student learning and which should be modified to become more aligned with our program goals. To enable WCA, we will need to invest in the next generation of mapping and assessment software to handle tens of thousands of mapped assignments in whole-course format.

2. Identify new ways to measure critical thinking outcomes. Such complicated skills are difficult to measure and hard to teach, and our data are based on only a few assignments that provide strong evidence on this university-level competency. The university should benchmark best practices in evaluating student critical thinking outcomes and employ new tools to assess this important core competency.

3. Create an external committee composed of employers of our students to assist in the program review process.

4. Confirm that the current university core competencies truly reflect the 21st-century needs of the employers of our students. Employers want not only academic content but also workplace-critical skills. Strayer students expect that the degrees they earn will lead to better employment opportunities.

5. Evaluate and refine the program review process so that every academic degree program is reviewed on a three-year assessment timeline as suggested by the IEC.

6. Identify the viability of nationally normed exams in the Information Technology / Information Systems programs.

Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14) Fundamental Elements

Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes at all levels (institution, degree/program, course) and for all programs that foster student learning and development that are

- appropriately integrated with one another;
- consonant with the institution’s mission; and,
- consonant with the standards of higher education and of the relevant disciplines.
Strayer University is engaged in ongoing assessment of student learning at all levels. The overarching purpose of this assessment is to determine whether the institution is fulfilling its mission by enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes they expect when they enroll at Strayer University.

Student learning outcomes and the core competencies that students are expected to acquire during their studies at Strayer are linked to the mission and are at the heart of the institutional strategic plans, which are found in Appendix B. The 2011–2015 Strategic Plan Close-Out Report provides a midpoint review of institutional progress toward achieving university goals and objectives related to curriculum, instruction, and student support that make student attainment of learning outcomes possible. The university design for ensuring that expected learning outcomes at all levels are integrated and linked to the mission and relevant discipline is described below.

**Mapping from University to Program to Course to Assignment, and Back Again**

University academic programs incorporate the defined core competences:

1. **Professional competence:** The ability to apply the knowledge and skills of their disciplines to real-world settings to the benefit of their professions

2. **Communication skills:** The ability to effectively interpret, compose, and articulate ideas and information in a variety of formats and presentation methods

3. **Critical thinking:** The ability to analyze, evaluate, and construct arguments based on their merits
4. **Analytical reasoning:** The ability to identify, evaluate, and solve problems using quantitative and qualitative information

5. **Information literacy:** The ability to locate, critically evaluate, and effectively use information for the purposes intended, including decision making and problem solving

6. **Ethical behavior:** The ability to evaluate complex issues and situations, and make informed ethical choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUS 100 Course Outcome</th>
<th>BBA</th>
<th>BSAC</th>
<th>BSCJ</th>
<th>BSIS</th>
<th>BSIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss basic business elements and considerations for starting a business</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain a capital market system, the role of competition in a market economy and how it impacts decision making</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define entrepreneurship and the nature and importance of small business in the U.S. economy</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the basic components of the marketing process including marketing research, marketing strategy, product, promotion, pricing and distribution</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the elements that foster effective communication in business</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the role of human resources, human resource management, human resource strategies, and employment law within an organization</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the fundamental components of production, operational processes, and management including efficiency and quality measurements</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain accounting and financial basics including planning, budgeting, resource allocation and sources of funding</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the key business management functions</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the roles of ethics and social responsibilities in business</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the global economic environment that impacts U.S. business</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technology and information resources to research issues in business</td>
<td>Business Concepts</td>
<td>Technological awareness</td>
<td>Technical communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write clearly and concisely about business using proper writing mechanics</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Legal communication</td>
<td>Technical communication</td>
<td>Technical communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: BBA = Bachelor of Business Administration; BSAC = Bachelor of Science in Accounting; BSCJ = Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice; BSIS = Bachelor of Science in Information Systems; BSIT = Bachelor of Science in Information Technology.*
These competencies cascade from overall university objectives to program and course learning objectives, and are embedded in the grading rubrics of individual course assignments, as shown in the figure below. [See Master of Business Administration, Master of Education, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing Mapping Process documents.]

Individual courses are designed to foster student mastery of particular learning objectives. While upper-division courses have in-depth mastery outcomes for students enrolled in the specific degree program, many introductory courses are used in several programs, with students from across the university enrolled. For example, our largest class, BUS100, is mapped into five different programs, each of which uses it for different purposes, as depicted in the following table.

To ensure that outcomes are relevant to the academic disciplines, Strayer also takes into consideration the requirements of externally defined programmatic accrediting standards for student learning outcomes. For example, the newly designed Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program incorporates competencies and outcomes required by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice. [See Nursing Curriculum Maps.] The university is also testing the effectiveness of using cohorts to group students by discipline in these early courses in order to provide even more relevance and sense of community. Early results look very promising.

A documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve student learning that meets the following criteria:

- clearly relate to the goals they are assessing;
- are of sufficient quality that the results can be used to inform decisions; and,
- include direct evidence of student learning.

Centralized and standardized course development, the use of a single learning management platform, and mandatory rubrics for outcome assessment provide faculty and academic leaders with sufficient data to inform decisions about the quality of the curriculum, instruction, and support services provided to students. These data have resulted in changes and improvements in our academic programs, instructional approaches, and systemic processes. Using both formal and informal assessment processes, the university acquires data relevant to student learning related to assignments, courses, and programs.

**Quarterly Course-Based Assessment That Supports Program Review**

Since 2011, Strayer has used Blackboard as its learning management system. The Blackboard system enables systematic quarterly learning outcome assessment by course. Strayer developed a process to obtain consistent and timely information about student performance and mastery of content using “clickable” grading rubrics for more than 90% of the standardized assignments in the course guides of all courses. Instructors evaluate and grade a student’s work by clicking on the rubric criterion that matches student performance on the assignment. Those grades align with an A–F grading scale for undergraduate courses and A, B, C, F for graduate courses. (A different grading scale is used for the Executive MBA degree, ranging from Unsatisfactory to Honors.)

