

# **DIXIE STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **YEAR ONE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT**



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**Compiled by Debra Bryant, Accreditation Liaison Officer**

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## INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Dixie State University is a publicly funded, open-admission state university within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), and is authorized by the Utah State Legislature in Article X, Section 4, of the Utah State Constitution. On February 16, 2013, Governor Hubert signed into law HB61, granting the title and status change of Dixie State College of Utah to Dixie State University. In the Utah State Board of Regents' Policy R-312-4.3, *Classifications*, Dixie State University is categorized under "baccalaureate colleges and universities". Institutions within this classification typically "offer baccalaureate degrees representing at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and award fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees per year". According to Regent Policy 312, it is the university's responsibility to:

...provide training and educational programs developed as a part of a dynamic continuum of opportunities that includes certificate, associate's degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and continuing education offerings responsive to a rapidly growing and divergent economic region. Emphasis is placed on teaching and training, scholarly, professional and creative efforts complementing its teaching and training role and community service. The institution contributes to the quality of life and economic development of the community, the state, and the region. Student success is supported through developmental programs and services provided by a comprehensive community college.

DSU is located in St. George, Utah, the county seat of Washington County. St. George is situated in the extreme southwest corner of Utah, about 120 miles north of Las Vegas, Nevada, and approximately seven miles from the Arizona state border. Washington County has a warm climate and proximity to ten major national parks, monuments, recreation areas, state parks, and scenic tourist destinations that make the area extremely desirable for various demographic groups and recreationists. Furthermore, the county is bifurcated by a major north-south transportation route, Interstate 15, so it is a convenient location for commercial enterprises.

As a result of these and other factors, the region and DSU have experienced rapid growth. Even with the economic downturn, DSU saw stunning enrollment growth. For example, the university reported end-of-term FTE enrollment for fall semester, 2007 at 3,996 and headcount at 6,413; in comparison, the end-of-term FTE enrollment for fall semester 2011 was 6,506 and headcount was 8,840. This amounted to an increase of 63% in FTE and 38% in headcount in four years' time. However, with the apparent economic recovery from the recession, DSU's 2012 enrollment FTE was down by 1.0% from end-of-term fall semester 2011 and enrollment FTE at 6295 for fall semester 2013 is further down 4.4%.

The submission of DSU's Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report to the Commission came at a significant moment in the life of the institution. Just over one hundred years ago, on September 19, 1911, the "St. George Stake Academy" opened its doors, thus, 2011 marked DSU's centennial. The institution's character can be explained, in part, by providing some historical context. Perched at the convergence of the Mohave and Sonoran Deserts and the Great Basin, St. George was dubbed "Utah's Dixie" by early settlers because of the warm climate and potential for raising agricultural crops like those of the Cotton Belt. It made sense, then, that the Stake Academy would be called "Dixie" as well. Throughout the twentieth century, Dixie Academy grew, becoming Dixie Normal College, then Dixie Junior College, and Dixie College, a

community college. By 2000, Dixie College had evolved to Dixie State College of Utah, a baccalaureate institution.

As it began its second century, DSU again welcomed change as it responded to educational needs in a dynamic and vibrant region. In 2010, Utah Governor Gary Herbert called upon the State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education to present a plan for Utah's colleges and universities to meet the needs of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; subsequently, in December 2010, the Regents adopted an initiative entitled "Higher Ed Utah 2020." The plan entailed a mission change to university status for Dixie State College. University preparation benchmarks were then established by Regent directive. Upon meeting the benchmarks, Regent approval for university status was given and on February 16, 2013, the Governor pronounced the title and status change of the college to Dixie State University. The University Benchmark document can be viewed at

<http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/File/2012%20Regent's%20University%20Benchmarks.pdf>.

While change and growth are facts of life for the institution, certain essential hallmarks of DSU have endured for a century; most notable among those hallmarks is the relationship between the university and the community. When the St. George Stake Academy was chartered, it was not as a state institution, but as a joint venture between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and St. George residents, who undertook the construction efforts. The sense of ownership and pride that St. George and Washington County residents feel for DSU has not waned in the twenty-first century, nor has the university forgotten its community. In fact, DSU sees its continued sustainability inextricably linked to its ability and willingness to respond to community needs. This relationship is articulated in the institutional mission and manifested in a rich array of educational programs, cultural and recreational offerings, and community outreach programs.

Another equally important hallmark of the university is its commitment to student-centered education. Faculty, staff, and administrators pride themselves on the personalized experiences they provide in the classrooms, in student support, and in their involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities with students. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges DSU faces may be in maintaining its tradition of personal relationships with students in the face of enrollment growth. Given its history, however, there is abundant confidence that the university will meet this and other emerging challenges.

## PREFACE

### ■ Brief Update on Institutional Changes since Last Report

Dixie State University submitted its first Year One Self-Evaluation Report to the Northwest Commission on September 15, 2011 and a Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report on September 1, 2012, completing the new seven year accreditation cycle in two years. Following is a brief update on significant institutional changes since the 2012 report:

#### **Enrollment and Program Growth**

After several years of rapid enrollment growth, DSU enrollment declined slightly in 2012. Attributed to the recovery from the recession and higher employment rates, 2012 enrollment FTE at 6,539 (-1.0%) was down compared to fall semester 2011. Enrollment of 6295 FTE for fall semester 2013 is also a decline of 4.4% due to continued economic recovery and a unique event: Utah's predominate religious organization, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, has decreased its age for common missionary service, which means that many students will take leave of their education earlier and go on two-year missions.

#### **University Status**

In 2010, Utah Governor Gary Herbert called upon the State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education to present a plan for Utah to meet the needs of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; subsequently, in December 2010, the Regents adopted an initiative entitled "Higher Ed Utah 2020." The plan entailed a mission change to university status for Dixie State College. University preparation benchmarks were established by Regent directive. Upon meeting the benchmarks, Regent approval for university status was given and on February 16, 2013, the Governor pronounced the title and status change of the college to Dixie State University. A letter notifying NWCCU that university status had been granted was sent on March 1, 2013. Acknowledgement of the DSU's university status and name change was sent by Dr. Les Steele on behalf of NWCCU on March 4, 2013.

