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Dixie State University (DSU) is a publicly funded, open-admission, regional university within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), and is authorized by the Utah State Legislature and designated by the Utah Board of Higher Education (USHE) Policy R-312-4.2, USHE Institutional Mission and Roles.

As one of three USHE universities with a “dual-mission” mandate, DSU functions both as a regional community college, offering an array of technical and academic certificates and associate degrees, concurrent high school enrollment, skills training, cultural and recreational opportunities, and non-credit community education; as well, DSU is a baccalaureate granting institution currently offering fifty-two baccalaureate degrees. Additionally, DSU was approved in 2018 to offer master’s degrees.

DSU is located in St. George, Utah (pop. 90,000), the county seat of Washington County. St. George is situated in the extreme southwest corner of Utah, about 120 miles north of Las Vegas, 40 miles from the Nevada state border and approximately seven miles from the Arizona state border. Washington County has a warm climate and is in proximity to no fewer than ten major national parks, monuments, recreation areas, state parks, and scenic tourist destinations. The county is bifurcated by a major north-south transportation route, Interstate 15, so it is a convenient location for light industrial and commercial enterprises. St. George is home to a large and growing community of retired adults and is the health and medical center for southern Utah. The county is currently experiencing significant economic growth in the technology and biotechnology sectors, some of which has emerged from the rapidly developing university innovation center named “Atwood Innovation Plaza.”

These and other factors are the reason St. George was named in 2018 as the fastest growing metropolitan region in the country, while DSU is the fastest growing university in the state. Indeed, forecasts show that the populations of St. George and Washington County are expected to grow by nearly 250% over the next 40 years. Student headcount for fall 2020 is expected to reach 12,000. Aligned with local population growth, DSU should experience continued enrollment growth for decades.

More than one hundred years ago, on September 19, 1911, the “St. George Stake Academy” opened its doors. 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 “Dixie” Cotton Belt. Throughout the twentieth century, Dixie Academy grew and evolved, becoming Dixie Normal College, then Dixie Junior College, and Dixie College, a community college. By 2000, the college outgrew its mission once again, and Dixie State College, secured a new mandate to offer bachelor’s degrees and a one hundred-acre campus in the heart of the city. In 2013, Dixie State College of Utah was granted university status and officially became Dixie State University.

The sense of ownership and pride that St. George and Washington County residents feel for DSU is still strong in the twenty-first century, and the university has not forgotten its community. DSU sees its continued sustainability inextricably linked to its ability and willingness to respond to and engage with community and regional 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 such as partnerships for economic development, internships, service projects, and continued learning opportunities.

An equally important hallmark of the university is its employees’ commitment to student-centered education. Faculty, staff, and administrators pride themselves on the personalized, rich and applied learning experiences they provide students in the classrooms, laboratories, student support services, academic advisement, and in their involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. This educational care resulted in 87% of 2019 seniors rating their DSU experience as good or excellent and 95% of graduates being employed or entering graduate school or the military within six months of graduation. However, a related challenge DSU is expecting to confront is maintaining its tradition of supportive, personal relationships with students in the face of continual enrollment and institutional
growth. Given its history, however, there is abundant confidence that the university will meet this and other emerging challenges.

In its second century, DSU continues to embrace opportunities for continuous improvement by refocusing its attention toward student learning and success, active and applied learning, and innovation and entrepreneurship, as it responds to educational needs locally and globally. One sign the university continues to advance is that it gained recognition for the second consecutive year among the best colleges and universities by U.S. News and World Report, with a ranking of 6th place in the Top Public Schools, Regional Colleges West category, for 2020. The following are other rankings of distinction: 5th Most Affordable Small College in the U.S. by CNBC; 5th Best College For Graduates With Low To No Student Debt in the U.S. by Great Value Colleges; and 3rd in the nation on Safe College’s 2020 Top 25 list.

Map and Virtual Tour of DSU Campus  
Welcome to Dixie State University  
DSU 2020-21 Catalog  
Fall 2020 Class Schedule

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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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Figure 1. 2019 Trailblazers
MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES SINCE LAST REPORT in 2015

Many substantial changes have occurred at Dixie State University since 2015. Two taglines familiar on campus and also to our local communities help define the evolution taking place at the institution: “from status to stature” and “active learning, active life”.

From Status to Stature. With conferral of university status in 2013 came the institutional appreciation that there was a need to grow into the stature of a university. Focus and advancement in this development was led by Dr. Richard Williams, who, in 2014, became DSU’s 18th president. By 2018, DSU was approved to offer its first master’s degree program, the Master of Accountancy. Two graduate degrees were implemented in 2019: Master of Arts in Technical Writing and Digital Rhetoric and Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy and in 2020 a Master of Athletic Training was added.

DSU remains an open access, teaching institution that now provides master, community college and bachelor level programs. Its name and status change are not a redirection, but rather an opportunity to further meet its educational commitments to its constituents. University status provides an extension of practicing core themes, learning, engagement and opportunity, through a deepening of intellectual and creative experiences.

As a teaching university, DSU has committed to the teacher-scholar model for faculty-life. While the highest priority for faculty is to promote effective, efficient, and engaging student learning, scholarship and creative activity are highly valued as intellectual pursuits that inform and elevate teaching and student learning. The process of operationalizing these commitments has been initiated. As teacherscholars, faculty will be challenged to meet new requirements to more intentionally demonstrate the degree to which students in their courses have learned and succeeded; this is evidenced by the achievement of university approved course learning outcomes (CLOs). Required evidence involve the following: course signature assignments; valid measurements of student work; results showing that students meet CLOs; samples of course syllabi, assignments, exams, and measures of learning; and student, peer and supervisor evaluations. Policy 641: Faculty Retention, Tenure & Promotion (Sec. 4.1) Policy 641, Addendum 7.1: Faculty Performance Standards

Development of Intellectual and Creative Capacities. In realizing the need for increased intellectual and creative capacity and rigor related to university status, DSU has been developing advanced academic programs, initiatives and support. Here are some examples:

- Establishment of the Office of Graduate Studies
- Establishment of the Office of Sponsored Programs to serve faculty and staff who are pursuing research or other sponsored projects funded by federal, state, and private organizations
- Conducting undergraduate research, providing opportunities for faculty to further their research, as well as providing students with practical research experience, including participation in publishing and professional presentations
- Recognition, encouragement and support of independent faculty research
- Increased hiring of faculty with terminal degrees in their fields (85%), particularly PhDs (70)%
- Creation of a state-of-the-art library and information resource center
• Increased focus on STEM programs in all areas, but particularly in information technology and health sciences, with a vision of becoming a polytechnic institution

• Atwood Innovation Plaza that assists innovators in acquiring intellectual property rights and in development of products and skills for entrepreneurs in launching and growing their businesses

• Collaboration with renowned US universities such as Stanford, John Hopkins and Notre Dame

• Partnerships with international academic programs to share educational and professional expertise and exchanges. e.g. Meijo University (Japan), Fukui University (Japan), Daegu Haany University (S. Korea), Guilin University (China), Universidad Catolica Los Angeles Chimbote (Peru), Universidad Hispanoamericana (Costa Rica), Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in Mexicali (Mexico), Universidad Tecnológica del Centro (Mexico), Universidad Tecnológica del Sur (Mexico), and Universidad Tecnológica de Bolivar (Colombia).

• Study-abroad opportunities established in partnership with the University Studies Abroad Consortium. Students currently have the opportunity to participate in international educational experiences and exchanges with DSU faculty in Japan, South Africa, Italy, Nepal, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Peru, and Colombia and in many other countries with USAC programs (https://studyabroad.dixie.edu/)

• Increased student opportunity to obtain professional certifications

• Partnerships with the Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Study Unit (CP CESU) and the National Parks System

• Initial steps taken in establishing a Geology field institute for support of local, national and international field work skills, studies and collaborations

• Increased national and international creative activities: Successfully competing in the Annual Kennedy Center, College Theatre Festival and competition, developed to improve the quality of college theater in the US. Performing a play at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

• Successful competition in academic matches on the national and international levels, particularly in the business and computer arenas

• Networking and offering internships with major US businesses and organizations

• Establishment of the Digital Learning Center to utilize state-of-the-art technologies in teaching

• Advancement of intentional, inclusive educational and social practices

• Increased support by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) that assists, trains in, and evaluates technologies and teaching methods that will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of student learning

• A regional crime institute training cybercrime investigators, working with police departments and the FBI

• DocUtah, a Southern Utah International Documentary Film Festival

• Creation of award-winning film and commercial video by the Digital Film Department

**Student Success.** In the past five years, DSU has also been refocusing on the quality and success of its community college mission and open enrollment students. Throughout this comprehensive report, one should note the many programs and resources established in the past five years to help all, but
particularly at-risk students succeed (See Report sections 1.D.1, 1.D.4, 2.C.3, and 2.G.1). To achieve these purposes, several new administrative positions were created: Associate Provost for Academic Success; Assistant VP for Student Success and Co-curricular Assessment position; Dir. Structure Enrollment; Dir. Student Outreach Services, Exec. Dir. Of Career Services and Student Success.

**Active Learning, Active Life.** To better serve students, DSU faculty and staff promote a culture of active, practical learning inside and outside the classroom. Going beyond the often passive, lecture mode of instruction, faculty increasingly provide applied, dynamic and hands-on experiences for their students. Training and use of AAC&U’s high impact teaching practices are encouraged ([High Impact Teaching Practices](#)).

Recognition of the need for more active learning experiences was accompanied by a realization that students also need to be innovative, problem-solvers who demonstrate grit in today’s world. Thus, innovation and grit have been identified as desirable, institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) for DSU students. Their operationalization is currently under development. Innovation at DSU is defined as the ability to “synthesize and collaborate across general and discipline-specific studies for innovative solutions of complex and unscripted problems.”