Using this rubric process enables access to dozens of sub-grades within a course. Those data are the core of the current assessment.
The university practices the course-based assessment approach as a formal and direct method to assess student learning. Between 2012 and 2015, Strayer formally assessed more than 200 course assignments. As seen in the figure below, course-based assessment is designed to “close the loop.”

**Selection of Courses for Assessment**

Course-based assessment is tied to the larger program review process. Academic programs at Strayer are evaluated on a five years cycle, except if selected for earlier review. Ideally, all courses in the program are assessed during the program review cycle. Assignments and grading rubrics were developed and standardized within the course guides for each course so that all sections of a course may be assessed.

The academic leader of each program selects specific assignment(s) within a course to assess each term after considering several factors:

- Important prerequisite skills needed for higher-level courses
- Rubric items that are used across multiple courses
- Unique program outcomes
- Courses intended as exit or capstone courses

**Tools employed:**

- Rubrics (content, weight, structure, sequencing)
- Faculty training, selection
- Course materials and workload
- Student tutoring and advising
- Technology

**Analysis of results with:**

- High or low failure rates
- Difference outcomes by mode
- Low participation rates
- Mismatch with other sources (surveys, nationally-normed)

**Program owner selects:**

- Critical rubrics
- New assignments
- Rubrics used in multiple courses
- A range of assignments from across the Program

**Data sources explored**

- Clickable rubrics for 1000s of specific assignments
- CE-SOP, Student Satisfaction, Alumni Survey, CE-FOP
- Nationally-normed data (Peregrine, ETS PP)
- Blackboard usage

**FIGURE 9: STRAYER CYCLE OF COURSE-BASED ASSESSMENT**

Note: CE-FOP = Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Poll; CE-SOP = Course Evaluation—Student Opinion Poll; ETS PP = Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile.

investigation. [See Clickable Rubric List; Video Links to the Use of Clickable Rubrics.]
Chapter 15: Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14)

Theme 4: Ensuring Continuous Improvement Standards 7 and 14

Courses redesigned or changed in recent quarters
Courses likely to be changed in the near future
Courses that have not been assessed since the last program review
Courses with low ratios of credit hours earned to credit hours attempted (CHE:CHA ratios) or high drop rates
Good access to data before and after the course to enable value-added calculations

Learning Outcome Mapping: Data Collection via Blackboard

Because instructors use clickable rubrics within courses to complete the assignment grading process, academic administrators are able to view outcomes on the elements of each assignment. Most major assignments are recorded in Blackboard using these clickable rubrics. With the ability to view the major assignments in a course, it is possible to create a detailed map of each element of the graded assignments. Below is an example of the course/assignment mapping of ACC557.

In this example, 10 of the 11 learning objectives are graded in the standard course rubric; only...
use of technology (#10) is not directly mapped to a unique course grade. Also, very few points are given to assignments that are not mapped to explicit learning objectives of the course but are key assignments nevertheless.

Academic program leaders and department chairs determine whether the assignments and the grading standards provide evidence of mastery of each learning outcome, and use these data to determine whether changes to the course would improve student outcomes.

Supplemental Data Used for Analyses and Changes

The staff of the OIE prepares grade-based reports and assembles other data and analyses for academic decision makers to review. Common reports include these:

- The range of student grades from the original class enrollment on Day Zero (the last day to add, or drop a course without penalty) to final letter grades. This material includes information on students who did not start the course, withdrawals during the term, and incompletes. This measure ensures that we are reviewing outcomes even for students who did not finish the course, and it is very useful for developmental courses and those taken during a student’s first term of attendance.

- Faculty usage of the clickable rubrics. IEC monitors whether instructors submit required sub-grades via the clickable rubric to ensure accurate measurement across all modalities of instruction. Current usage rates for clickable rubrics are greater than 95% in online sections and 85% in campus sections. The university is employing strategies to require 100% usage in all modalities.

- The course-specific results from Course Evaluation—Student Opinion Polls and the program-specific results from Course Evaluation—Faculty Opinion Polls

- Appropriate Peregrine or nationally normed data. More than 80% of Strayer graduates are in programs with an exit assessment in the capstone course.

OIE staff provide annotated reports to academic leaders who are responsible for course and program outcomes. Reports can include the range of grades, the share of participation in a specific assignment, and the modal outcome differences, if any. An example is shown in Table 23.

### Table 23: Assessment Results for Spring 2015, Business Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Rubric Element Graded</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Mean Score (0-4)</th>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
<th>OIRAE Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIN100 Week 4 1A</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN100 Week 4 1B</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN100 Week 4 1C</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN100 Week 4 1D-Writing</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: OIRAE = Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Evaluation.
In this example, OIE staff suggested that certain assignments may not be rigorous enough and noted the statistical difference between online and campus-based students in a writing assignment. Using additional data provided by OIE, academic leaders also learned that students did not find the textbook used in this course to be helpful, that many students dropped out of the course early in the term, and that some of the students needed tutoring to improve quantitative outcomes. Consequently, the course is under revision and efforts are being made to improve student tutoring and instruction. The course will be reassessed in early 2017 to determine whether the improvements had the intended effect.

Another example that highlights the assessment process involves the course Contemporary Issues in Education (EDU505). This course was completely revised in spring 2014 due to adoption of a new textbook. In reviewing student learning data, faculty identified an overarching curricular challenge in the Master of Education Program: There was no introductory or foundational course to introduce new students to the rigor of graduate-level writing. Rather, many students enrolled in concentration courses that were theory- or research-based, and therefore had difficulty achieving some of the expected outcomes. [See EDU505 Assessment Report.]