#### **New Mission Statement**

DSU took the opportunity of the change to university status, to revise its mission statement to highlight its core themes: *Dixie State University is a teaching institution that strives to enrich its community and the lives of its students by promoting a culture of learning, values, and community.*

#### **Special Report**

[http://www.dixie.edu/assessment\\_archive/File/InstitutionalDocuments/NWCCUReports/DSU%20Special%20Report.pdf](http://www.dixie.edu/assessment_archive/File/InstitutionalDocuments/NWCCUReports/DSU%20Special%20Report.pdf)

On May 1, 2013, Dixie State University sent a special report, requested by President Sandra Elman. The content of the special report had a twofold purpose:

- I. Address the institution's planning and resource allocation for undertaking substantive changes with regard to programs that have been initiated since January 2008.
- II. Address how the institution intends to comply with Commission Policy A-2, *Substantive Change*, in the future.

## ■ Responses to 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Recommendations

Dixie State University recognizes the recommendations from the Commission in the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Report of October 8 -10, 2012. The Commission has requested that DSU include an addendum in its Year One Report addressing the two recommendations made in the Comprehensive Report (February 5, 2013, letter from Dr. Sandra Elman, President, NWCCU). The following section outlines the ongoing efforts of the university to respond to the recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

*The evaluators found current human and institutional resources insufficient for the rate of growth and expansion. Therefore, the evaluators recommend that the institution plan for and strengthen its human and institutional infrastructure to assure the integrity of its programs (Standards 2.B.2, 2.B.4, 5.B.1; Eligibility Requirement 10 and 24).*

### **Response to Recommendation 1**

Aware of the challenges faced by the institution due to rapid enrollment growth and program expansion, Dixie State University was involved in extensive, ongoing assessment and planning before and at the time of the NWCCU comprehensive “year seven” site visit and evaluation. DSU plans well for the future, as the comprehensive report peer evaluators noted:

As described above, the recent institutional planning process was exemplary marked by inclusive, systematic, comprehensive and purposeful planning informed by the collection and use of appropriate data and the achievement of a remarkable consensus over priorities (p.28).

A benchmark document was established with the Regents to determine university readiness: <http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/File/2012%20Regent's%20University%20Benchmarks.pdf>. The document was developed from research that included university-level expectations based upon institutional characteristics from three peer-comparator groups. The benchmarks related to the necessary foundational degrees, the number and qualifications of faculty, and the necessary student and administrative services, and laid out a three-year cost plan for achieving the elements necessary to attain university status Utah’s Commissioner of Higher Education, David L. Buhler, wrote in his memo of recommendation to the State Board of Regents:

In sum, the benchmarks agreed to by the Commissioner, Regents, and the College have provided a blueprint for development during the last three years. The enrollment growth and accompanying tuition increases have provided the resources needed to meet the benchmarks. This update provides evidence that DSU has met the criteria established by the Board of Regents and Commissioner's office and is prepared for university designation.

Examples of resource building to establish sufficiency in response to enrollment and program growth:

1. Before and after the comprehensive self-study was written, the university moved to increase staffing. In June, 2010, there were 215 fulltime staff; by September 2013, there are 277 (a 29% increase).
2. The DSU ratio of adviser/students is now in line with national averages. For students declared as general education students, the ratio is 336:1, well below the 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising of 441:1 for two year schools, which is essentially the comparative group for general education students. For declared majors in specific fields, the ratio average, across disciplines, is 281:1. This ratio is in line with the 260:1 ratio for public, bachelor granting institutions and the 300:1 ratio for public, master granting institutions.
3. The evaluators expressed a concern regarding DSU's sufficient capacity and qualifications of faculty for supporting new programs. DSU is also concerned with building faculty capacity and has made a determined effort to increase fulltime qualified faculty. Utah is a very conservative state, financially and otherwise. Each year there are very limited funds provided from the state; institutions must, therefore, plan well for hiring of new faculty and plan lean. Faculty for new programs is typically hired for course and program development up two or three years before a program is offered. It is somewhat a question of "the chicken and the egg": How can faculty be justified without a program in place and students enrolled and how can a program be offered without sufficient faculty? Most new programs have GE courses with faculty already in place. In preparation for baccalaureate and university status, for the past ten years DSU has focused on hiring highly qualified faculty by mostly hiring faculty with terminal degrees for teaching even at the GE level.

Since June, 2010, an additional 35 fulltime faculty positions have been funded. In June, 2010, there were 155 fulltime faculty, and by July 1, 2013, there are 190 fulltime faculty, a 23% increase. As of the start of the 2013-2014 academic year, 61% of fulltime faculty members hold a terminal degree in the field in which they teach.

4. 2013-14 increase in available faculty and staff professional development funds. An additional \$60,000 has been made available for faculty and an additional \$40,000 for staff.
5. The new 170,000 square foot Holland Building was completed at the campus center for student one-stop service. The library is the heart of the Holland Building and its new home allowed for expanded library services, including a new faculty technology support center. An additional instructional systems administrator was hired July 1, 2013.
6. The computer lab space for students was expanded from 863 to 1117 computers, with 234 new student computers made available in the Holland Building.
7. DSU received \$1.5 million in its 2013-14 budget from the state to work on university development. Ongoing \$1.5 million annually has been appropriated for university status.
8. Over \$12 million in tuition revenue has been generated in the past five years and used to support enrollment and program growth.

As noted by the peer evaluators in their 2012 comprehensive report, “Dixie State College appears to have sufficient financial stability, cash flow and reserves to support its mission, programs, and services” (p.24). Dixie State University is a very fiscally conservative institution as evidenced by its budget process. The portion of collected revenues used is based on probabilities of historically collected revenue percentages. For example, if the historical collection rate is 80 percent, then the planning process includes budgets that represent scenarios of 25, 45, and 65 of those expected revenues. This conservative approach and response preparation is directly accountable for the sound financial situation that recent external auditors have determined. It also is responsible for the fact that DSU is the only public institution in the state of Utah that did not cut programs or lay off a single employee during the long recession of the past five years. Instead, it continued to hire faculty and staff, provide equipment and facilities, and increase professional development funds. At the same time it provided equity and benefit cost increases to both faculty and staff and maintained every fulltime faculty member at 90 percent of the CUPA mean for the appropriate discipline and rank.