The term grit has become a popular learning objective nationally and carries various definitions. DSU defines its ILO - G.R.I.T.:

- **G**rowth Mindset: The belief that personal attributes can be developed through effort and education.
- **R**elationship Building: The practice of cultivating trusting, collaborative and inclusive relationships.
- **I**ntentional Learning: The purposeful, deliberate process to acquire and use a variety of strategies to attain and apply knowledge.
- **T**enacity: The habit of persevering, adapting and staying engaged for a sustained period of time to achieve goals.

**Reorganization of Administrative Structure with Additional Administrative Positions.** There has been a considerable number of additions and changes in senior administrative positions and personnel in the past five years. All but three (the VP of Administrative Affairs, the VP of Institutional Advancement and Development and the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics) of the President’s cabinet have changed since 2015. The following positions have new people in place: VP Academic Affairs/Provost, VP Student Affairs and the General Counsel. The following are new cabinet positions on campus with new personnel: AVP Campus Diversity, VP Marketing and Communications, Chief of Staff, and Asst. to President for Government and Community Relations. There has also been a considerable increase in faculty and front-line, staff workers at DSU (see Standard 2.F.3).

**New Academic Programs and Reorganization of Academic Units.** Since 2015, four master’s degrees, 26 bachelor’s degrees, 18 minors, 23 certificates and 5 associate’s degrees have been added at DSU. With the increase of new programs and the change of direction of colleges, there have been several reorganizations within Academic Affairs. There have also been new positions added to the...
Academic Affairs administrative team: four new associate provosts and a director of budgets. In order to improve communication and service to students, Academic Advisement was moved from Student Affairs to the Academic Affairs Division, reporting to the new Assoc. Provost for Academic Success. The Advisement administration has identified two main functional areas, and, therefore, added the position of Dir. First Year Advisement.

**Student Affairs Administrative Team.** The numerous new student services programs to support student success have required a significant increase in front-line and administrative staff in this division. New senior administrator positions and several program director positions have been established: three new Assistant Vice Presidents, for Student Success, Enrollment Management and Student Inclusiveness; and Director Student Affairs Planning and Operations.

**Facilities.** With growth happening in the number of programs and students, DSU is on the build

- The newest building on campus is the 155,000 sq. ft. Health and Human Performance Building. Completed in 2019, the facility will hold the specialized classrooms and labs for academic programs in exercise science, sports and recreation management, health administration, and population health, as well as University of Utah physical therapy and occupational therapy programs. Additionally, the center houses recreation and intramural programs and exercise facilities including a fitness center, a track, a swimming pool, a climbing wall, and basketball courts that convert to indoor soccer venues.
- Facing student housing shortages has been an issue for DSU for some time. In Fall 2016, the Campus View Suites 1 was completed with 59 living units and 352 beds. Campus View Suites 2, scheduled to be completed Fall 2021, is under construction with 91 living units and 534 beds.
- DSU was able to acquire the old elementary school on University Avenue, across the street from campus, and turn it into Atwood Innovation Plaza. The building opened in fall 2019.
- The DSU Kanab Center on the campus of Kanab High School, is 80 miles from St. George. The center will offer credit-bearing, predominantly GE classes and a few CTE credit-bearing courses.
- Half a block from campus, DSU had leased buildings at University Plaza for several years, but purchased the plaza in 2015. One building at the Plaza is leased to the University of Utah.
- Significant upgrades have been made to the technology infrastructure and specialized software.
- The university has committed to the State of Utah’s energy and sustainability program and established strict requirements regarding sustainable products, energy efficiency and water conservation ([https://dfcm.utah.gov/energy-efficiency-program/](https://dfcm.utah.gov/energy-efficiency-program/)). To assure compliance, particularly regarding building temperature regulations, DSU has assigned an energy manager. The last three buildings constructed on campus follow the program guidelines ([Utah State Building Energy Efficiency Program](https://dfcm.utah.gov/energy-efficiency-program/)).

**Concurrent Enrollment** (dual college and high school enrollment) has grown significantly between 2015-2019, from 1076 students in fall 2015 to 2913 in fall 2019. The program has built GE Certificate completion opportunities at many of the local high schools, strengthened Math and English offerings, and added a very popular Computer Information System, MOS Certification course that had over 500 students enrolled in fall 2019.
Assessment. As noted in the main Report, DSU assessment is progressing towards a more data-driven, decision-making culture (see next section - Responses to NWCCU Evaluators). Establishment of the centralized Office of Institutional Effectiveness supports this new direction by providing additional assessment expertise and data. Significant advancements in assessment have resulted from DSU’s purchase of EAB’s Academic Performance Solutions (APS) and Navigate (student success management system) software. The resulting collaboration include institutionalization of valuable, annual, academic department reports using APS metrics. DSU has been recognized by EAB as the leading university, nationally, for utilization of the APS platform. Subsequently, three DSU administrators were invited to sit on APS national advisory boards based on their expertise in APS application.

New Strategic Planning Cycle: DSU successfully completed all the goals established in its first five-year strategic plan as a university, titled “Dixie 2020 - Status to Stature”, and recently approved the next five-year plan titled “Trailblazing Distinction.” The new plan is based on four aspirational design features: open education, inclusive, comprehensive, and polytechnic. [Strategic Planning website](#) with 2020-25 Strategic Plan under development.

Figure 2: Enrollment Student headcount continues to go up, with fall 2020 expected to reach 12,000.

### Fall 2015 & Fall 2019 - 3rd Week Enrollment

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<th>2019</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<td>6,402</td>
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NWCCU EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS and COMMENTS

2012 Comprehensive NWCCU Evaluation Committee Recommendations (Comprehensive Report) NWCCU letter that Comprehensive Report Recommendations were met

“... the evaluators recommend that the institution plan for and strengthen its human and institutional infrastructure to assure the integrity of its programs" (p.36)

“...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.” (p.36)

2012 Comment by NWCCU Evaluation Committee

“The college must be vigilant in ensuring that data supporting general education assessment is regularly collected and accessibly archived, that appropriate assessment benchmarks are defined, and that analysis of these assessments is used to improve general education.” (p.22)

2013 Year One NWCCU Evaluation Report Recommendation (Year One Report) NWCCU letter that addendum requested in response to Year One Report were met

“The committee recommends DSU continue in its efforts to further clarify and articulate what constitutes mission fulfillment. While the process of assessing its mission has advanced well, it is still not clear from the report exactly how the University will know when mission fulfillment has been achieved. Relatedly, establishing baselines needs to be revisited and possibly re-worded. While establishing baselines are critical, it is not always clear what is expected to occur after their creation.” (p.12)

2015 Mid-cycle NWCCU Evaluation Comment (Mid-cycle Report) No formal recommendations or requests for addenda accompanying the 2020 Comprehensive Report. But, the following informal recommendation was made:

“The most immediate challenge facing DSU is the revision of the core theme objectives, outcomes, indicators, measures and benchmarks, basing these changes on the new Strategic Plan, and to clearly articulate how they will know when mission fulfillment has been achieved.” (p.10)

DSU RESPONSES to RECOMMENDATIONS and COMMENTS

Response to 2013 and 2015 Recommendations and Comments re. Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

DSU Defines Mission Fulfillment

DSU has more clearly articulated its determination of mission fulfillment. Core themes and objectives define the fundamental purposes of DSU’s mission. They indicate what the institution does and how it measures what it does. Analysis of data allows the university to identify the extent to which it fulfills its intended objectives and mission and facilitates its continuous improvement. As part of
the institutional assessment development process in place and in response to the 2015 strategic plan and mid-cycle evaluators’ comments, the Core Theme Assessment plan was revised with adjusted objectives and indicators of mission fulfillment.

Acceptable Thresholds of Performance and Mission Fulfillment
Specific objectives have been articulated for each of the three core themes, and two to three outcome indicators of achievement have been identified for each objective. In turn, each indicator has been linked to metrics, and expected levels of performance or benchmarks have been identified for each set of metrics. Analysis of indicators and related objectives define their attainment level as areas that “need improvement” (“unmet”, “partially met”, and “nearly met”), “met expectations” and “exceeded expectations.” Each attainment level is numerically valued, 0 to 4. Mission fulfillment is fundamentally determined through simple mathematical calculation of a cumulative average.

The thresholds to determine substantial fulfillment of DSU’s mission is that the university meets or exceeds the following benchmark achievements: 75% of indicators; 86% of the core theme objectives; and 100% of core themes. Though seemingly oversimplified or artificial in nature, this method of evaluating mission fulfillment by mapping objective, indicator, and core theme accomplishments is an entry-way into the more extensive look into some primary indications of achievement. This form of assessment helps focus attention on important purposes of an institution and to intentionally improve conditions. Action plans are developed for all indicators and objectives that are not met and for many that are met, but are deemed to need improvement. Core Theme Map to Rationale, Strategic & Academic Action Plans (See 1.A.1 & 1.B.2)

Response to 2012 and 2015 Recommendations and Comments re. Improvement of Assessment Processes and Support Infrastructure

DSU was challenged and fortunate (in hindsight) to be among the first institutions in the region to be held responsible for meeting the “new” 2010 NWCCU accreditation standards. The required compliance with the new standards and process provided the institution with a hasty emersion into advanced assessment standards. With only two years preparation for its comprehensive accreditation evaluation, the university delved into the process of identification of core themes and setting up related progressive assessment practices. As noted in the 2012 recommendations from accreditation evaluators, infrastructure and resources for assessment and general support of staff and faculty were needed at DSU as it was growing and changing.