With this information, the redesign of EDU505 changed focus; the new course would become a prerequisite to other, more difficult courses in the degree program. Content was incorporated to provide students with skills to access and use the library, writing lab, and other academic support services. Content was revised to include contemporary examples to make the course more meaningful to students, such as assignments related to cyberbullying, the Common Core, and standardized testing. [See EDU505 Course Guide 2014; Revised Course Guide.]

Later assessment results revealed that students performed better in a number of areas, although many still struggled with graduate-level writing. As a result of this analysis, faculty and administrators developed new strategies to improve student writing, including the adoption of Grammarly software.

It is important that program reviews be informed by student learning results. The OIE analyses provide academic leaders with a wide range of tools to make appropriate decisions, such as restructuring the program, rebuilding courses, refining assignments, developing new rubrics, employing new materials and technology, engaging tutoring support, and selecting and training appropriate faculty.

For example, in spring 2015, the College of Business asked to look in-depth about two of its introductory graduate-level quantitative courses, ECO550 and FIN534. OIE compiled and analyzed the myriad data and sent a detailed spreadsheet to the College Dean. In addition, OIE wrote an informal summary of the major themes and opportunities for improvement it found with these courses. [See ECO 550 and FIN534 Analysis.]

The College of Business reviewed the data and chose to implement the following changes:

- Retraining graduate faculty about our shared standards for grading and the requirement of using the rubric (based on Blackboard grades data)
- Refocusing the work of FIN534 on the essential learning outcomes needed from that course (based on Peregrine, faculty survey, and student survey data)
- Expanding tutoring options for quantitative graduate courses, such as on-campus tutoring and online supplemental instruction (based on student drop and student opinion poll data)
Although the university employs sufficient measures to evaluate student learning and uses the data to make improvements to curriculum, instruction, and student support services, the working group concluded that the adoption of a “whole-course assessment” (WCA) model would reveal additional valuable data. This process would supplant the current course-based assessment design. WCA will entail reviewing all learning objectives when a course is scheduled for review. [See BSN Whole Course Assessment Example.] To enable WCA, Strayer would need to invest in the next generation of mapping and assessment software.

Support of administration and faculty in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results.

Evidence that assessment information is shared with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning.

Academic leaders responsible for different areas of the curriculum use formal and informal faculty focus groups to test the soundness of their ideas. Currently, the deans of faculty meet with faculty groups weekly, and OIE staff frequently share assessment data at these meetings. [See Web link Economics Faculty Meeting.]

Faculty and administrators work effectively together to create the course content, to collect and review assessment data, and to make revisions to courses and programs where necessary. Instructors are trained to use standardized rubrics, to interpret learning outcome data, and to administer and evaluate end-of-program exams such as the Peregrine.

Faculty subject matter experts, who may be full-time or adjunct employees, also are called upon to develop new courses for existing programs or to participate in the development of new academic programs, degree concentrations, and so on.

When a course-related issue arises, faculty, department chairs, and deans of faculty meet to discuss data and develop plans to address any issues that require a timely response. Such issues include unexpected changes in student outcomes discovered through assessment, changes in drop rates, or changes in student satisfaction data.

Faculty content experts review and recommend changes to courses based on student and faculty survey data, student outcome data, and analysis of industry employment qualification standards. Faculty subject matter experts, who may be full-time or adjunct employees, also are called upon to develop new courses for existing programs or to participate in the development of new academic programs, degree concentrations, and so on.
Faculty members have opportunities to recommend changes in a course using the Course Change Request form. This form lets faculty update or change elements within a course in real time. Only faculty can initiate a course change request. The number of faculty who have served or are serving as subject matter experts and the number of course change requests processed annually indicate a robust role for faculty in curricular design and improvement.

The university president is apprised of assessment results and key performance indicators at least quarterly, and he provides a summary report to the Board of Trustees. The provost meets regularly with senior academic leaders to discuss student learning outcome results, and the director of the OIE is one of her direct reports.

*Clear and realistic guidelines and timetables, supported by appropriate resources. Assessment processes of sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable.*

*Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of student learning assessment processes.*

The university engages in regular, sustained assessment of student learning outcomes and uses data to improve the quality of its academic programs and student support services. The guidelines and timetables for assessment are developed by the OIE and the IEC, and these timetables are congruent with the goals and objectives set forth in the strategic plan.

The guidelines and timetables are realistic, and the responsibilities for assessment are understood by the faculty, administrators, and program owners. The use of clickable rubrics makes it possible for faculty to participate in the collection and evaluation of data on student success in achieving the learning objectives of each course, regardless of modality of instruction. The university has the ability to collect, aggregate, and analyze large data sets to obtain an overall picture of student mastery, ranging from single assignments to entire courses and concentrations.

Since 2012, the university has evaluated a number of undergraduate and graduate programs including the following:

- **Associate of Arts in Accounting (AAAC) (2012)**, **Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice (AACJ) (2014)**, **Associate of Arts in Information Systems (AAIS) (2012)**
- **Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (2014)**, **Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC) (2012)**, **Bachelor of Science in Economics (BSEC) (2012)**, **Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice (BSCJ) (2014)**, **Bachelor of Science in Information Systems (BSIS) (2012)**, **Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) (2015)**
- **Master of Business Administration (MBA) (2014)**, **Master of Science in Accounting (MSAC) (2012)**, **Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) (2012)**, **Master of Science in Human Resource Management (MSHR) (2015)**, **Master of Science in Health Services Administration (MHSA) (2014)**
- **General education (2015)**

Reviews underway or planned include the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice (BSCJ), Master of Education (MED), Master of Public Administration (MPA), and Jack Welch Management Institute (JWMI) Executive MBA.

The BBA program review illustrates the practical, collaborative, and comprehensive approach used by the university. Faculty and administrators examined student learning outcome data and demand for each of the BBA’s concentrations. Information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provided insight into the relationship of the university’s concentration...
offerings to credentials needed for applicable career paths. Faculty also reviewed ways to build content into first-year courses that is relevant for multiple concentrations. This program review resulted in several changes to the BBA, including elimination of the legal concentration, integration of certification preparation in the Project Management concentration, and incorporation of content that is applicable to multiple concentrations into the foundational BUS100 course. [See BBA Program Review.]