Additionally, Dixie State’s budget approach provides a necessary cushion to accommodate unforeseen events. One such event is a factor in reversing the growth of the institution for the short-term. Utah’s predominate religious organization has decreased its age for application for missionary services, which means that students will leave the educational process earlier. Every public institution in the state is experiencing lower enrollments as a consequence. DSU conservatively budgeted for the 2013-14 year a 5% enrollment decrease, which happily has turned out to be only a 4.4% decrease, leaving a small funding surplus.

A premise of Recommendation 1 is that rapid growth would continue for the institution. As is noted above, DSU has actually experienced enrollment decline for the past two years. The administration is always concerned with sustainability and that it maintain its quality of service to students and the community. As such, with economic recovery and university status, DSU has accepted and welcomes a recommended slower pace of growth of new programs and a time of strengthening of infrastructure and existing programs. Utah’s Commissioner of Higher Education, David L. Buhler, wrote in his memo of recommendation to the State Board of Regents:

The Commissioner recommends the Regents accept the University Benchmark Update and approve Dixie State College for university status. While it is anticipated that graduate programming at the master's level will likely be considered in the future, it is understood that DSC is not proposing this at this time, and this is a prudent approach. Therefore, it is also recommended that graduate degrees not be considered until the institution has had the opportunity to mature in its new role.

## **Recommendation 2**

*The evaluators found evidence of a great deal of activity concerning the assessment of student learning and core theme objectives. However, the evaluators did not find that the assessment of student learning was sufficiently conducted, documented or acted upon. Therefore, the evaluators recommend that the institution fulfill its plan to collect and analyze data to evaluate the accomplishment of core theme objectives and course and program outcomes, and use the*



*data to inform program improvements and resource decisions in a consistent and systematic manner (Standards 3.B.3, 4.A.1, 4.A.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2; Eligibility Requirement 22, 23, 24).*

## **Response to Recommendation 2**

With the completion of the new seven-year accreditation process in two years, Dixie State University was and is well aware of its need to advance on a path of realignment of assessment to the new accreditation standards, improve assessment practices and base institutional decisions on sufficient and sound data in order to assure mission fulfillment. By fall 2012, two key positions in the academic support area had been created to assist in this development: the Director of Program Assessment and Institutional Research position, Andrea Brown, and the Academic Program Support and Assessment Specialist, Dr. Assunta Hardy; both are directed by the vice president of academic services. In fall 2013, Dr. Hardy was advanced to fulltime and to Director of Academic Assessment. These two professionals, along with the newly assigned Accreditation Liaison Officer, Dr. Debra Bryant, immediately began discussing with and advising university administrators and employees on best practices in assessment and revision of accreditation processes. An additional professional to be over institutional program proposals and reviews, as well as curriculum development, is being hired in September of 2013.

A new standing committee was formed, the Institutional Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC). ISAAC, with representatives from across academic and support divisions and from student, staff and faculty associations, is the voice of institutional assessment and accreditation to the campus. The committee also supervises accreditation and institutional assessment practices and makes recommendations to their colleagues and the administration. ISAAC reviewed and revised the institutional mission and initially established core themes, indicators, measures and benchmarks, delivered them to their divisions for discussion, and recommended the current version. For the academic year 2013-2014, the scope of the committee's responsibilities will include assisting in creating the measures (i.e., campus-wide surveys) identified during AY 2012-2013 to ensure mission fulfillment. The mission statement, core themes, institutional objectives, indicators and measures are available at: <http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/File/2013%20Objectives%2C%20Indicators%2C%20Measures8232013.pdf>

While ISAAC worked on clarifying the institution's core themes, the Director of Academic Assessment began improving the processes and understanding of faculty of academic program assessment. Though processes were in place to meet NWCCU and Board of Regent guidelines for program development and assessment, effective practices of data gathering and analysis and high levels of involvement of faculty at the department level were not standardized across programs. At this time, new templates for reporting annual student learning outcomes' assessment and for three and five year program reviews have been developed and faculty has been trained on the processes. Timelines and information flow plans from programs and departments for institutional strategic planning purposes have also been set-up. A DSU assessment website with assessment process, templates, timelines and training is found at: <http://www.dixie.edu/assessments/>

Human resources across campus have been identified to assist in instituting the assessment processes. During AY 2012-2013, one faculty member for each academic program was assigned to be the Assessment Coordinator for their academic program. There are currently approximately

32 assessment coordinators across campus. With the help of the Director of Academic Assessment, the Assessment Coordinators are regularly trained on basic concepts of assessment. Also, under the guidance of the Director of Academic Assessment, the Assessment Coordinators take on the leadership role to formalize their assessment process within their academic program, and annually document and report their assessment efforts to the Office of Academic Services. Assessment Coordinators have also been identified among the support-services group. During AY 2012-2013, support-services department assessment training, with accompanying objective assessment templates, was delivered by the Accreditation Liaison and Director of Program Assessment and Institutional Research.

In addition, the General Education (GE) Committee is given the responsibility to oversee assessment of the GE program. Under the guidance of the Director of Academic Assessment, the GE committee has revisited their GE outcomes, and taken initiatives to map the GE courses to the GE outcomes. The next step is to assess the GE outcomes by identifying courses, creating embedded assessment, and gathering and analyzing student data. As well, steps are being taken to see how ePortfolios can be implemented to facilitate the assessment process.