Over the past seven-year accreditation cycle, in response to NWCCU evaluator recommendations and perceived need by DSU, the university has intentionally developed its assessment and continuous improvement processes. The following are examples of actions taken in this regard:

1. Establishment of the position of academic assessment specialist in Spring 2012, who
   A. developed more sophisticated academic assessment practices at DSU
   B. provided insight and developed institutional understanding of core theme, program learning outcome, objective and indicator alignment, mapping and assessment
   C. provided individual and program training on assessment
   D. established college and program infrastructure positions for assessment coordinators, college assessment leads and an assessment committee
E. established a process of archiving and reporting assessment, using the Taskstream software
F. monitored academic assessment practices across compass
G. establishing a coherent GE assessment process across the institution

2. Improvement of DSU’s Institutional Research Department by
   A. hiring a new institutional research specialist as director of IR in 2013
   B. increasing the IR staff support by two employees
   C. being instrumental in developing a positive DSU cultural change for using data
   D. increasing DSU academic research by setting up support processes
   E. developing quality of institutional surveys with purchase of Qualtrics Survey Software
   F. setting up the first institutional data dashboards

3. Establishment of an Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC) to
   A. work on development of institutional assessment practices
   B. review core theme assessment practices and assessment results
   C. communicate positive assessment practices across campus
   D. assist in defining ILO for their departments
   E. increase DSU understanding of and appreciation for value of accreditation

4. Review and improvement of core theme definitions, objectives, indicators and measures,
   resulting in
   A. higher expectations regarding quality of program learning objectives and their assessment
   B. more useful information from core theme, objective and indicator assessment
   C. replacement of baseline development as targets with specific benchmarks of achievement
   D. improved action planning informed by assessment
   E. better alignment with strategic planning
   F. more consistency in assessment and less redundancy

5. Maintenance of strong strategic planning processes and follow through by
   A. using the same consultant for development of the strategic plan in 2015 and 2020
   B. learning from 2015 strategic planning process that DSU’s plans can include, but should not respond solely to administrative imperatives; they should focus on the main purposes of DSU, which is student success and educational mission fulfillment.
   C. inviting all major stakeholders to participate in the strategic planning process
   D. holding regular campus wide information dissemination meetings: practicing total transparency of strategic planning process and inviting continued stakeholder feedback as plans are developed, implemented and achieved

6. Creation of an assessment taskforce to evaluate assessment processes in 2017 to
   A. clarify DSU assessment activities, reports, resources and capacity across campus
   B. research best practices in higher education assessment
   C. identify gaps and weaknesses in DSU assessment practices
   D. make recommendation for improvement actions
7. Strengthening of the academic infrastructure by
   A. establishing the Center for Teaching and Learning to assist faculty in the development of professional competencies, such as best practices in pedagogy
   B. establishing an Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budget position to:
      i. guide and support academic programs in development, including identification of meaningful PLOs
      ii. improve quality of curriculum development, program develop, assessment, and annual unit planning
      iii. monitor academic budget planning and academic efficiency
   C. establishing an Associate Provost for Academic Success position to:
      i. design, deploy and manage focused initiatives, assess and monitor student learning and success, achievement and academic advisement and provide responsive services to facilitate student success.
   D. establishing an Associate Provost for Community and Global Engagement position to
      i. serve the local and global communities’ educational needs, including international, educational partnerships and satellite learning centers
   E. establishing an Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs position to:
      i. supervise the Center for Teaching and Learning and academic innovation, as well as attend to faculty needs, recognition and quality of professional life
   F. establishing the Director of Academic Budget position to assist in academic program budgeting, and related assessment of faculty sufficiency and development needs and efficiency
   G. embedding faculty and staff needs assessment into the program approval process
   H. developing comprehensive program assessment processes and an annual reporting plan
   I. collaborating with EAB in use of their Navigate software for population management, predictive analytics, and development of a student care model as a comprehensive platform to advance student learning and success.

8. Establishment of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to
   A. build on existing institutional research approach
   B. increase and improve data driven, decision making through a more robust business intelligence infrastructure
   C. centralize and oversee data management, sourcing and quality
   D. increase transparency and disaggregation of DSU data for campus members and the public
   E. increase access to internal and external data, supporting campus members in use of data
   F. facilitate reporting processes and streamline reporting practices

9. Strengthening of campus-wide assessment processes through
   A. on-going emphasis on the value and use of data
   B. establishment of more rigorous, annual reporting requirements for academic and non-academic programs
C. increased administrative requirement of justification for resource funding  
D. increased assessment, support resources  
E. national movement demanding accountability of higher education

**Response to 2012 Comments re. need for improvements in General Education Assessment**

10. Reformation of GE definitions and its assessment at DSU by

   A. establishing a taskforce that researched GE best practices and developed DSU’s reform [GE Taskforce Reform Report](#)  
   B. proactively participating in USHE initiative to establish GE guidelines for Utah institutions  
   C. participating in AAC&U conferences on GE: training on and committing to AAC&U’s LEAP initiative and GE Value rubrics  
   D. establishing a GE Assessment Committee in 2013 to support the GE Committee  
   E. identifying courses that provide useful assessment results and remapping GE assessment across institutional programs  
   F. evaluating GE Program Learning Outcomes using the AAC&U rubrics, between 2013-15  
   G. improving student experience in fulfilling GE compliance and appreciating GE relevance  
   H. completing a Taskforce report to ascertain and inform the campus constituents of the status of GE  
   I. planning for expansion of assessment of GE development and competency into upper division coursework
STANDARD ONE
STUDENT SUCCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND EFFECTIVENESS
Institutional Mission

1.A.1 The institution’s mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement. (Eligibility Requirements 1, 2, 3, & 6)

Response: The Utah Board of Higher Education (designated the Utah State Board of Regents until July 2020) Policy R-312-4.2, USHE Institutional Mission and Roles, classifies Dixie State University (DSU) as a “regional university” with a role to:

“...provide career and technical education, undergraduate associate and baccalaureate programs and select master’s degree programs to fill regional or state workforce demands.... Regional universities emphasize teaching, scholarly, and creative achievements that complement teaching and community service.... The institution contributes to the quality of life and economic development at the local and state levels. Student success is supported through developmental programs and services associated with a comprehensive community college.”

DSU has a long history of fulfilling this role through a mission to engage and serve its designated region by providing ever-expanding opportunities to learn, achieve, and be enriched through a quality education. Provided below are the values, mission, and core themes that guide the university in fulfilling its role.

The current DSU mission and core themes were established in 2015 as a component of the 2020 strategic planning process and were specifically designed to express and reflect the six university values established simultaneously. The university values are listed below but are identified and further defined in the 2015-20 Strategic Plan.

Values
Student-centered success
Academic excellence
Equity and inclusion
Accountability
Service leadership
Local and global resources

Mission. Dixie State University is a public, comprehensive university dedicated to rigorous learning and the enrichment of the professional and personal lives of its students and community by providing opportunities that engage the unique southern Utah environment and resources.

Core Themes. The core themes were established through internal and local community discussions of the institution’s values and purpose. Subsequent to these discussions, three mission-aligned core themes were selected: 1) Learning; 2) Engagement; and 3) Opportunity. DSU Core Theme Assessment Plan - Includes Rationale and Mapping to Strategic Plan and Academic Initiatives

Core Theme One: Learning
Definition: Preparing knowledgeable and competent learners through effective and active learning practices in a student-centered environment.

Objective 1: Achievement of quality learning

Objective 2: Excellent, student-centered environment

Objective 3: Preparing students to achieve their educational goals

Core Theme Two: Engagement
Definition: Maintaining active involvement and positive collaboration with the Southern Utah region to strengthen cultural, economic, and civic life
Objective 1: Students, faculty and staff maintain active involvement with their communities

Objective 2: Productive collaborations for economic and professional community development

Core Theme Three: Opportunity
Definition: Valuing inclusion, access, diversity and equity

Objective 1: Inclusion and access for all institutional populations

Objective 2: Support and equity for diverse populations

College of the Arts faculty and students created a video to communicate DSU’s core themes, not only as a device to focus on administrative purposes, but as representations of student purposes as well. Student Core Theme Video

The DSU community engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process over the past year that culminated in a revision of mission and values, establishing a new five-year strategic plan titled, “Trailblazer Distinction”. Included in the development process of this plan was a focus on assessment through the three core themes that reflect our institutional values. The values expressed as core themes are constants of DSU, so these will continue to be addressed in the new strategic plan. As intentional as core theme alignment has been, the somewhat separate and redundant assessment of core theme objectives and strategic planning goals will be merged in the new strategic plan, resulting in a single, streamlined process that broadens participation and focuses continuous improvement and budget support. Strategic Planning website includes the 2020-25 Strategic Plan’s goals.

Improving Institutional Effectiveness

1.B.1 The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement. (Eligibility Requirements 4, 5, 6, & 19)

Response: DSU engages in an ongoing robust, systematic, continuous improvement process of evaluation and planning. Institutional effectiveness is assessed through multiple evaluation and planning processes operating on different cycles, including: 1) institutional core theme and data analysis of mission fulfillment; 2) student achievement and learning outcomes data assessment; 3) program assessment and student achievement for specialized accreditation; 4) department, college and division annual reports, 5) financial, facilities and quality assurance auditing; 6) internal and external environmental monitoring; 7) cyclical five-year SWOT analysis; and 8) institutional strategic planning including annual progress reports.

Institutional research at DSU historically fulfilled a compliance function and was the primary source of data for campus decision-making. In an era of increasing accountability and demands for transparency, the importance of data-informed, decision-making continues to expand while new resources are needed. Recognizing the need to advance DSU’s data collection and analysis capabilities, President Williams appointed a taskforce in 2017 and hired a consultant to assess institutional capacity, processes and deficiencies in the data management system (DSU Data Taskforce Description). A key finding from the Taskforce
was an inadequate institutional approach to comprehensive data management and assessment of institutional effectiveness. To resolve this deficiency, DSU established an [Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE)] that was launched in fall 2019. IE now oversees the functions of institutional research, assessment, accreditation, and strategic planning.