University resources for student learning assessment include OIE staff, members of the IEC, academic leaders such as course managers and department chairs, and the faculty. Because resources for assessment are shared among different areas, the OIE undertook a review of the effectiveness of the processes and presented the results to the IEC in 2015. The IEC found the assessment process to be well integrated across academic programs but recommended ways to improve its effectiveness. One suggestion addressed the need to engage in more assessments of an entire course instead of analyzing discrete assignments within the course. The result of this analysis is the first iteration of the WCA process that is currently under development and testing. [See Course-Based Assessment Report, 2015.]

The use of external review committees or advisory teams is an effective tool in the program review process. Such committees were influential in helping to design the new BSCJ and BSN degree programs and can provide invaluable guidance in ensuring that degree programs remain relevant for students who seek career opportunities. Establishing and managing external advisory committees is time-consuming and requires resources. Addressing this need is an opportunity for improvement to ensure that degree programs are relevant and that students acquire the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful in their chosen careers.

Documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment.

Assessment results that provide sufficient and convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program outcomes.

Chapter 14 documents the use of student learning assessment information as part of the overall evaluation of Strayer’s institutional assessment efforts. The university has a comprehensive approach to evaluating student learning at the assignment, concentration, program, and institutional levels. In addition, reports on key performance indicators (KPIs) provide academic leaders with data on persistence rates of new students, graduation rates, student and alumni satisfaction, placement and performance of students needing remediation, and student opinions on the effectiveness of their instructors.

Annually, the president reports to the Board of Trustees on the KPIs and quarterly discusses progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. [See Board of Trustees Dashboard.] Two examples of the KPIs on the strategic plan dashboard illustrate student achievement of institutional and program outcomes:

- “Measure graduates of all programs on nationally normed content exams”
  - Such exams provide critical triangulation with our grading policies to ensure our students are learning what we (and the marketplace) expect from their degrees.
  - More than 80% of graduates now take the exam, about half of whom are at or near national averages.

- “Increase the share of graduates improving their careers” based on successful completion of their program
At Strayer, we build programs such that mastering student learning will change the career paths of our graduates.

More than 60% of recent graduates have seen substantial career benefits since mastering the student learning objectives.

Further evidence is provided in the following discussion of Strayer’s capstone courses and the use of Peregrine and other nationally normed assessment measures.

**Capstone Courses**

Another key piece of assessing outcomes is the capstone course in each of our programs. Each program is punctuated by a comprehensive final course, e.g., BUS499, CRJ499, or MSM599. Each final course weaves together the myriad themes of the entire course of study. As such, faculty grading in that course provides one more guarantee that the students have met the learning outcomes required in the course. [See Course Guides BUS499, CRJ499, MSM499.]

The courses themselves are mapped to the core objectives of the program, so the grades in the final courses are direct evidence of the mastery of learning. [See Course Mapping BUS499.]

Capstone courses have relatively high passage rates—students do indeed demonstrate the learning outcomes required of our graduates. However, top grades (“A’s”) are not as common; clearly, faculty are identifying excellence among a selection of our students.

**Peregrine Assessments**

To obtain further evidence that Strayer students are achieving key program outcomes, the university in 2012 began using nationally normed assessments such as Peregrine. More than 15,000 Strayer students in nine academic programs have now taken an appropriate nationally normed examination to determine how they compare with peers who have undertaken similar studies at other institutions of higher education.

Before employing one of these assessments, the program leaders and faculty review the test content to determine its match with the learning outcomes of the degree program. If the match is high, the assessment becomes part of the capstone course in that program. For example, in the BBA program, 10% of the grade for each student in BUS499 relates to the Peregrine BBA assessment: one-half for completion and one-half for total score earned.

To better understand the value created by our course and program content, Strayer is exploring the use of Peregrine as an inbound test as well as an exit assessment. This will allow us to calculate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Winter 2016</th>
<th>Passage Rate</th>
<th>A’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC599</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUS499</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS499</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRJ499</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC599</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUS599</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<td>CIS599</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD599</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 24: CAPSTONE GRADES AS DIRECT EVIDENCE OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Passing Grades: A&Bs for graduate; A, B & C for undergraduate

Passing Rate: CHE:CHA
The university recently implemented the assessment in both the first program course (CRJ100) and the last (CRJ499) in the BSCJ Program. Although there is not enough longitudinal data to draw conclusions, we expect that future information will result in improvements to the BSCJ Program.

Peregrine and similar assessments measure student mastery of the content in degree programs. Strayer’s institutional commitment is to teach a broader set of competencies including critical thinking, written communication, and analytical reasoning. We have experimented with assessments to supplement Peregrine in these categories.

The Peregrine results help Strayer confirm the accuracy of its grading system and achievement of student learning outcome objectives throughout our courses. This extra triangulation confirms that most programs show results close to national norms. ACBSP, which suggested these extra assessments recommend that we compare ourselves against the Hybrid Program benchmark. Strayer also focuses on “All Programs” measure, which is usually more stringent.

Recent ad hoc investigations resulting from the Peregrine analyses include these:

- **Exploring the relationship between program GPAs and Peregrine scores:** In the JWMI spring 2015 assessment, there was a solid relationship between the Peregrine scores and GPAs of Strayer students. Students with a 4.0 GPA had average Peregrine scores of almost 60, while those with a GPA below 3.6 averaged less than 42. However, it was concluded that the assessment measured prior learning that was not taught in the university's curriculum. JWMI faculty took the assessment and then constructed a customized assessment more closely mapped to the curriculum [See Peregrine Summer 2015 JWMI Analysis.]