### **2011 Year One Report Recommendation**

In 2011, when DSU submitted its first Year One Self-Evaluation Report to the Commission, peer evaluators made the following recommendation:

*The panel recommends that the College develop specific measurable benchmarks and criteria for each indicator under each Core Theme, assigning specific designations of an acceptable level of performance for each outcome indicator, outlining in clear terms for each what successful mission fulfillment looks like. (Standard 1.A.2)*

### **Response to Commission Year One Report Recommendation**

With the additional comments and recommendations from the 2012 comprehensive evaluation report and ISAAC in place, a fresh look was taken of assessment and, therefore, also of DSU objectives, outcomes, measurement and benchmarks. Thus in 2012-2013, objectives and outcomes were refined and based on measurable elements. New practical and meaningful measures and performance expectations were defined. During the 2013-2014 academic year, ISAAC will be working on creating, improving and standardizing measurement tools, baselining new benchmarks and identifying trends for stable, existing benchmarks. With an attitude of continuous improvement the Director of Academic Assessment became a member and began training with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Assessment Leadership Academy. The revised objective, indicators and benchmarks can be found at:

<http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/File/2013%20Objectives%2C%20Indicators%2C%20Measures8232013.pdf>

### **ADDENDUM: SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE PROPOSAL for UNIVERSITY STATUS (Attached as a separate report with appendices)**

Requested by Dr. Elman and the NWCCU in a July 31, 2013 letter in response to the Spring 2013 Special Report

## CHAPTER ONE: MISSION, CORE THEMES, EXPECTATIONS

### ■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS 2 AND 3

**2. Authority:** *The institution is authorized to operate and award degrees as a higher education institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, or governing board as required by the jurisdiction in which it operates.*

On February 16, 2013, with the passing of House Bill 61, Governor Hubert pronounced the title and status change of Dixie State College of Utah to Dixie State University. Dixie State University (DSU) is a publicly funded, open-admissions, state university within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and is authorized by the Utah State Legislature in Article X, Section 4, of the Utah State Constitution. Utah State Code, [Title 53B, Chapter 1](#), establishes the Board of Regents and vests that body the power and authority with the “control, management, and supervision of the institutions of higher education. . . .”

Under Utah State Code [53B-1-101\(2\) and 53B-1-103](#), and Board of Regents’ [Policy R220](#), delegation of responsibilities, effective communication, and consultation is conferred to an institutional Board of Trustees. Board of Trustee members are appointed by the Governor. DSU administrators govern the university in accordance with Utah state code.

**3. Mission and Core Themes:** *The institution's mission and core themes are clearly defined and adopted by its governing board(s), consistent with its legal authorization, and are appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. The institution's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its students and its principal programs lead to recognized degrees. The institution devotes all, or substantially all, of its resources to support its educational mission and core themes.*

### ■ STANDARD 1.A - MISSION

*1.A.1 The institution has a widely published mission statement—approved by its governing board—that articulates a purpose appropriate for an institution of higher learning, gives direction for its efforts, and derives from, and is generally understood by, its community.*

*1.A.2 The institution defines mission fulfillment in the context of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations. Guided by that definition, it articulates institutional accomplishments or outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.*

Dixie State University has a new mission statement, reflecting both its new name and teaching university status, as well as its essential core themes. DSU’s mission statement and core themes are readily available on its Accreditation and “About DSU” webpages: [http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/dscs\\_mission\\_and\\_core\\_themes.php](http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/dscs_mission_and_core_themes.php). The core themes of DSU are not new, they are instilled in its being, having developed over 100 years. The revision of the 2005 to 2011 mission statement was accomplished during spring of 2013 in an inclusive campus process, after the legislative granting of university status and name change. Its mission and core themes reflect DSU’s focus on serving its students and its community by offering

quality learning experiences that lead to recognized degrees. Dixie State University devotes substantially all of its resources to support its educational mission and core themes.

### **Dixie State University's Mission Statement**

*Dixie State University is a teaching institution that strives to enrich its community and the lives of its students by promoting a culture of learning, values, and community.*

#### **Mission Statement Development**

The Board of Regents approved university status for Dixie State on January 5, 2013, and the Utah Legislature awarded university status and name change with approval of House Bill 61 on February 6, 2013. The university's revised higher education classification and mission statement are referenced in Regent Policy R-312-4.3, found at [http://higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/pff\\_2013\\_r312.pdf](http://higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/pff_2013_r312.pdf).

With the granting of university status in Spring of 2013, Dixie State University took the opportunity to reconsider its mission statement, to make it more concise, useful and memorable for its stakeholders. In Spring of 2013, revision of the mission statement was undertaken by ISAAC and the Deans' Council, in consultation with the Higher Education Commissioner's office. Two main parameters were set: the statement would be shorter and would reflect the core themes that a broad constituent consensus had developed. Discussion of a mission statement was opened on campus, several options were proffered and a survey was conducted of statement preferences. A final mission statement was chosen by majority vote. The revised mission statement truly reflects the essence of Dixie. The Board of Trustees approved the mission statement on April 29, 2013, and it was approved by the Utah Board of Regents May 17, 2013. The current mission statement is available online at [http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/dscs\\_mission\\_and\\_core\\_themes.php](http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/dscs_mission_and_core_themes.php).

When considering revision of the mission statement, a few key realizations became apparent:

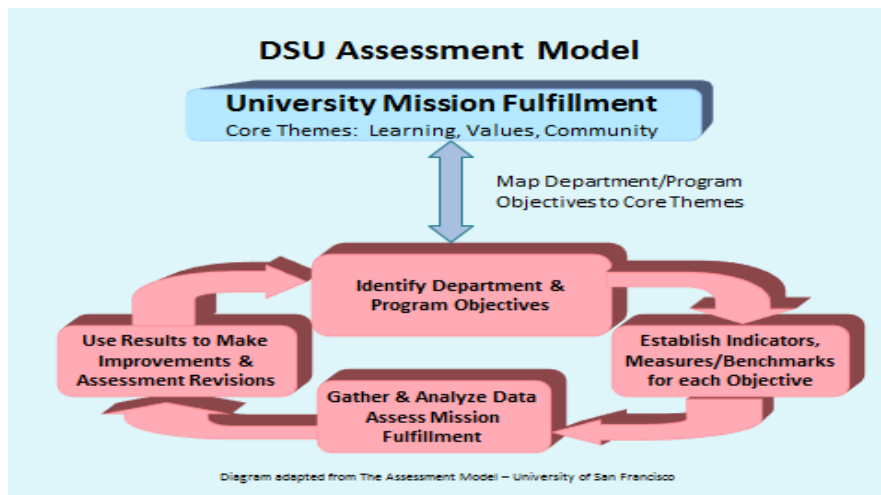
1. After months of work on institutional objectives, indicators and measures, ISAAC members appreciated that sufficient mission detail was defined at these levels of articulation. Therefore, extensively defining the attributes of the institution's objectives was not necessary at the mission statement level and detracted from the value of a simple, overarching statement.
2. It was limiting and unnecessary to define the broad spectrum of degrees and certificates being offered, as was done in the 2005 mission statement. Objectives and indicators define the degrees offered.
3. The core themes truly embraced the essence of DSU's mission.
4. It is appropriate that Core Theme One is about learning because one of the primary characteristics of Dixie State University is that it is a teaching institution that focuses on student learning, enhanced by personal relations, a caring and supportive faculty and excellent teaching.
5. The "Dixie Spirit" is an essential characteristic of DSU and is defined by its values and sense of community.