The IE staff are responsible for the development and administration of a coordinated system of data and evaluative functions that will inform strategic planning, institutional operations, and organizational decision-making. In addition, IE will serve as the primary source of truth for all externally reported and internal campus data. The IE team is developing capabilities and systems to extend its data governance capacity and further its practice of institutional effectiveness analysis. One of the main purposes of the IE office is to provide transparent, comprehensive, and meaningful data and analysis across campus. This will enable all stakeholders to make better informed, data-driven decisions. [Dashboards and IE Visualizations]

DSU adopted the Nichols Model of Institutional Effectiveness (1995) for assessing academic program learning outcomes, as well as institutional effectiveness. The university has been intentional about developing a culture of assessment and planning, resulting in all institutional divisions participating in program and service assessment, analysis, action planning and continuous improvement. The assessment process culminates in annual reports produced by all academic departments, as well as by departments within Student Affairs and Administrative Affairs. Three years of annual reports from all university areas are available: [Academic Affairs Annual Reports; Student Affairs Annual Reports; Administrative Affairs Annual Reports]

Furthermore, Academic and Student Support Affairs divisions have made great strides in the assessment and analysis of student learning and of program learning outcomes. [Baccalaureate degree program assessment reports from Taskstream; Student Affairs Taskstream Assessment Reports]. In summer 2020, the Division of Academic Affairs added an annual academic unit action planning process to increase the intentionality of administrators in planning actions aligned with the 2020-25 Strategic Plan and closing-the-loop in response to end-of-the-year evaluations and annual report findings. [Academic Action Plan Template]

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**Figure 2: Institutional Effectiveness Model (Nichols)**

![Diagram of Institutional Effectiveness Model](image)
The following policies define DSU’s assessment practices:

Policy 109: Strategic Planning and Evaluation
Policy 609: Academic Cyclical Program Review
USHE Policy R411: Cyclical Institutional Program Reviews
USHE Policy R401, Sections 6 & 8: Review of New Programs

1.B.2 The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions. (Eligibility Requirement 4)

Response: DSU establishes and articulates meaningful goals, objectives and indicators of its goals through multiple processes and organizational structures, including administrative imperatives, across all divisions, the Institutional Strategic Assessment & Accreditation Committee (ISAAC), and the strategic planning processes. These goals, objectives, and indicators are then benchmarked to regional and national peer institutions that are selected institutionally or are imposed by the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE).

Approval of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan prompted a need to re-evaluate goals, objectives, and indicators forming the basis for the 2015 Mid-cycle Review Evaluators’ Report (p.10) to note, “The most immediate challenge facing DSU is the revision of the core theme objectives, outcomes, indicators, measures and benchmarks, basing these changes in the new Strategic Plan, and to clearly articulate how they will know when mission fulfillment has been achieved.”

DSU Defines Mission Fulfillment

DSU has developed a clearer articulation of the determination of mission fulfillment. Core themes and objectives define the fundamental purposes of DSU’s mission. They indicate what the institution does and how it measures what it does. Analysis of data allows the university to identify the extent to which it fulfills its intended objectives and mission; and this analysis facilitates the university’s continuous improvement. As part of the institutional assessment development process in place and in response to the 2015 strategic plan and mid-cycle evaluators’ comments, the Core Theme Assessment plan was revised with adjusted objectives, indicators and definition of mission fulfillment. DSU Core Theme Assessment Plan - Includes Rationale and Mapping to Strategic Plan and Academic Initiatives

Acceptable Thresholds of Performance and Mission Fulfillment

Specific objectives have been articulated for each of the three core themes, and two to three outcome indicators of achievement have been identified for each objective. In turn, each indicator has been linked to metrics, and expected levels of performance, benchmarks, have been identified for each set of metrics. Analysis of indicators and related
objectives define their attainment level as areas that “need improvement” (“unmet”, “partially met”, and “nearly met”), “met expectations” and “exceeded expectations.” Each attainment level is numerically valued, 0 to 4. Through simple mathematical calculation of cumulative average, mission fulfillment is fundamentally determined.

The core theme assessment thresholds to determine substantial fulfillment of DSU’s mission is that the university meets or exceeds the following benchmark achievements: 75% of indicators; 86% of the core theme objectives; and 100% of core themes. Though oversimplified or seemingly artificial in nature, this method of evaluating mission fulfillment by mapping objective, indicator, and core theme accomplishments is an entryway into the more extensive look into some primary indications of achievement. This form of assessment helps focus attention on the important purposes of an institution and on intentionally improving conditions. Action plans are developed for all indicators and objectives that are not met; and many indicators and objectives that are met need advancement as well. Challenges in Assessing Mission Fulfillment; Summary of Core Theme Initiatives and Achievements

The three-year, Core Theme Assessment & Mission Fulfillment Reports and the Strategic Plan demonstrate assessment practices at DSU. Other assessment documents will be presented throughout this institutional effectiveness report.

Regional and National Peer Institutions

The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) selects DSU’s national peer institutions for comparative analyses of appropriate data points in institutional, USHE and IPEDS reports. USHE also provides public reports with comparative data for all eight Utah higher education institutions.


The following reports provide examples of DSU assessment that includes comparative regional and national peer institutional data: Great Colleges to Work For (GCTWF) Survey; GCTWF 2020 Survey Comparative Results; National Student Survey of Engagement (NSSE) Results; EAB Navigate Report (formerly the Education Advisory Board); CUPA Salary Surveys

The 2015-2020 Strategic Plan Final Report used comparative data related to such goals as the following:

- G2.O8. Offer degrees consistent with the offerings of a public comprehensive university
- G3.O5. Total compensation for faculty and staff that meets the average compensation reported for similar positions at comparable and competitive institutions
- G3.O7. 15 percent of faculty and staff will be racially and ethnically diverse, reflecting the diversity of a regional university
- G3.O10. The Great Colleges to Work For” survey results will have a 60 percent participation rate and ratings of good to excellent in all categories.
- G5.O2. Achieve the standards for Carnegie classification as an Engaged University
- G6.O2 Student-athletes are known for excellence in the classroom, in competition, and in the community

These and other goals were part of a well-planned, assessed and implemented strategic pursuit that furthered DSU’s core theme
and mission fulfillment process. However, a weakness in the 2015-20 Strategic Plan was the notable absence of strategies directly related to improving instruction and student learning. Separate strategies and initiatives were established by the Academic Management and Student Affairs teams. To correct this inadvertence in the future, the 2020-25 strategic planning process was led by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs to focus more of the plan directly on advancing instructional effectiveness, student learning and student success. It should be noted there is ample evidence that Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have been working diligently over the past five years on goals and strategies within and across their divisions to improve educational processes, student learning and achievement, and their assessment. Beginning with the 2020-21 academic year, annual academic unit plans produced by all direct reports to the Provost/VPAA will be aligned directly with the new institutional strategic plan.

1.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Eligibility Requirements 4 & 19)

Response: The culture and system of shared governance at DSU is clearly defined, transparent and broadly recognized. Internal processes of governance are inclusive of students, faculty, and staff in all matters that affect them. The governance of DSU at the institutional level is defined in policy section 100 (Policy Library). (See also 2.4.A regarding shared governance). Policy 103: College President: Ethics and Responsibilities, section 4.6.1.5, establishes that the President will “seek and respect the advice of faculty, staff, and administrators in matters pertaining to University life and governance.” Evidence of shared governance can be found in the following ways:

• Students are represented on the institutional Board of Trustees, University Council, Academic Council, and in nearly every other major academic and administrative committee. Student leaders also meet monthly with the President, Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs. Student senators are assigned as liaisons to academic schools and divisions. Students also participate in the strategic planning process and the Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Council. Policy 541: Student Government, Section 1.3 states, “It becomes the charge of the Dixie State University Student Association (DSUSA) Council to plan student activities and join with faculty and staff in serving on committees and councils to provide student input into the decision-making process of Dixie State University.”

• Faculty views and interests are represented largely through the Faculty Senate, whose President sits on the University Council, Academic Council, and the Deans’ Advisory Council. Faculty issues are heard in Trustee meetings where the agenda includes a standing line item for faculty representation. Department chairs represent their faculty on the University Curriculum Committee and other key university committees; deans and associate deans represent faculty on Academic Council. Faculty are represented on all major academic councils and committees and most student committees. Faculty are also invited to fully participate in the strategic planning process (faculty constituted 40% of the steering committee); many strategic planning sub-committees are chaired by faculty members and all include faculty representation. Policy 633: Faculty Rights and Responsibilities, Section 4.2.13, states, “The faculty as a
whole, through the Faculty Senate, has the right to a meaningful role in the governance of the institution, including the formation and revision of policies”.

- The Staff Association represents the staff at DSU. The Staff Association President or a representative is a member of the University Council, while the staff are represented in Board of Trustee meetings with a standing line item on each agenda. Staff representatives sit on major academic committees and some search committees as appropriate and on student committees. Staff are invited to fully participate in the strategic planning process.

**Policy 111: Staff Association, Section 1.1 states**, “The purpose of the Staff Association (SA) is to represent the staff and to collaborate with administration, Faculty Senate and all members of the Dixie State University (DSU) community.”

- The Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee’s ISAAC Charter includes required membership from all divisions and students and defines the committee’s directive to: Foster excellence through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational quality and institutional effectiveness; and encourage institutional improvement through continuous self-study; and in so doing, assist DSU in defining its:
  - mission, institutional learning outcomes, core themes and expectations
  - resources and capacity
  - planning and implementation
  - effectiveness and improvement
  - mission fulfillment, adaptation and sustainability
- Annual reports are produced by nearly every DSU program, operational unit and department, involving input from many employees, include program/department highlights, summary of significant assessment results, SWOT analyses, action plans, and related budget requests. Academic Affairs Annual Reports; Student Affairs Annual Reports; Administrative Affairs Annual Reports

- **Policy 109: Strategic Planning and Evaluation** and the list of 2015-20 Strategic Plan Implementation Team Members provide evidence of the broad spectrum of DSU stakeholders that were involved directly in strategy and outcomes development and assessment.