- **Exploring the relationship between a Peregrine discipline sub-score and the grade received in the course that included the tested concepts:** Across 11 quarters, data revealed that those who received an A grade in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Strayer Average (last four terms)</th>
<th>Hybrid Programs</th>
<th>All Programs in USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBA</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSCJ</td>
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<td>†</td>
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<td>BSAC</td>
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</tr>
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<td>MBA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSAC</td>
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<td>MSHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>52</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWMI</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Customized assessment without direct norm
† National norm not yet sufficient

TABLE 25: STRAYER PEREGRINE SCORES AND EXTERNAL BENCHMARKS

The “content value-added” for our programs. The university recently implemented the assessment in both the first program course (CRJ100) and the last (CRJ499) in the BSCJ Program. Although there is not enough longitudinal data to draw conclusions, we expect that future information will result in improvements to the BSCJ Program.
the MPA course Administrative Law averaged 50.5 on the Administrative Law sub-section of Peregrine; those not receiving an A in the MPA course averaged only 44.8. The program owner of MPA concluded that grading in the course was directionally accurate but perhaps not at a high enough standard. [See MPA Peregrine Analysis Fall 2015.]

• **Exploring the relationship between Peregrine score and Career Impact post-graduation:** The most recent Survey of Alumni was the first to have graduates with Peregrine scores. The OIE survey could find no relationship between the Peregrine score earned and the career benefits (promotion, new job) reported. Other factors, such as prior experience working in the field of study were much better predictors for career improvements. [See OIE 2015 Survey of Recent Graduates.]

Although the university uses nationally normed assessments for many of its programs, the Information Technology and Information Systems programs are the largest for which we have not identified an appropriate nationally normed test. However, the university is using technical certification as one measure to evaluate student learning in those academic programs.

*Other National Assessments*

For a three-year period (2012–2014), students were asked to take the ETS Proficiency Profile for extra credit. The students who took the exam did not perform well in English and math courses. A broader discussion of this topic is included in Chapter 13 (General Education).

We also ran only experiment with the CLA+ assessment. A few faculty and student volunteers suggested that the assessment’s complicated “performance tasks” used to measure critical thinking were not emphasized in Strayer’s curriculum. The results of these two assessment studies suggested that Strayer needs more in-course assignments focused on the core competencies, especially critical thinking.

The research of the working group suggests that Strayer is in compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 14. Significant progress to create sustained and meaningful assessment programs has been made since the last reaccreditation, and the use of assessment results has improved Strayer’s curriculum, instruction, student support services, and student learning outcomes.
All self-study working groups were asked to respond to the following question:

Analyses of enrollment trends and demand suggest that a majority of the student population will study exclusively online in the future and that this population will be increasingly technologically savvy. What are the major implications of such changes, if any?

The Steering Committee posed this “thought question” so that the working groups would consider the changes that might be necessitated by future enrollment patterns in key areas such as planning, resource allocation, student services, assessment of student learning, and faculty qualifications and training. Although some research was required to respond to this question, the Steering Committee believed that the considerable experience of the working group members would result in ideas, recommendations, and suggestions that could be of value to academic and administrative leaders in preparing for Strayer’s future.

A number of working groups did not find that enrollment trends would significantly impact compliance with such standards as mission, leadership and governance; most groups indicated that Strayer is well prepared for changes in enrollments.

Chapter 16 addresses only those standards where the working groups believe the shift in enrollments may have implications. The groups made no recommendations relative to this question, but some groups identified suggestions which are listed at the end of the chapter.
Chapter 16: Implications of Online Enrollment Growth

Planning and Resource Allocation

The most significant implications of changing enrollment patterns identified by all working groups were those related to planning and resource allocation. Effective planning and efficient deployment of resources are essential to anticipating and staying abreast of the latest technology; enriching content to make it appealing and beneficial to students; developing leaders, faculty, and staff who are effective in online environments; providing appropriate student support services; and continuing robust outcomes assessment.

As described in Chapter 3 of the self-study report, between 2007 and 2012, Strayer expanded its geographic footprint and increased the size of its student population. However, by 2013 enrollments generally, and campus-based enrollments specifically, began to decline. Concurrently, student enrollment patterns shifted with a trend toward a greater number of online enrollments. Figure 11 depicts changes in the modality of student enrollments between 2013 and 2015:

In a survey administered to students in summer 2015, more than 60% of the respondents indicated a preference for taking an online BUS100 course (an introductory course for most Strayer undergraduates) rather than enrolling at a campus. In the winter 2016 Strayer Student Profile it was reported that 73% of new students took all of their classes online in
their first term of enrollment, an increase of 10% over the prior year. [See Winter 2016 Student Profile.]

The cost to maintain physical campuses requires a significant investment in facilities, technology infrastructure, and human resources ranging from faculty to security personnel. As described in Chapter 6 of the report, the cost of maintaining facilities has increased by nearly 15% since 2010 relative to the number of students enrolled at Strayer’s campuses. [See Figure 2, Chapter 6.] Because students choose to take more of their classes online, campus investments benefit a smaller percentage of our student body, and in the future will have a lower priority in planning and resource allocation relative to investments in the online environment. The working groups noted that it will be necessary to deploy resources currently devoted to campuses to other uses.

While Strayer remains committed to providing flexible program delivery options to our students and do not envision becoming an online university without campuses, shifting enrollment patterns may necessitate further reduction in the number of campuses, campus consolidations or changes in the geographic footprint, and redesign of campus facilities to upgrade technology.

An unintended consequence of reducing the number of campuses may be a reduction in enrollments by students who prefer campus-based classes or in-person tutoring and advising. Enrollments may also decline among students on F-1 visas, who are required to enroll at physical campuses, and students who receive Veterans Administration benefits, because of the implications for limiting financial assistance for housing allowances. Such decisions might also affect students who do not have access to technology in their homes and who now use local campus computer labs for their studies. Growth in online enrollments also has planning and resource allocation implications for the hiring and training of instructional and non-instructional personnel, the acquisition or updating of technologies to enhance teaching and learning, the development and/or acquisition of online content that appeals to students and facilitates learning in the online environment, and the provision of exceptional remedial and academic support services.