## Acceptable Level of Mission Fulfillment

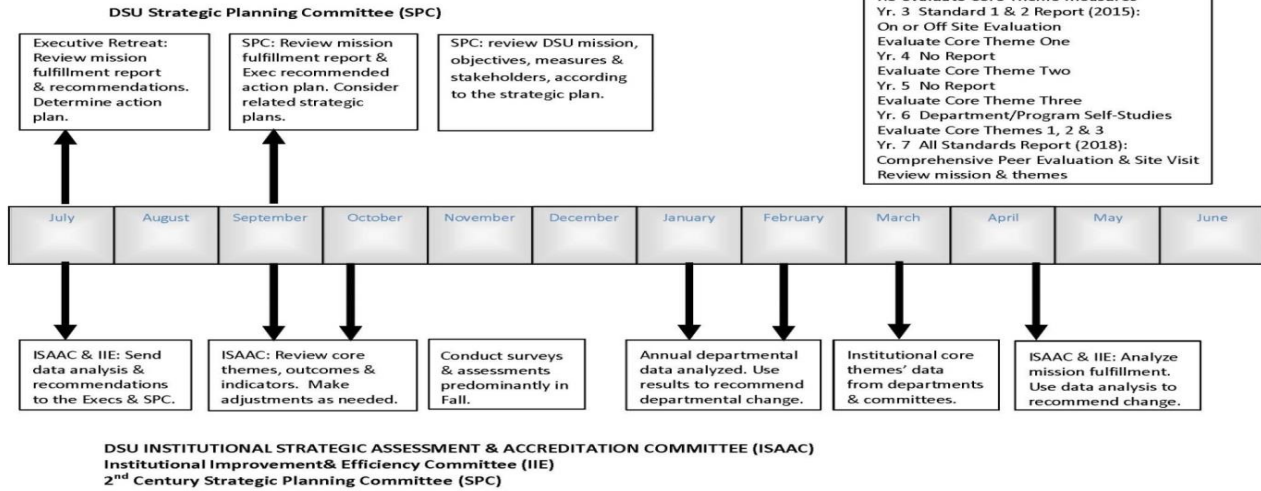
DSU determines mission fulfillment at the *institutional level* by holistically analyzing the alignment of performance with its mission, core themes, objectives and benchmarks. Evaluation at the institutional level is based primarily on three criteria: capacity and resource management; planning and implementation; and valid assessment and use of results for continuous improvement and sustainability. An annual assessment report is forwarded to the President's executive staff, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Strategic Planning Committee, and the Board of Trustees for review and recommendations, and for use in strategic planning. The Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC) & administration will periodically assess the continued relevance of the institution's mission, core themes and objectives.

Mission fulfillment at the *core theme level* is measured by indicators and benchmarks which were identified for the objectives and intended outcomes for each core theme. This strategy identifies meaningful performance expectations for acceptable fulfillment that will consistently provide data for analysis at the program, department, or functional unit level. Those data will become tools for determining overall institutional achievement and needed courses of action.

Mission fulfillment at the *program level* is measured by individual departments or programs setting objectives that correspond to the institutional core themes and objectives and conducting regular assessment of their indicators and performance expectations, some of which provide data on institutional mission fulfillment. Program and institutional data collection will be monitored and coordinated by the Director of Program Assessment and Institutional Research, the Director of Academic Assessment, the Accreditation Liaison Officer, and the Implementation of Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC). Individual departments and programs will also conduct strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analyses and evaluate the level of their mission and objectives fulfillment and determine necessary action.



**DSU TIMELINE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF MISSION FULFILLMENT**



For an detailed diagram of DSU's Assessment System go to:  
<http://www.dixie.edu/assessments/Image/DSU%20Assessment%20System.jpg>



**■ STANDARD 1.B – CORE THEMES**

*1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.*

***Dixie State University Core Themes***

DSU core themes, objectives, outcomes, indicators, measures and benchmarks can be found at <http://www.dixie.edu/accreditation/File/2013%20Objectives%2C%20Indicators%2C%20Measures8232013.pdf>

<b>Core Theme One: A Culture of Learning</b>
<b>Dixie State University promotes a campus-wide culture of learning; delivers excellent teaching; and prepares knowledgeable and competent students who achieve their educational goals.</b>
<b>Core Theme Two: A Culture of Values</b>
<b>Dixie State University invests in a culture of values which include service, citizenship, diversity, ethics, and collaboration.</b>
<b>Core Theme Three: A Culture of Community</b>
<b>Dixie State University builds and maintains strong relationships between students, faculty, staff and community to foster economic growth and a continuum of educational, cultural and recreational enrichment.</b>

*1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.*

After the NWCCU Comprehensive Evaluation in fall 2012, DSU began its second, seven year cycle of assessment and reporting. With the new standards better understood and more widely accepted on campus, the institution undertook the reassessment of its core themes, objectives, indicators and measures. There was broad consensus that the core themes were sound. But, the Institutional Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC) worked long and hard at establishing more specific, meaningful and assessable objectives, indicators and benchmarks as recommended by NWCCCU evaluators. The main task of ISAAC for 2013-2014 is to establish, test and gather data on valid, standardized, institutional surveys. Sound benchmarks will stand and continue to be used, the baselines for new benchmarks will be set, data will be assessed as it compares to the benchmarks, and benchmarks will be tested, in order to establish acceptable, foundational thresholds to measure institutional mission fulfillment and sustainability over time.

**Core Theme One: A Culture of Learning**

***Dixie State University promotes a campus-wide culture of learning; delivers excellent teaching; and prepares knowledgeable and competent students who achieve their educational goals.***

Learning is at the heart of DSU’s mission, therefore, Core Theme One focuses on the student as the institution’s *raison d’etre*. DSU aspires to help students attain their educational and life goals, however varied those goals may be. DSU’s institutional philosophy asserts that a supportive environment of academic rigor will develop students with knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in the endeavors of their choice.