DSU employees participate on DSU Committees, develop programs, department and college annual reports, and engage in strategic planning and have a voice in the analysis of institutional effectiveness, in identifying institutional priorities and in proposing allocation of resources.

**Division and Strategic Plan Initiatives for Continuous Improvement 2015-2020**

Academic Division Initiatives 2015-20
Student Affairs Initiatives 2015-20
Administrative Affairs Initiatives 2015-20
2015-20 Strategic Plan Final Report
2019-20 Strategic Plan Accomplishments and Further Planned Actions
1.B.4 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals. (Eligibility Requirement 4)

Response: Through continuous institutional assessment, third-party reports and data, effectiveness and strategic planning processes, DSU monitors and responds to internal and external environments. In the 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Report, the NWCCU evaluators’ commended DSU for its strategic assessment practices, “The evaluation team was thoroughly impressed by this planning process.” As described above, the recent institutional planning processes was [sic] exemplarily 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.29).” (2012 Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Report)

DSU continues this practice and has advanced the systematic gathering of relevant institutional and environmental data for analysis and insights involving broad-based, constituent input and recommendations for data informed actions. For example, DSU has multiple third-party contracts with EAB and other organizations that regularly supply data, best practices and insights about national trends and environmental conditions that impact our decision making. Campus dialogue about trends and best practices gleaned from multiple news and information feeds occurs daily and inform institutional decision making. In today’s world where disruption in many environments requires flexibility and responsive change, it is essential that organizations practice ongoing data gathering and analysis for quick and appropriate decision-making. Though DSU still values and conducts comprehensive, big picture assessment for strategic planning every five years, it has significantly augmented its continuous improvement and assessment practices.

Strategic planning and implementation are central to the DSU culture and provide guidance for resource allocation and the prioritization of actions and initiatives. DSU has adopted a five-year planning cycle aligned with the beginning of each decade. DSU selects consultants and employs a nearly year-long process of data and information gathering, stakeholder engagement involving faculty, staff, students, trustees and community members to complete a SWOT analysis. An iterative feedback-infused planning process is used throughout to establish goals, strategies and actions to create and adjust the plan. Nearly 60 members of the campus community are directly involved as members of either the steering committee or goal teams.

Once approved and implemented, goal and strategy leaders are selected to provide leadership in implementing the plan and are then held accountable through semi-annual reviews and public presentations of accomplishments. Beginning in 2020, the DSU “Strategic Initiatives Forum” will be established with membership drawn from the leadership of each of the five primary strategic goal teams. This group will meet monthly to coordinate strategic activities and provide progress reports. The President in his annual state-of-the-university address presents the status of strategic planning progress and achievement in a meeting open to campus members and the public.
Additional Related Policies, Websites and Support documents

Strategic Planning website
Policy 109: Strategic Planning and Evaluation
2015-20 Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning website includes the 2020-25 Strategic Plans in development

(See also MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES SINCE LAST REPORT in 2015 section above)

The following is a list of entities with which DSU frequently partners to gather, share and interpret data in order to better respond to internal and external environmental conditions.

External Monitoring:

- The University of Utah, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute serves Utah to “Develop and share economic, demographic, and public policy research that sheds light and helps people make informed decisions.” Recent Publication: 2020 Economic Report to the Governor

- The mission of the Five Counties Association of Governments is to “plan, prepare and partner with federal, state and local governments to strengthen the role of southwestern Utah local officials in the execution of state and federal programs at the local level.

- The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) assists by providing documents and comparisons among Utah system institutions and national peer institutions in its annual USHE Databook of which it has maintained archived editions for more than a decade.

- The City of St. George’s input is provided by the mayor, who is a DSU Trustee

- The Washington County School Board’s superintendent is a DSU Trustee and provides insight about regional public education affairs

- DSU’s Zion Business Resources Center, now housed at DSU’s new Atwood Innovation Plaza, has long partnered with and supported local businesses with the purpose of economic development. In keeping with its mission, Innovation Plaza personnel assist innovators in acquiring intellectual property and entrepreneurs in launching and growing their businesses.

Internal Monitoring:

- The DSU Data Governance Office produces, manages and responds to many report requirements and surveys that assess and contain information about student, employer, community and employee, national and local perceptions, demographics and standings. e.g. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Great Colleges to Work For (GCTWF) Survey, Alumni Surveys, Senior Student Surveys, Employer Surveys, National Student Clearing House reports, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Reports (IPEDS), USHE reports and USHE Databooks.

- Specialized accreditation requires rigorous assessment and reporting of program results and standards’ fulfillment. DSU’s Specialized Accreditation Programs

- DSU’s Institutional Strategic Assessment and Accreditation Committee (ISAAC) and various campus programs and services have provided core theme, objective and indicator data analysis.

- DSU’s internal financial records are documented by Business Services in the form of state-audited, financial reports and internal audits. Annual Financial Statements

- Facilities and Technology infrastructure monitoring is predominantly responsive
to State requirements, but also to internal standards. Facilities Master Plan; Utah Building Board Preventative Maintenance Audit Dixie FY19; IT Strategic Plan; DSU IT Equipment & Software Purchase & Replacement Plan

- Campus security is monitored through the Cleary Act Reports & Crime Logs and the 2019 Annual Security & Fire Safety Report

- The associations for students, staff and faculty monitor and support the needs, resources and environments of their members. DSU Student Association; Staff Association; Faculty Senate

- Four associate provost positions have been established over the past five years. The people in these areas have greatly increased the academic division’s ability to monitor and serve its internal and external academic environments.

  - Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budget streamlines and improves quality of curriculum development, program develop and assessment, annual unit planning, academic budget planning and academic efficiency.

  - Associate Provost for Academic Success designs, deploys and manages focused initiatives, assesses and monitors student learning and success, achievement and academic advisement and provided responsive services to facilitate student success. Academic Advisement has adopted EAB Navigate, population management, predictive analytics, and a student care model as a comprehensive platform to advance student learning and success.

  - Associate Provost for Community and Global Engagement serves the local and global communities’ educational needs, including international, educational partnerships and satellite learning centers.

  - Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs supervises the Center for Teaching and Learning and academic innovation, as well as attending to faculty needs, recognition and quality of professional life.

- DSU has an Internal Audit Department the purpose of which is to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services. It brings a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, internal control, and governance processes. Internal Audit assists administration, the Board of Trustees, and its Audit Committee in the effective discharge of their responsibilities and in identifying, avoiding and, if necessary, mitigating risks. Policy 140: Internal Audit

**Governance (See also 2.A.1)**

DSU’s Governance Approval Pathways Chart defines the information review, decision-making and approval process of key decisions as they traverse the institutional governance entities. The Utah Board of Higher Education delegate the Board of Trustees to advise the President and to approve, disapprove, or make recommendations concerning initiatives submitted by the President. The Trustees are also expected to facilitate communication between DSU and the community. (USHE Policy R220, Delegation of Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees). Board of Trustees’ subcommittees are actively engaged in monitoring the DSU mission, programs, and services by working with appropriate university employees who are able to inform them according to their committee assignments.
Board of Trustees Sub-Committees

- Executive Committee
- Academic Committee
- Audit Committee
- Finance/Investment Committee
- Government Affairs Committee
- Honoree Selection Committee
- Policy Committee
- Dixie Technical College Board Liaison
- National Advisory Council (NAC) Representative

The President’s Cabinet is comprised of senior administrators who report directly to the president. The commission of the cabinet is “to discuss the direction of the University, strategically align units, make decisions on budget priorities, determine the organization of the University, and approve policy and position announcements. To create transparency, communicate, collaborate, and share decisions affecting other areas.”

The University Council, chaired by the president, is the highest, shared governance body at DSU. The charter of the council is “to gather and disseminate information shared at University Council meetings with campus departments and colleges. To create collaboration, report, establish relationships, share concerns, and approve policy.”

Additional Related Policies

- Policy Review Chart
- Policy 204: Budget Process
- New Academic Program Approval Flowchart
- Policy 609: Academic Program Review
- USHE Policy R411: Cyclical Institutional Program Reviews
- USHE Policy R401, Sections 6 & 8: Review of New Programs
- Policy 109: Strategic Planning and Evaluation

Student Learning

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminates in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials with designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study. (Eligibility Requirement 5)

Response: Academic award programs, including degrees and emphases, minors, and certificates, must all undergo rigorous review by a series of governance bodies. The cycle of review begins with academic department approval, followed by the College Curriculum Committee, University Curriculum Committee, and Academic Council approvals. The award program then undergoes a Utah system-wide peer review and a review by USHE Commissioner’s Office before being forwarded to the DSU Board of Trustees for final system approval and in most cases, also for approval by NWCCU. Beginning in 2018, final approval of all programs was devolved from the Utah Board of Higher Education to the university trustees, so only notification of their approval is required at the state level. New Academic Program Approval Flowchart
All new courses entered into the curriculum management software must include Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and all program proposals must include Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Learning outcomes at the program and course level are first reviewed by the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budget for rigor, accuracy, and format before distribution to faculty committees for review - a practice initiated in 2018. CLOs entered into the software prior to Fall 2018 are being gradually updated to the current and more rigorous standards. Academic program proposals and approvals, initiated since late 2013, may be downloaded and viewed on DSU’s Program Tracker website. Examples of Recently Developed PLO Assessment Plans

For over 20 years, the Utah Board of Higher Education (UBHE) has hosted an annual “What is an Educated Person?” conference, where discussions are held encompassing “who our students are, what they are learning and how we know what is learned and how we must change.” To maintain appropriate educational content, learning outcomes, rigor and congruence for transferability of program and general education (GE) coursework across the State, USHE also organizes annual major and GE meetings. At these meetings, faculty discuss and compare courses and programs within major fields to assist in standardization. USHE Policy R470, Section 6.1: Majors Committees

This cooperative process is of particular importance to GE coursework contained within associate of science and associate of arts degrees. USHE formed the General Education Task Force in 1992 to dialog about GE standards, learning expectations, assessments and transfer. Within USHE, students can transfer to another institution with an associate degree or a GE letter of completion and be recognized as having completed the general education requirements of the Utah institution to which they are transferring.