In many of these areas the working groups agreed that the university is well positioned for changing enrollment trends because Strayer has made considerable investments in infrastructure to support online students. The groups concluded that with the robust planning and resource allocation process in place, Strayer University is prepared to address future changes necessitated by demographic shifts in the coming years.

**Administration, Faculty, and Staff**

The increasing online population of the student body will have an effect on the composition of its personnel. We acknowledge the need to recruit and hire administrators and faculty who have experience teaching and working in online learning environments, creating online content, and supporting online students. Equally important is ensuring that Strayer hires and trains those who support instruction. Admissions, library and technology staff, instructional designers, tutors, student support staff, and disability services personnel must be experienced in, or provided training for, serving students in the online environment.

Working groups concluded that selecting and hiring faculty who are adept in online instruction should be an increased priority. In the past, student demand for campus-based classes was sufficient to support faculty who taught only in
person at campuses. We anticipate that changes in enrollment patterns will make this no longer feasible as faculty will need to be effective instructors whether teaching at a campus or in the online environment.

In recent years, Strayer has made progress in hiring faculty who will be effective in the online environment. Presently, hiring decisions are based in part on teaching demonstrations by applicants in a simulated online environment. The university also provides training to faculty and staff to ensure that they effectively work with and support online students. Changes have been made to Strayer’s new faculty orientation program to include components in online instruction, ways to use the Blackboard learning management system, and techniques for increasing student engagement in online environments.

New faculty have regular feedback sessions with supervisors and faculty mentors who provide guidance and promote the development of online teaching skills. Strayer provides pre-quarter training each term that addresses issues in online teaching; webinars and other educational opportunities are offered throughout the year. Funding is available for full-time faculty to attend professional development opportunities, including those that enhance online teaching skills.

Such initiatives position Strayer to serve its students whether they are enrolled in online or campus-based courses. Future growth in the online environment may necessitate some changes in instruction and instructional support services, but the working groups concluded that Strayer’s students in both modalities will be effectively served.

**Student Support**

In student support, the primary implications of growth in the online student population include the need for additional investment in student support personnel and in technology that can be leveraged to enhance academic success and personal services; and planning, preparation, and funding to deliver additional remedial and academic support services for adult learners who enroll without prior collegiate experience.

In recent years, the university has enhanced online student services in several ways as described in Chapters 11 and 12 of the self-study. Online 101 is a beginning course designed to ensure that new students are equipped to succeed in the online classroom environment. Online students are able to review classes that were recorded using the screen capture system, and the university provides academic support services such as Tutor.com, Grammarly, supplemental instruction, and the Virtual Writing Center. Strayer recently partnered with Lynda.com, a service with unlimited access to 130,000 instructional support videos. Finally, student career resources are available on the iCampus student web portal.

Although Strayer has a number of initiatives to support the needs of online learners, the working groups suggested that continued investment in human resources, training, and technology will be needed as the online population expands.

**Technology and Content**

The move to online learning means a greater incorporation of technology throughout the university’s courses, almost all of which will be taught in an asynchronous format. The major challenge will be ensuring that the incorporation of new and evolving technologies not only supplements but also strengthens the academic content, rigor, and coherence of these offerings.

The working groups examined the current state of online courses to identify the various ways in which technologies are integrated into them, and evaluated the effectiveness of those
technologies. This examination and analysis revealed both opportunities and potential challenges relating to the increasing student preference for online learning.

Since 2012, the university has established a number of contractual relationships to address the needs of online learners, including partnerships with Blackboard Collaborate, GoToTraining, and VitalSource. We have also partnered with Tutor.com and Grammarly to provide support services to our online and campus-based student populations. These partnerships and others expand educational access to online students and provide resources to support our academic programs consistent with the goals of the strategic plan.

Strayer has adopted some adaptive learning technology and is exploring other programs to improve student learning. As described in Chapter 13, a successful example is the ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) adaptive learning program, used in core math classes, MAT090, MAT104, and MAT300. Another example is the use of interactive webtexts. In addition to traditional written text material, these interactive webtexts incorporate videos, discussion forums, study questions, and quizzes within the text. The professor for each section has access to a dashboard allowing a real-time analysis of student activity and performance in terms of webtext completion, allowing for a deeper view of student comprehension of and engagement with the material.

Technological innovations such as adaptive learning programs and webtexts can enhance learning and enrich the content of our courses, making online learning a positive experience for the student. In addition to experimenting with making classes richer and more engaging, recent changes to the curriculum through the process of program review will help ensure that all students practice essential skills. Currently, ENG221, Oral Communications, is an elective course and is offered only on campus. With the most recent revisions to the general studies requirements, all bachelor's students will be required to take COM101, Effective Communication Skills, and COM201, Oral Communication and Persuasion, which will be a newly designed course leveraging new technology to increase students’ digital fluency and spoken communication skills.

Significant efforts are underway to improve general education online courses and instruction. Online faculty are encouraged to increase outreach, create their own content, and customize their classes. Strayer has supported those efforts with new technology and training, including Civitas, Kaltura, and Lynda.com. Our efforts have paid off in many areas including marked improvement in CHE:CHA ratios for online math and English outcomes. [See General Education Online Classes Chart.]

The content of online courses will be enriched by the newly created Strayer Studios that will make our online course content much more engaging, interactive and dynamic which should contribute to Strayer’s efforts to build partnerships with businesses in Strayer@Work. Online content will be revised to incorporate business cases and instructional modules that address the issues and challenges that affect the global business community. Such changes will also benefit non-partner students by providing content that enhances their career opportunities.