<b>Objective 1: Foster a campus-wide culture of learning</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Provide a wide variety of learning resources & support to advance the knowledge of students, faculty, & staff	1) Satisfaction of student resources & support services	a) NSSE Grouping - Campus Environment; High-Impact Practices b) Student Survey	NSSE provides comparative data with peer institutions. A student survey will give their perspective on resources & support services & areas of needed improvement.	NSSE will be used for the baseline. DSU rating averages will be higher than peers'. A student survey will be created, administered & baselined
	2) Satisfaction of faculty/staff resources & support services	Faculty & Staff survey	A faculty/staff survey will identify areas of strengths & of needed improvements in support services	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered & baselined
B) Offer quality educational programs at the certificate, associate, baccalaureate and graduate degree levels	1) Number & variety of degree programs offered by school	a) Track institutional strategic planning documents b) List of degree programs c) Peer institution benchmark programs d) Student program demand survey	Justification for new & existing degree programs, plus identification of degrees in high demand	Create a baseline (2013-2014) of percentage of degrees offered by like institutions, as well as peer & state institutions
	2) Program goals align with academic & professional standards	a) Rating of proposals of new degree program by external evaluators b) Rating of 5 yr. program reviews by external & internal evaluators c) NSSE groupings – Academic Challenge; Learning with Peers; High Impact Practices	a) Justification of new degree programs & validation of existing programs b) 3 point scale: 1) does not meet requirements, 2) met requirements, or 3) exceeds requirements c) NSSE provides comparative data with peer institutions	Baseline year: 2013/2014. Target: All new program degree proposals & all program reviews will receive no less than “met requirements” by external and internal reviewers. DSU NSSE rating averages will meet those of its peers. Note: Graduate degree courses & programs will not be offered for two to three years from 2013.



*Core Theme One: A Culture of Learning*

<b>Objective 2: Deliver excellent teaching in a student centered environment</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) The faculty is qualified in the field & at the level they teach	1) Faculty Credentials	a) Percent with terminal degrees in each program b) Degrees held by faculty c) Professional qualifications & experience	Faculty having terminal degrees & professional qualifications indicates superior educational experience for students	Target: Regents require 60% of our faculty (FTE, Fulltime & adjunct) have terminal degrees. List from Banner
	2) Faculty participate in continued faculty professional development	a) Counts of professional development from Faculty b) ePortfolios	Continued professional development leads to superior educational experience for students	Baseline year: 2013/2014 for counts of professional development & the number/percentage of faculty participating
B) Students engage in active learning through best pedagogical practices applied in the classroom	1) Faculty report on pedagogical practices used, & the frequency of usage	a) Faculty survey includes a rubric listing best pedagogical practices b) ePortfolios	Best pedagogical practices support student engagement & active learning. Reflective teaching & learning practices also promote learning.	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered & baselined. Target: At least 50% of the responding faculty uses a variety of pedagogical practices (more than three different practices), besides traditional lecture, read textbook & test format.
	2) Students report on the variety of pedagogical practices they experience, the frequency of usage	Student survey includes a rubric listing best pedagogical practices. Students will be asked to rate the effectiveness of the practices on their learning.	Students & faculty reporting on pedagogical practices is informative, personally & institutionally & identifies areas of needed improvement	Student survey to be created, administered & baselined. Target: At least 50% of responding students experience more than 3 pedagogical practices beyond the traditional. At least 50% of the students find pedagogical practices effective to learning.
C) The institution maintains an atmosphere characterized by strong relationships & positive interpersonal interactions between faculty & students	1) Small class sizes	a) Student/faculty ratio (IPEDS) b) Percentage of courses by student class size range (Common Data Set)	Smaller class sizes result in more positive student-faculty relationships	Target: Student to faculty ratio is 25:1 or lower. Target: More than 65% of class sections have less than 30 students.
	2) Positive feedback from students & alumni	a) NSSE grouping – Experience with Faculty b) Graduate student & alumni surveys conducted bi-annually	Provides peer comparative data Student/alumni survey will identify areas of needed improvement	NSSE data will be used for the baseline. DSU ratings higher than peers'. The graduate and alumni surveys will be revised, administered & baselined.
	3) Positive faculty feedback	Faculty survey	Faculty survey will identify areas of needed improvement.	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered & baselined.

***Core Theme One: A Culture of Learning***

<b>Objective 3: Develop students' knowledge and skills, enabling them to succeed in a changing and competitive world</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Students develop & master relevant knowledge & skills	1) Student success in meeting General Education Requirements	GE learning outcome attainment, based on 3-point scale: 1) not met 2) partially met 3) met	GE committee already collecting this data which demonstrates students' GE knowledge & skills.	Curriculum mapping and pilot testing of GE outcomes scheduled for the 2013/2014 year.
	2) Student success in mastering the foundational knowledge & skills of their major	Percent of programs meeting their PLO benchmarks based on rubric ratings (3-point scale: 1) not met, 2) partially met, 3) met)	Program assessments informs mission fulfillment. Acquisition of foundational knowledge & skills in a field is essential for mastery of that field & one assumed purpose of education.	2012/2013 is the baseline year. Threshold: 50% of programs submit Academic Program Assessment Documents (PAR Forms). Target: 65% response rate & of those responding 70% of programs will have partially met their PLO benchmarks.

<b>Objective 4: Support student achievement of their educational goals</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Support students in the transition to, progress in & attainment of their chosen major	1) Students progress towards their major & meeting their educational goals	a) Graduate student survey b) Retention rated c) Non-returning student survey	NSSE data will identify student perceptions about the level of student support the institution provides (see CT1, Obj.1.A.1) Retention rates are low at DSU, impacting factors need to be identified and action taken.	Graduate and alumni surveys will be revised, administered & baselined. Target: Meet national average retention rates (2012: 58.3% for 4 year public institutions with open selectivity reported by ACT). Baseline of Non-Returning student Survey Spring 2012.
	2) Students graduate	a) Degrees awarded b) Graduation rate c) Graduate student survey d) Time to degree	Nationally reviewed graduation statistics. Graduating/alumni survey question will query student perceptions of educational experience at Dixie. These measures can identify areas of needed improvement.	Target: degrees awarded trend upward. Target: National Persistence to Degree Rates as reported by ACT in 2012 is 27.2% for 4 year public institutions with open selectivity. Target: Meet median time for bachelor degree recipients to earn a degree when graduating from a public institution (2008: 55 months, reported by the National Center for Education Stats.)