Through the guidance of the Utah Board of Higher Education, DSU Board of Trustees, and in alignment with the mission statement and strategic plan; DSU has strategically identified academic programs that are consistent with the offerings of a comprehensive, regional university, including standard degrees and those responsive to documented regional needs and opportunities.

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning. (Eligibility Requirement 5)

Response: The new academic program proposal form used by DSU to evaluate proposed degree, minor, and certificate programs is based on stipulated requirements from the Utah System of Higher Education (Policy R401: Approval of New Programs...) and DSU Policy 609: Academic Program Review. Programs are initiated and developed by faculty after they research similar programs offered at other reputable institutions. The first level of approval for these programs occurs at the college level with faculty and division curriculum committee review and vote (New Academic Program Approval Flowchart). The next level of approval occurs at the
University Curriculum Committee, which is the institutional faculty voice on curriculum (Policy 602: Undergraduate Curriculum Approval and Revision). Members review each proposal for design, breadth, depth, and sequencing of courses.

Congruence of program content across USHE is aided by the USHE Majors Committee and annual majors meetings, as noted in 1.C.1 (Policy R470, Section 6.1: Majors Committees). Most programs include a capstone or practicum course that synthesizes learning. All programs are vetted by other public higher education institutions with similar programs. The programs are then sent to the Board of Trustees, and trustees take into consideration comments of other institutions before they vote to approve programs. The NWCCU has the final word on program approval.

USHE policy mandates that all baccalaureate students complete a minimum of two high impact practices (HIPs), the first within the first 30 credits and the second at the upper division within the major. DSU has been intentional about providing high impact learning experiences, mainly those identified by George Kuh, to actively engage students and deepen their learning (NSSE HIP Report F19). The following instructional practices and learning experiences are implemented across all academic divisions:

- First Year Courses, Seminars and Experiences
- Common General Education Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning
- Writing Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning (study abroad)

The university goal for HIPs is that all students gain a breadth, depth and synthesis of learning through the following practices identified by AAC&U (High Impact Teaching Practices):

- investing time and effort in a purposeful task.
- interacting with faculty and peers about substantive matters.
- receiving frequent feedback about their work and guidance about how they can make improvements.
- connecting disciplinary content with real-world experience when they apply knowledge and skills from the discipline to a real-world problem.
- discovering connections between the curriculum, their learning, and personal experience though a reflective writing component.

Student development and learning are enhanced through the acquisition of essential life skills, so the university is developing and implementing teaching practices and resources that advance two additional institutional learning outcomes: Innovation and G.R.I.T. DSU defines Innovation as the ability to synthesize and collaborate across general and discipline-specific studies for innovative solutions of complex and unscripted problems. G.R.I.T. is defined as students practicing Growth Mindset - the belief that personal attributes can be developed through effort and education; Relationship Building - the practice of cultivating trusting, collaborative and inclusive relationships; Intentional Learning - the purposeful, deliberate process to acquire and use a variety of strategies to attain and apply knowledge; and Tenacity - the habit of persevering, adapting and staying engaged for a sustained period of time to achieve goals (DSU ILOs).
1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students. (Eligibility Requirement 5)

Response: Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for all degrees and certificates are published on program websites and in the Catalog (Program and Course links are provided on the front page of the online catalog) for students and the public to review. In Fall 2018, PLOs for all university academic award programs were upgraded and standardized. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are also published on the catalog program webpages. When a student clicks on a course link, the course description and the course learning outcomes appear for review.

Faculty are expected to provide a syllabus to students enrolled in their classes (Policy 633: Faculty Rights & Responsibilities, Section 4.2.2.3.2, Syllabi) that adhere to DSU guidelines for content, including course learning outcomes (Required Elements of Syllabi). College administrative assistants have the responsibility to gather course syllabi for each semester and archive them in the Library repository designed for that purpose. Syllabi Examples.

1.C.4 The institution’s admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public. (Eligibility Requirement 17)

Response: As an open-admission institution, DSU strives to provide accessible, clear admission and graduation requirement information to its prospective students, current students and their influencers. Policy 501: Undergraduate Admission to the Institution, the Admissions website, and the catalog admissions pages provide the admission requirements for DSU’s students. Students can track their progress through the admissions process via a CRM called Slate, which provides a process checklist. DSU faithfully adheres to these policies in performing their student-centered admission duties.

Policy 524: Graduation, the Graduation office and website and the catalog’s Graduation pages provide clear guidance regarding graduation requirements, as well as additional resources and support. Admission and graduation requirements are included in each new program proposal; after approval, these requirements are subsequently published in the catalog on degree and program pages. All students who have declared a major and degree have access online through Degree Works, which outlines their specific degree requirements and tracks their personal completion of requirements toward graduation.

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs. (Eligibility Requirements 5, 12 & 13)
Response: Faculty produce meaningful and assessable curriculum, including course and program learning outcomes (CLOs; PLOs), with assistance from the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budget, program assessment coordinators, assessment leads and the Director of Accreditation (Examples of recently developed PLO assessment plans). The first evaluation level for new courses and programs is at the department and college level involving faculty review and approval (New Academic Program Approval Flowchart). Once established, programs are annually assessed by program faculty, chairs, deans and program assessment coordinators. Analysis of (PLOs) is conducted by department faculty and reported in Department Annual Reports prepared by chairs and reviewed by deans and the Provost/VPAA. The essential purpose of the assessment process is to identify areas of insufficient student learning and to develop action plans for remediation or improvement of curriculum and the learning process.

Academic assessments are archived in and reported from Taskstream, an assessment management platform. Attached are Bachelor program assessment reports from Taskstream. The bachelor program reports are being used as evidence of systematic academic assessment because they provide the most numerous program type examples of assessment. For the same reason, Bachelor program assessment is used as an indicator of student learning in the Core Theme Assessment & Mission Fulfillment Reports. Beginning Fall 2020, DSU will transition from the Taskstream platform to a more user-friendly product, Campus Labs, for archiving and reporting academic assessment.

All academic departments have a designated assessment coordinator that is either a program faculty member or the Department Chair. Assessment coordinators are mentored and assisted by college assessment leads who together comprise the DSU Academic Assessment Committee. DSU is in the process of correcting an unfortunate situation in a few programs, where assessment has fallen on the shoulders of the coordinators. In these cases, there may be minimal participation from program faculty, except those who are gathering PLO and signature assignment data from their courses. Academic Assessment Committee

It takes a village to do assessment well. So DSU is in the process of reframing assessment from an arduous task for a few faculty members to a meaningful pathway for all faculty that leads to student success, curriculum development and continuous program improvement. In order to make this shift, DSU will follow the National Institute for Learning Outcomes’ (NILOA’s) lead to promote “good enough” assessment. “Good enough” meaning assessment that is good and it is enough; not over burdensome, but valuable. This approach is meaningful at a teaching intensive institution like DSU, where faculty are strongly committed to curriculum development and improvement, as well as to student learning and success and are encouraged to associate assessment with these two purposes. Policy 633: Faculty Rights & Responsibilities, Section 4.1.16

The Utah Board of Higher Education (UBHE) also plays a role in program assessment. Three years following approval of a new degree program, an institutional program review and progress report is required by the Provost and the UBHE. At seven years following initial approval, a second program review and progress report must be submitted to UBHE. Policy 609: Academic Program Review; USHE Policy R411: Cyclical Institutional Program Reviews; Policy R401, Sections 6 & 8: Review of New Programs

Quality of instruction and student learning are essential to the health and success of students, faculty, staff, and educational institutions. It is, therefore, vital that DSU develop and support
effective teaching and learning practices among faculty and staff. To this end, DSU has established an active Center for Teaching and Learning and Office of Digital and Extended Learning that together provide structured learning opportunities, conferences and expert guest speakers, as well as open access to personalized learning experiences, software and equipment. These centers played a central role in assisting faculty and students navigate the challenges of maintaining quality educational experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Achieving quality instruction and learning requires that practical feedback be provided to faculty through reflection and peer review of their pedagogical practices. This process is defined and promoted in Policy 641: Faculty Retention, Tenure and Promotion and Policy 634: Faculty Professional Development. Policy 634 outlines faculty development opportunities, informal and formal evaluations among the faculty (Annual Faculty Activity Plan - AFAP and Role Statements), as well as instruction evaluations by peers and supervisors. Student Opinion Surveys of their courses and professors are also a part of the faculty evaluation process (Policy 552, Section 4.1.2.9: Student Rights & Responsibilities). (See also Standard 2.F.4)

1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy. (Eligibility Requirements 5 & 13)

Response: The Provost/VPAA appointed a task force comprised of faculty and staff in fall 2016 with the charge to revise the General Education program. The revisions were finalized and implemented during the 2017-2018 academic year (GE Taskforce Reform Report). The revised GE program is an integrated program of study covering the depth and breadth of intellect, critical to effective learning, productive work and citizenship. The revised GE program incorporated a set of cross-cutting, essential learning outcomes derived from the AAC&U’s LEAP Initiative and aligned with USHE Policy R470.

As noted in 1.C.1, USHE actively works with institutions to develop comprehensive and congruent learning outcomes across the system (USHE Policy R470: General Education Requirements...). DSU baccalaureate programs include the recognizable GE core areas, such as humanities, fine arts, mathematics, natural sciences and social science. Each of the GE course areas (e.g., Literature and Humanities, Mathematics, etc.) have stated learning outcomes; these learning outcomes were revised and updated during the 2017-2018 academic year (GE Area Course Criteria). In addition, DSU is developing Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for “Innovation” and “GRIT”.