The working groups concluded that significant progress has been made since 2012 in incorporating technology to improve facilities, educational content, and student learning. However, it is clear that continued investment in initiatives such as Strayer Studios, technology platforms, and adaptive learning programs will be
essential to support students who enroll at the university. Finally, it was suggested that Strayer investigate and adopt emerging technologies to ensure the verification of online students. As the online population grows, ensuring that the students who enroll are the students who achieve the learning outcomes becomes increasingly important. While we believe that our current verification process is sufficient, there may be new ways to improve these processes in the future.

Assessment

The supposition that our students are increasingly technologically savvy is a complex issue. The research undertaken by the working group suggested that our newer and younger students were more comfortable with technology than our older students. For example, they were more willing to participate in online tutoring sessions. However, we lacked data to evaluate how our new students’ technological skills would compare with those of a broader set of students entering other colleges and universities. Student learning outcomes in CIS105, our introductory computer course, reveal that only 63% of those registered pass the course in that term. Such data imply that our assumptions about the technological abilities of younger enrollees may be wrong and that Strayer will need to effectively assist new students who choose the online modality for their studies.

A detailed review of policies and procedures for assessing student learning and for using data for improvement revealed that assessment is effective for both online and campus-based students. For example, the curriculum and grading standards for each course are determined centrally by the schools, and the learning management system facilitates the distribution and required use of approved rubrics. That rubric information is visible to all and is a core part of the course assessment process. Any differences in learning outcomes along modal lines are investigated and addressed through a range of tools including curriculum changes, advising refinements, admissions amendments, and faculty training or selection.

As the online population grows, there may be a need for new tools to evaluate student learning. However, the working groups found that the university’s emphasis on ensuring student learning means that Strayer will adapt to an increasingly online modality preference among students without sacrificing overall effectiveness.

Suggestions:

1. Establish a division or team including faculty dedicated to identifying and testing new learning technologies.

2. Identify or create adaptive learning programs for a larger number of undergraduate and developmental courses.

3. Invest in planning, preparation, and funding to deliver additional remedial and academic support services for adult learners who enroll without prior college experience.

4. Investigate new technologies to ensure online student verification.

5. Identify the optimal number of full-time faculty to teach the expanding online student population to determine appropriate class sizes, to facilitate instruction, and to ensure student learning.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 17: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

Each working group was tasked with researching compliance with the fundamental elements of the 14 MSCHE characteristics of excellence, and with identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement. For more than a year, the working groups and the steering committee examined existing data, commissioned new studies, interviewed staff and faculty, and evaluated countless documents and other evidence related to the fundamental elements of the standards and the research questions. Many groups established sub-committees to research specific questions or topics. Some working groups were affected by changes in the composition of the groups resulting from reassignment of individuals’ responsibilities during the self-study period.

Once the groups began to draft their reports it became clear that there was significant overlap between the material researched to analyze compliance with the fundamental elements and the material used to respond to the research questions. In some cases the research question responses augmented the analyses of the fundamental elements and provided useful context. However, in many of the standards, the responses to the research questions were simply redundant. In retrospect, there were too many research questions for each standard and many of the questions did not open new avenues of exploration. As a result, the self-study report authors elected not to include working group responses to many of the research questions.

The suggestions and recommendations made by the working groups as a result of their analyses are provided for each of the 14 Characteristics of Excellence in the previous chapters. Many of the groups came to similar conclusions and a few made nearly identical recommendations. Similar recommendations and suggestions were listed under the standard with which they most closely aligned. This consistency among many reports enabled the steering committee to identify strengths and challenges and to recommend to the academic leaders and the Board of Trustees actions that will ensure compliance with MSCHE standards, improve student learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of the Strayer University in fulfilling its mission.

Recommendations and suggestions resulting from the self-study are repeated below. We believe that the adoption of these recommendations and suggestions will ensure institutional effectiveness and student learning, build on institutional strengths, help to capitalize on future opportunities, and address specific challenges identified in the self-study process.

Recommendations

Planning, Institutional Resources, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

1. Adopting a formal assessment process focused on the effectiveness of expenditures would be a helpful tool in planning
and institutional renewal. A more consistent approach to the analysis of post-investment outcomes may be beneficial to the university in informing future investment decisions. Requests for funds provide the rationale for making an investment, but currently there does not appear to be a rigorous and consistent process requiring project owners to evaluate and document the benefits achieved from an investment relative to the expectations at the time the investment was approved.

**Leadership and Governance**

2. Strayer has appropriate mechanisms in place to properly assess the effectiveness of institutional leadership. Although the Board of Trustees meets annually in executive session to evaluate the performance of the university’s President, we recommend that the board develop and provide the president with an annual written performance review for his benefit and for the university record.

3. The Board of Trustees should consider diversifying its membership to include more women and alumni. With the appointment of its newest member in December 2015, the board now has two female members. Currently, only one trustee is a Strayer alumnus. Women make up more than half of the student body, and graduates in recent years have perspectives that would be beneficial to the institution. Further, we recommend that adding a trustee who has that expertise in online education or experience in technology or similar fields relevant to current and planned academic programs would provide valuable insights in guiding Strayer’s future directions.

**Administration**

4. After an appropriate period of time, assessment of the impact of administrative changes should be undertaken to determine if such changes positively affected student learning and institutional effectiveness.

**Faculty**

5. The university should create a standing Curriculum Committee comprised of adjunct and full-time faculty and academic administrators to review and recommend changes designed to improve all curricular offerings of the university.

**Admissions, Retention, and Student Support Services**

6. Although the university has adopted several strategies and tools to support students, and collects student usage data, detailed assessment of the effectiveness of student services on academic achievement is lacking. The team concluded that studies should be undertaken to correlate usage with retention, continuation, and student satisfaction rates.

**General Education**

7. Place additional emphasis on assessing essential skills and general education competencies that are important for student success in upper-division courses and employ these data to make improvement in curricula and instruction.