***Core Theme Two: A Culture of Values***  
***Dixie State University invests in a culture of values which include service, citizenship, diversity, ethics, and collaboration.***

One hears about “Dixie Spirit” often at DSU. The expression encapsulates the distinctive characteristics of DSU students, alumni, and employees. The Dixie Spirit runs through the institutional mission and is demonstrated in the actions of the DSU community. Becky Smith, the Dean of the School of Academic and Community Outreach and a DSU alumnus, says:

Dixie Spirit is a tangible entity. It means caring, responsive individuals. . . support for co-workers and students. It means cohesiveness and a united bond to the community . . . . It means I’m as interested in seeing you succeed as I am in succeeding. It is as simple as greeting everyone you pass with a look and a smile. It’s a welcome. It’s why people come for a visit or short-term employment and don’t leave.

During the process of developing Core Theme Two, the question most-often posed was: “But is it measurable?” The university can measure student participation in service projects and exposure to civic events, but can it measure the extent to which students internalize service and citizenship and integrate them in their future activities? The consensus is that Core Theme Two and its objectives are fundamental to DSU’s mission fulfillment and they must be addressed; therefore, a combination of approaches to measurements seems appropriate.

Scholarly research supports the decision. Even as they recognize the need for producing quantitative data, many educational researchers have identified “purposeful pathways” or “high-impact practices” as crucial for student success.<sup>2</sup> Among these practices are hard-to-measure activities like collaboration, appreciation of diversity, global and service learning. In regard to assessment of these activities at the heart of a liberal education, researcher Ross Miller maintains that “once learning goes beyond the most basic levels, meaningful assessment nearly always requires *qualitative* judgments of the elements vital to authentic work in a domain.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, assessment of students’ active involvement with, real-world application of, and learned skills in service is both quantitative and qualitative. Structured reflective essays will be used in courses with service-learning experiences, in capstone courses, and as part of internships. Student opinions from NSSE will provide data on their perceptions of personal growth and educational benefit, as well as the amount and effort students devote to community service.

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, B.F. *Recent Issues in the Analysis of Behavior*. Columbus: Merrill, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Leskes and Miller, 2006; Brownell and Swaner, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, Ross. *Assessment in Cycles of Improvement*. 2007.

*Core Theme Two: A Culture of Values*

<b>Objective 1: Engage students and employees in service and citizenship activities that enhance their Dixie State University experience</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Students are engaged in service & citizenship activities that enhance their Dixie experiences	1) Student experiences with meaningful, service learning	a) NSSE index: 7a-d, f & 1k b) Graduate & alumni surveys	Service is an integral part of the Dixie experience. Service learning enriches academic learning, engages students & develops citizenship. NSSE allows comparisons of Freshman to Seniors.	NSSE data will be used for the baseline. DSU rating averages will be higher than peers'. The graduate & alumni surveys will be revised, administered and baselined.
	2) Student reflections on engagement as part of their university experience	Rubric assessment of reflective exercises	The value of the service experience is found not only in the number of activities, but in the reflection of the effect on a person's life.	A reflective exercise format will be created and distributed. Once developed, an assessment rubric will be established.
B) Students critically explore, evaluate, & reflect upon their lives, careers, & interests in relation to society & service	1) Students describe & analyze understandings of rights & obligations of citizenship	a) GE assessment b) Curriculum mapping of GE	Understanding citizenship is an essential part of education. An educated person sees him or herself as a part of society with obligations to that society.	Curriculum mapping of GE outcomes was piloted in 2012/2013. Scheduled for 2013/2014.
C) Faculty & staff engage in service & citizenship activities that benefit the campus and community	1) Faculty & staff participate in service and citizenship activities	a) Faculty & staff participation b) Satisfaction survey c) Types of activities on and off-campus	DSU is an integral part of surrounding community. The activities & involvement of faculty & staff in external & internal service is part of DSU's fabric & provide an example for students.	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered and baselined.

**Core Theme Two: A Culture of Values**

<b>Objective 2: Promote an environment of respect, responsible, and ethical behavior</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Campus culture creates an expectation of ethical behavior, communicating appropriate behavioral standards	1) Syllabi contain expectations of students to exhibit ethical behavior in their coursework & campus activity	a) Analysis of syllabi b) Analysis of student policies	Setting standards of ethical behavior, communicating expectations & providing consequences for offending behavior is foundational in educating an individual.	Baseline: 2013/2014 year create timeline & methodology. Target: 100% syllabi compliance. Appropriate student policies, comparable to peer institutions.
	2) Students engage in activities that analyze & promote discussion of ethical behavior	a) GE assessment b) Graduate student survey c) NSSE	Student engagement in activities that analyze & promote the discussion of ethical behavior, encourages personal application	Curriculum mapping & pilot testing of GE outcomes scheduled for 2013/2014 The graduate survey will be revised, administered & baselined. NSSE used for the baseline. DSU rating averages will be higher than peers'.
B) Employees adhere to campus policies & procedures in the fulfillment of responsibilities	1) Departments provide proper training with regard to policies & procedures	Track per year: a) Types of training offered b) Participation by area	Ongoing & regular training on shows attitude of continuous improvement of operations & services & care for employee development. Appropriate training should be accessible & regular.	Target: Appropriate training offered in all areas. Baseline data must be established.

<b>Objective 3: Foster a climate of support and collaboration</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Campus culture fosters a spirit of camaraderie & pride in DSU mission	1) Employees build networks of support across campus	Annual employee participation & satisfaction survey	The work environment should be positive, supportive & collaborative. Employees' perceptions will measure morale & identify areas of needed improvement	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered & baselined.
	2) Employees feel valued as part of the campus team	Annual employee participation & satisfaction survey	Individuals become part of a team when they feel engaged, valued & able to make contributions to the success of an organization.	A faculty & staff survey will be selected or created, administered & baselined.