DSU’s GE Learning Goals (GE Student Learning Outcomes are also listed at this link):
1. Broad knowledge of the Liberal Arts and Sciences
2. Critical Thinking
3. Effective Communications
4. Information Literacy
5. Quantitative Reasoning
6. Diversity and Globalization
7. Responsibilities of Citizenship

DSU’s GE Philosophy and Description: General Education website; DSU’s GE Requirements
All applied degrees and certificate programs of 30 credits or more also include Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and related instruction in the core GE areas of communication, computation, and human relations. USHE Policy 401, Section 3.1.2 & 3.1.3: Certificate & AAS GE Requirements

In the 2012 Comprehensive Evaluation Committee Report (p.22), evaluators commented regarding GE, not as a formal recommendation, that “The college must be vigilant in ensuring that data supporting general education assessment is regularly collected and accessibly archived, that appropriate assessment benchmarks are defined, and that analysis of these assessments is used to improve general education.”

Since 2012, DSU has continued developing its GE assessment practices. In doing so, it identified GE as an important indicator of institutional learning for Core Theme Assessment. Accordingly, the university established a GE Assessment Committee which has mapped courses, developed rubrics and benchmarks, and assessed GE across multiple programs and colleges to fulfill the 2017-18 GE reform initiative. In the 2018-19 academic year, the GE assessment committee was able to complete the significant task of assessing and analyzing all GE areas according the reformed GE guidelines. GEAC 2018-19 Assessment Report; GELO Assessment Results 2018-19

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning support planning and practices are used for continuous improvement of student learning. (Eligibility Requirement 5)

Response: Once established, academic programs are annually assessed by program faculty and program assessment coordinators. Analysis of PLOs is conducted by department faculty and reported in Department Annual Reports prepared by department chairs and reviewed by deans, the Associate Provost of Academic Planning and Budget, and the Provost/VPAA. A secondary function of the annual report is to identify resource needs. A component of the assessment process is to identify areas of insufficient student learning and to develop action plans for remediation and continuous improvement of curriculum, the learning process, and student achievement. The intent of the newly required Academic Action Plan is to ensure the closing of the loop on assessment. Academic Action Plan Template (2020) (See also 1.C.5)

Additional and Related Support Documents
Bachelor Program Assessment Reports in Taskstream, including improvement actions Academic Affairs Annual Reports

1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality. (Eligibility Requirements 5 & 13)
Response: Policy 526, Section 4.1: Academic Transfer Credit details the conditions governing transfer of academic credit. DSU accepts transfer credit from other regionally accredited institutions of higher education. Transfer credits are evaluated on an individual basis; courses that have no equivalent at DSU may be accepted as electives only. Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degrees earned at USHE institutions, as well as GE “letters of completion” submitted by Registrars at USHE institutions, are accepted to meet GE requirements (Policy R470: General Education). (See also 2.C.1 regarding transfer of credit.)

AA or AS degrees earned at non-USHE, regionally accredited institutions are accepted to meet GE requirements; however, students must meet DSU and USHE requirements in mathematics, composition and American institutions. Non-GE, program-required courses are assessed by faculty and the chairs of the appropriate programs. DSU also awards credit for competencies as measured by the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Advanced Placement program (AP). A Transfer Guide with information on previously approved transfer equivalencies for out-of-state institutions is also available.

As a member of USHE, DSU works closely with sister institutions to develop articulation agreements. Annual conferences and workshops, known as “Majors Meetings” are held; discipline faculty members convene to review, coordinate, and update articulation for their programs (USHE Policy R470, Section 6.1: Majors Committees). As noted in 1.C.6, articulation agreements exist between all USHE institutions for transfer of general education credit, as well as for many non-GE program specific courses. Program-required courses are assessed for transferability by faculty and chairs of the appropriate programs.

Additionally, DSU is a member of the Interstate Transfer Passport @ DSU (See WICHE Passport Program), which provides a framework for block transfer of lower-division general education.

The recently revised Policy 523: Extra-Institutional Credit defines credit that is earned outside of DSU, from prior learning, experiential learning and credit awarded because of successful standardized testing or approved experiences. DSU follows USHE Policy R472: Credit for Prior Learning. Test and programs recognized for credit awarded by DSU include Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Exam Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST), Vertical Foreign Language Tests, B.Y.U. Foreign Language Assessment Testing Service (FLATS), American Council on Education (ACE)-Evaluated Military Training and International Baccalaureate (IB) Credit exams. Prior learning credit may also be awarded for proficiency in foreign languages.

In some cases, students are awarded prior, experiential learning credit for learning that is equal to college-level learning, but was acquired outside of a traditional educational setting (DSU Policy 523, Section 3.2 & 4.3.8: Prior Learning). This credit is assessed by faculty and chairs of appropriate programs and is awarded for learning that can be demonstrated, not by experience alone, but in connection with the theories and data of the relevant academic fields. Credit may be granted only for documented learning which falls within the scope of the regular curricular offerings of the University.

1.C.9 The institution’s graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring,
among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice. (Eligibility Requirements 5 & 13)

**Response:** Graduate degree programs were first offered at DSU in fall 2018. Prior to implementing DSU’s first graduate degree program, an Office of Graduate Studies was established, a Director of Graduate Studies was appointed, a Graduate Council was established and several policies were created to guide development and set standards for graduate programs. The purpose of Policy 701: Graduate Studies is to aid in defining graduate studies at DSU. This policy sets standards in direct response to NWCCU Standard 1.C.9. Policy 702: Administration and Governance and establishes the administrative structure of graduate studies. A Director of Graduate Studies is appointed by the Provost/VPAA with the responsibility to create and manage strategic planning for graduate education, guide all curriculum activities through the approval process to accreditation, manage graduate budget practices, oversee graduate student advising and supervise administrative personnel. Currently the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budget is also the Director of Graduate Studies. Each graduate program has a graduate program director who oversees a specific graduate program and liaises with program faculty, students, advisors, and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Policy 703: Graduate Degree Requirements and Policy 706: Master’s degrees define general requirements for establishing a master’s level degree at DSU. The development and approval of all graduate degree program proposals undergo the same process as undergraduate programs, with the exception that faculty governance for graduate curriculum is through the Graduate Council. Only graduate faculty members can serve on the Graduate Council and are considered qualified to review and approve the rigor and demands of graduate education, as well as the course instructors’ qualifications. Each approved graduate program includes opportunities for research scholarship, creative expression, and/or appropriate high-level professional practice. DSU does allow graduate credit for internships, clinical practices, field experiences, and other high impact practices that have been approved as an integral part of graduate programs. Graduate program proposals are vetted by other USHE institutions and approved by DSU’s Academic Council, the Board of Trustees and the NWCCU. Program proposals may be downloaded and viewed at the Program Tracker.

Finally, several policies were created to shape Master’s requirements. Policy 704: Graduate Admission and Policy 706: Master’s degrees define master degree admission requirements, procedures and applications. Also, the purpose of Policy 705: Graduate Assistantships is to establish definitions, guiding principles, terms, and administrative authority for assistantships.

**Student Achievement**

1.D.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies. (Eligibility Requirement 17)
Response: DSU is an open enrollment institution and welcomes students with a wide range of academic competencies and preparation. To better support at-risk students in benefitting from higher education, the institution was selected to participate in the Reimagining the First Year Initiative, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s collaboration to assist institutions to improve first year retention. An early step in helping students succeed is to require placement in English, Reading and Mathematics courses for those who have low test scores in the three academic areas. Completion of these pre-requisite courses enables registration in other courses (Registration Placement Requirements). The university accepts the ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, and ALEKS college placement tests as predictors of pre-requisite course needs. ESL courses may have different placement exams, such as the TOEFL. (See also 2.C.3)

In support of its open enrollment status, DSU seeks to enhance its educational offerings to benefit students in achieving their academic potential (Student Core Theme Video). The student onboarding process addresses the needs of newly admitted students from the moment they say “Yes, I’m coming to Dixie” until classes begin. Those students who respond positively are placed into an online Canvas course administered and supported by academic advisors. These new students join the communications pathway that helps students through the onboarding process, ensuring that all items on their checklist of requirements have been accomplished. Questions and concerns are addressed. This process includes, but is not limited to, those related to tuition/fees, financial aid, housing, course registration, and New Student Orientation.

The New Student Orientation Program serves as the bridge between the last phase of recruitment and the first phase of retention and is designed to help new students feel prepared for their first semester. Orientation connects students to DSU and increases their knowledge of campus resources through an “active learning, active life”, online experience, the Trailblazer Prep Course. The purpose of orientation is to provide students and their support system with a successful transition to DSU by organizing and delivering preparatory academic, financial, and campus resource information and engagement opportunities. Our objective is that all new DSU students and their families learn and engage in New Student Orientation and adopt the DSU Trailblazer vision.

DSU designed and launched its new and improved first-year experience course, SSC 1010 – Trailblazer Connections website in
Trailblazer Connections provides a rich pre-semester or in-semester academic curriculum combined with student support services to further reinforce students’ transition to college. In this course, students learn the value of a college education, what it means to be an intentional student and educated person, and they develop a sense of belonging by building a learning community. The Trailblazer Connections website provides more information about the course curriculum, resources, and other related initiatives.

Understanding that student persistence in college increases as they develop relationships with other students and faculty, DSU has initiated a “block scheduling” strategy. For the Fall 2020 term, approximately 75-80% of the incoming freshmen will have three or four connected courses with other freshmen in their meta-major. The goal of these cohorts is to create a sense of belonging, connection to their peers, and study groups. Employing a proactive/intrusive advising model, advisors can communicate with cohort-shared instructors, informing them they have the same students and encouraging communication and identification of those that may be struggling in multiple courses.

Research shows that encouraging students to identify early with a meta-major improves retention. Therefore, one of the objectives for Trailblazer Connections is for students to enter or continue on their path of career exploration, including identification of career goals. Some academic departments have created their own Trailblazer alternative course to further assist and commit students who have already identified their major. In these courses, students are encouraged to network and develop mentors of faculty, alumni and professionals in their career fields of interest.