**Suggestions**

**Mission, Goals, and Integrity**

1. The university should develop a communications plan to more clearly and
directly communicate the mission and goals of the University with students and prospective students, faculty and staff, and external constituents.

**Planning, Institutional Resources, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

2. Modify spending authorization forms to include a section explicitly stating the goal/objective of the strategic plan that the investment is addressing. While the team was able to conclude there was a strong link between the strategic plan and resource allocation based on actual investments being made, funding requests infrequently referenced the specific component of the strategic plan that was being addressed. This minor addition to funding request documentation would allow for easy reference to the strategic plan, provide for an easier method of confirming that all goals in the strategic plan are being funded, and to the extent that certain goals are not being funded, provide a mechanism to determine whether the university's focus has shifted or resources need to be reallocated.

3. Provide consistent feedback to the university community regarding steps that are being taken in response to surveys, feedback, and information requests. Often resources are allocated based on information distilled from student or staff surveys; however, the respondents may not always be notified that their voices have been heard and the University has allocated funding to address their concerns. Improved communication may enhance community goodwill and encourage future participation on surveys and other feedback-giving opportunities.

**Leadership and Governance**

4. The Board of Trustees is apprised of student and faculty issues and viewpoints by reviewing the survey data and other information presented by the president and other academic leaders. However, it is suggested that we create formal opportunities for the Board of Trustees periodically to interact with faculty and students representatives.

**Faculty**

5. Faculty engagement in curricular development would be enhanced by including more faculty in the assessment and adoption of technologies for online instruction. Currently, this is primarily done at the management level and new technologies typically are introduced to faculty after adoption or as a pilot program.

**Educational Offerings**

6. Regularly assess the progress of students awarded transfer credit or credit by alternative means such as challenge exams to evaluate their performance in subsequent classes compared with students taking these classes in residence.

**Related Educational Activities**

7. Raise awareness about and provide support for experiential learning credit opportunities among prospective and current students. Consider the viability of continuing the rarely used Life Credit Portfolio or revising it to make it a more attractive option for students. Investigate
the viability of using free diagnostic exams so that students may evaluate the likelihood of passing standardized tests such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSSTs), and the like.

8. Ensure that remedial courses accurately measure student learning and provide a foundation for success in credit-bearing courses. Benchmark best practices and adopt strategies to further assist students who need remediation.

**Admissions, Retention, and Student Support Services**

9. Direct, specific, and targeted intervention for struggling students has assisted in improving student outcomes. The university should conduct short-term and long-term assessment of the effectiveness of coaches and advisors to ensure the optimal ratio of coaches/advisors to students for improving student outcomes.

10. Embed career-relevant content into curricula and evaluate its impact on student and alumni satisfaction.

**General Education**

11. Adopt a comprehensive assessment tool for use in general studies. Further investigate the discrepancy between current Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS-PP) and Peregrine test results.

12. Undertake a survey of the curriculum in each of the majors to identify how we currently embed critical thinking into the curriculum. Among other things, this survey will help to analyze and assess existing assignments. Further, it is proposed that we assess student outcomes in critical thinking, using a value-added methodology, so that we can ascertain the extent to which our programs improve critical thinking skills.

13. Incorporate more performance task–style assignments in courses to ensure that students are performing a diverse range of cognitive tasks in our courses.

**Institutional Assessment**

14. While distributed assessment is very effective at aligning a dispersed organization around the goals of the strategic plan, Strayer may benefit from centralizing reporting procedures in a department with primary responsibility for collecting annual assessment information linked to the strategic plan, documenting actions taken or changes resulting from assessment, and preparing an annual report to the university president. This process would require annual reports from departments throughout the institution such as admissions, human resources, financial services, information technology, student affairs, and so on. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) would serve as a resource for departments and monitor quarterly process toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

15. Strayer needs more information about the career success of its alumni and should invest accordingly. Current surveys could provide better assessment information if we reward alumni for the time they spend responding, and other strategies such as industry-related focus groups would be beneficial. As the alumni network is just emerging, funding
alumni participation in the range of networking opportunities would be of benefit to Strayer students.

**Assessment of Student Learning**

16. Launch “whole-course assessment” (WCA) to supplant the current course-based assessment. WCA will review all learning objectives in a course at once. Our current process can focus too deeply on individual assignments and learning outcomes. This evolution will help academic leaders to understand which assignments are critical for student learning and which should be modified to become more aligned with our program goals. To enable WCA, we will need to invest in the next generation of mapping and assessment software to handle tens of thousands of mapped assignments in whole-course format.

17. Identify new ways to measure critical thinking outcomes. Such complicated skills are difficult to measure and hard to teach, and our data are based on only a few assignments that provide strong evidence on this university-level competency. Strayer should benchmark best practices in evaluating student critical thinking outcomes and employ new tools to assess this important core competency.

18. Create an external committee composed of employers of our students to assist formally in the program review process.

19. Confirm that the current core competencies truly reflect the 21st-century needs of the employers of our students. Employers want not only academic content but also workplace-critical skills. Strayer students expect that the degrees they earn will lead to better employment opportunities.

20. Evaluate and refine the program review process so that every academic degree program is reviewed on a three-year assessment timeline as suggested by the IEC.

21. Identify the viability of nationally normed exams in the Information Technology and Information Systems programs.

**Online Enrollment Growth**

22. Establish a division or team including faculty dedicated to identifying and testing new learning technologies.

23. Identify or create adaptive learning programs for a larger number of undergraduate and developmental courses.

24. Invest in planning, preparation, and funding to deliver additional remedial and academic support services for adult learners who enroll without prior college experience.

25. Investigate new technologies to ensure online student verification.

26. Identify the optimal number of full-time faculty to teach the expanding online student population to determine appropriate class sizes, to facilitate instruction, and to ensure student learning.
A. Glossary of Terms
B. Strategic Plans
C. Organizational Chart
D. Campuses and Additional Locations (Locations and Maps)
E. Institutional Profile