### ***Core Theme Three: A Culture of Community***

***Dixie State University builds and maintains strong relationships between students, faculty, staff and community to foster economic growth and a continuum of educational, cultural and recreational enrichment.***

DSU and its community are historically close. Not only did community members fund and construct the original St. George Stake Academy that became Dixie State University, but they continue to support it and expect to benefit from its existence. As the population of the immediate area continues to grow, the historical context and importance of the relationship between community and university may become diluted; however, a significantly large number of residents are still very engaged in, and feel a vested ownership of, DSU.

A robust alumni organization has a voice in governance and contributes to the advancement of the institution through various fundraising, events, and service projects. An active and engaged Office of Institutional Advancement functions as an important liaison between the campus and the community at large. DSU is committed to building and maintaining strategic relationships that enhance goodwill and support of the university, and to providing educational, economic, and cultural opportunities that enhance the community's quality of life.

The university has sought to become a driver of economic development by creating a number of partnerships with business and industry, arts and performance organizations, local governments and non-governmental organizations. It creates and supports initiatives and projects to encourage and mentor emerging entrepreneurs and creative artists, it provides support for existing enterprises, and informs and fosters dialogue on issues of public interest.

The university views its community partnerships as being doubly beneficial; just as the members of the community experience economic benefits and improved quality of life, the partnerships open educational avenues for students and industry currency for faculty. Students at DSU are involved in community service projects on their own or as a part of coursework, committee and club responsibilities, and athletes' service projects. Students in many degree programs are required to complete internships or program outreach to the community through a variety of activities. An obvious and intentional overlap in the purposes, goals, and outcomes between all three core themes becomes apparent as DSU fulfills its mission to produce citizens who make responsible and meaningful contributions to society, in part through service to others.

**Core Theme Three: A Culture of Community**

<b>Objective 1: Enrich educational exchanges between community, businesses, and the university by providing effective high quality opportunities and partnerships</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Successful educational exchanges with the community	1) Participation by community in educational exchanges	a) Trends in enrollment b) Number & types of exchanges	Increased enrollment in educational exchanges is indicative of program effectiveness & quality	Target: participation by community in educational exchanges trends upward. Number & types of exchanges & enrollment will be baselined.
	2) Quality of educational exchanges	Participant satisfaction survey	The satisfaction surveys reveal participants' perceptions of program quality & areas of needed improvement	A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined.
B) Successful educational exchanges with businesses	1) Participation by businesses in educational exchanges	Trends in participation; a) Number & types of exchanges b) Student surveys	Increased participation in educational exchanges is indicative of program effectiveness and quality. Student surveys reveal perceptions of program quality & areas of needed improvement	Target: participation by businesses in educational exchanges trend upward . Number & types of exchanges & enrollment will be baselined. The graduate survey will be revised, administered & baselined
	2) Quality of educational exchanges	Participant satisfaction surveys	The satisfaction surveys reveal participants' perception of program quality & areas of needed improvement	A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined.

<b>Objective 2: Encourage economic development by assisting and supporting individuals, businesses and community organizations to nurture the growth of the regional economy</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Southern Utah's entrepreneurial ecosystem will continue to develop	1) Number of programs created & types of support	List the business support programs offered	Efforts to encourage economic development are reflected in the programs that are supported	Target: Number and type of business support programs created by DSU (Dixie Business Alliance) trend upward
	2) Success of & satisfaction with the economic development programs	a) Counts & trends of new businesses created, jobs created, increase in sales, etc. b) Participant satisfaction survey	Program results reveal effectiveness. The satisfaction surveys reveal perceptions of program quality & areas of needed improvement.	Target: Counts of new businesses, jobs, sales, etc. created, trend upward A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined.

***Core Theme Three: A Culture of Community***

<b>Objective 3: Engage the campus and community by providing a variety of quality community educational programs and cultural, athletic, and social events</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
A) Campus & community are engaged in community educational programs	1) Number & variety of community educational programs offered	List of offerings & participation trends	The more community educational programs offered & the greater the variety of those offerings, the more engaged the campus & community	Target: Number & variety of community educational programs offered & participation trend upward
	2) Quality & type of educational programs	a) Participant satisfaction survey b) Community interest survey	Programs will be in response to community interests & needs. Satisfaction surveys reveal participants' perception of program quality & areas of needed improvement.	A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined. A community survey will be created, administered & baselined.
B) Campus & community are engaged in cultural events	1) Number & variety of cultural events offered	List of offerings & participation trends	The more cultural events offered & the greater the variety of those offerings the more engaged the campus & community	Target: Number and variety of cultural events offered & participation trend upward
	2) Quality & type of cultural events	a) Participant satisfaction survey b) Community interest survey	Cultural events will be in response to community interests & needs. Satisfaction surveys reveal participants' perception of program quality & areas of needed improvement.	A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined. A community survey will be created, administered & baselined.
C) Campus and community are engaged in athletic and social events	1) Number & variety of athletic & social events offered	List of offerings & participation trends by participant type	The more athletic & social events offered & the greater the variety of those offerings, the more engaged the campus & community	Target: Number & variety of athletic & social events offered & participation trend upward
	2) Quality of athletic and social events	a) Participant satisfaction survey b) Community interest survey	Athletic and social events will be in response to community interests & needs. Satisfaction surveys reveal participants' perception of program quality & areas of needed improvement.	A participant survey will be created, administered & baselined. A community survey will be created, administered & baselined.



## ■ *CONCLUSION*

The process of clarifying mission, core themes and objectives was a community building experience for the constituents of Dixie State University. As the campus worked to develop core themes truly reflective of its mission; students, faculty, staff and the larger community played an active role. When the 2012 revised core themes were introduced, the Accreditation Steering Committee sought student involvement in trying to get the message out to the entire campus. A student project that involved the Center for Media Innovation (CMI), students in the media program, student council members, student-athletes, and faculty, resulted in a 2012 video production emphasizing the DSU core themes. The unabashed parody of *Monty Python*, entitled *Three Questions*, can be viewed at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7HXhlaJoNs&feature=youtu.be>.

DSU moves forward with assessment of mission fulfillment with a sincere attitude of continuous improvement. The members of the institution appreciate that DSU assessment is stronger and more beneficial today than it was last year and that it will be stronger yet in the future.