A revised Academic Standing Policy 525 outlines processes of early intervention for students who are struggling academically. The new policy defines levels of academic standing flags for advisors and identifies interventions that at-risk students must follow. Faculty and advisors use the early alert program provided in EAB’s Navigate platform to identify and initiate communication with students for whom faculty are concerned.

Throughout students’ educational experiences, they will have regular contact points with academic advisors, from the day that they enroll to the day they graduate and possibly afterwards. Specific program/degree requirements are found in the catalog under the program sections: Catalog Program links (on front page). Policy 663: Academic Advisement Career Services website


The graduation websites (catalog.dixie.edu/graduation/ & graduation.dixie.edu/) provide information to prospective graduates while holding the philosophical position that students must be responsible for knowing and understanding the graduation requirements and the process of application. Students, therefore, have access to a degree completion tracking system called Degree Works. As a student approaches completion of their degree requirements, they are advised to complete a graduation application, which they can locate online, and to schedule an appointment with their program advisor well in advance of their anticipated graduation date. The student and advisor will perform a degree completion audit, identify missing requirements, if any, and discuss the student’s academic progress and responsibilities as graduation approaches. Policy 524: Graduation
1.D.2 Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps). (Eligibility Requirements 6, 21 & 22)

Response: As noted in 1.B.1 and 1.B.2 (Institutional Effectiveness Assessment & Comparative Data), 2.C.3 (Appropriate Admission, Placement & Guidance) and 2.G.1 (Provision of Support Programs), DSU is strongly committed to student learning and achievement, as well as to serving all its students as needed, including providing resources to close equity gaps. This commitment has catalyzed numerous institutional effectiveness, assessment, student support and achievement, and curricular improvement initiatives as noted throughout this report.

DSU has established and publishes outcome metrics regarding student achievement on its Institutional Effectiveness webpage (Dashboards and IE Visualizations). Included in the institution and program data that is available are enrollment headcount and FTE by major, DSU census data, graduation rates, retention rates, course grades, USHE comparative data, and national survey results. Data on post-graduation success is also provided by Career Services on the 1st Destination website. At the institutional level, DSU reports retention and completion for the 2018-19 IPEDS cohort and for all degree-seeking students; results are compared to external benchmarks. USHE Databooks also compare DSU to other Utah public institutions of higher education (National Peer Institutions). But, the administration realizes that more needs to be done in disaggregating, analyzing, comparing, sharing and responding to student achievement data.

DSU Responses to Four Questions Regarding Retention and Graduation Data
DSU has responded to the four questions related to retention and graduation data that evaluators’ have for the past few years been prompted by the NWCCU to ask.

- What are the key challenges of DSU related to the institution’s graduation rates, retention and other data provided?
- What is the institution doing to improve graduation and retention rates?
- What initiatives appear to be most effective in improving graduation and retention rates?
- What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation and retention rates?

IE is revising all existing report procedures (including enrollment, retention, course and program completion dashboards) to validate the accuracy of data and the efficacy of shared visualizations. Moving forward, most created visualizations will offer the end user the ability to explore data based on race, ethnicity, age group, gender, first-generation status, and Pell eligibility status. For those occasions where this exploration cannot be executed in the distributed visualization, IE will work with requestors and data consumers to conduct these additional analyses as needed. Where equity gaps are identified, action plans to promote student achievement and close barriers will be established as noted in the 2020-25 Strategic Plan.
1.D.3 The institution’s disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution’s website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources. (Eligibility Requirements 6, 21 & 22)

Response: DSU currently provides six Student Data Dashboards on the Visualizations and Dashboards pages making the data available to university users and the public. Four dashboards are set to disaggregate by student demographic indicators: Headcount by Major, Graduation Numbers, Graduation Rates, and Retention Rates.

- Headcount by Major - unduplicated headcount information by Major, Department, and College for five years (Fall only) by race, gender, major, or age, full/part-time, degree-seeking, residential status, and first generation on different student levels. [Enrollment]

- Course Enrollment – student FTE, and SCHs for each DSU course for five years (Fall only) and can be reported at the College, Department, Prefix/Subject, and Course level.

- Graduation Numbers - number of graduates for five academic years for all Departments, Colleges, and Majors, by race, and gender at different degree levels. [Graduation Credentials]

- Graduation Rate - the percentage of student who graduated within 6 years or 150% of time) for 2 years (2010 and 2011) with additional years in progress using various filters. The default settings review New Freshman, Full-time, Bachelor Degree intent, with No Exclusions. Filters include demographic information, and additional institutional information including Index Scores, GPA’s, etc. [DSU Graduation Rates]

- Comparative USHE data ([https://ushe.edu/data/](https://ushe.edu/data/))

- Job Placement – compared to other USHE institutions ([https://ushe.edu/data/](https://ushe.edu/data/))

- 1st Destination dashboard, for which data is also disaggregated, was added to the Career Services website.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is developing a more robust business intelligence infrastructure that will move the use of data from a compliance orientation to a strategic reporting and analytics orientation – working with stakeholders across campus to improve the availability of and accessibility to timely and relevant information. Currently disaggregated data is not compared with that of peer institutions. This is an application that will be developed as IE moves forward. Here are an example of the more interactive and informative dashboards under development on the new Datablaze site: [Datablaze Enrollment] and [Graduation Credentials]

The overall data sharing posture of IE as it
relates to publishing of data and visualizations is that information should be widely disseminated. Transparency and openness contribute to a culture of data-driven decision making. Availability of data is also critical to supporting these efforts. New development endeavors in IE focus on the easy retrieval of both historical and current information by end-users. Information that does not identify students at the individual record level should be broadly available to the campus community; information that provides evidence of the activities or outcomes of specific identifiable students will be provided subject to appropriate security protocols.

Tableau is employed for data visualizations, while RStudio Connect is used for both the presentation of tabular data and for more complex analyses. Visualizations and publications emanating from this software is to be shared and published on DSU’s website. Options exist to define each visualization as a broadly available public document or to restrict access based on the specific user or institutional role. In addition, the institution has contracted with EAB to implement and deploy the Education Data Hub; this data warehouse product will help to consolidate and connect data from disparate information sources, including the student information system (Ellucian Banner), learning management system (Instructure Canvas), customer relationship management system (Technolutions Slate), and others.

1.D.4 The institution’s processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate achievement gaps and promote equity. (Eligibility Requirements 6, 21 & 22)

Response: For the past several years, DSU has reported Visualizations & Dashboards on student achievement data such as student enrollment, retention, graduates, graduation rates and transfer (See 1.D.3). This data has been available, but not publicly published, disaggregated according to gender, race, ethnicity, first-generation and part-time/full-time status. The 1st Destination dashboard, for which data is also disaggregated, was added to the Career Services website for public view. Public data dashboards are now available disaggregated regarding enrollment, retention, graduation on the Institutional Effectiveness webpage. Datablaze website

Previously, DSU has not been deliberately opaque about its methodologies, analysis and findings related to student achievement data. But it has realized that it needs to more strongly encourage greater availability, analysis, discussion, and responsiveness to disaggregated data. Intentionality has clearly increased in the past few years in using DSU student success data, with considerable effort being made toward discussing and mitigating student achievement gaps and promoting equity.

Strategic planning and its accompanying open communication practices are examples of means to providing inclusion and transparency concerning institutional challenges and assessment, analysis, strategies and improvements conducted at DSU (Policy 109: Strategic Planning & Evaluation).

Indicator 3.1.A for the core theme Opportunity, “Students who are academically at-risk and from diverse backgrounds enroll and are retained (at DSU)”, has focused attention on students who are at-risk and from diverse backgrounds. The at-risk students in this case are those with low index scores (a composite of high school GPA and ACT score), and are minority or international students (Core Theme Assessment & Mission Fulfillment Reports).

Annual reports are expected to stimulate
open discussion among department members and between administrators regarding data (See 1.B.3). The sharing of information and governance at University Council is another instance of open communication regarding institutional data and issues (University Committees - University Council Charter). Additionally, a main directive of the Institutional Effectiveness Office is to provide access to data, making it more transparent, useful and used, especially regarding disaggregated student achievement data.

New positions have recently been established to improve data collection, analysis and response regarding student success and achievement gaps. Three positions in particular lead these efforts, the Associate Provost for Academic Success, the Assistant Vice President for Student Success & Co-Curricular Assessment and the Assistant Vice President of Campus Diversity. The AVP of Campus Diversity has the specific task of improving inclusion and guiding the university in overcoming equity matters. As noted in 2.G.1 and 1.D.1 many initiatives have been implemented to mitigate achievement gaps and better serve all the university’s students. The Equity Challenges re. Multicultural Student Retention report is an example of assessment and resulting programs and activities to improve retention for multicultural students.

With the objective to strengthen the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of educational practices and of monitoring student achievement, DSU has partnered with EAB (formerly the Education Advisory Board) since 2017. EAB provides DSU with research, technology and consulting services to assist in coordinating, integrating and utilizing critical student and course data. DSU had invested in three of their products: Academic Performance Solutions (APS), Navigate, and Educational Data Hub (EDH) and adopted many related best practices. These products focus on improving enrollment management and student success, as well as institutional operations and strategy. A significant advantage of working with EAB is its ability to provide peer benchmarking data due to the large number of institutions with which it partners, e.g. EAB Navigate Report.

An excellent example of using EAB data reports to guide in the development of a student achievement improvement initiative is the 2020 approved, START (Students Taking an Active Role as a Trailblazer) Scholars Program. The program is designed to expand the content of Trailblazer Connections by infusing preparatory Math and English coursework over a 5-day engagement period. The focus of the program is to help at-risk students with below 50-index scores, or are first generation.
CONCLUSION

As the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and the national higher education community have developed in their understanding and practice of accountability regarding mission fulfillment, so has DSU. When confronted with the new regional accreditation standards of 2010, DSU began an accelerated and somewhat arduous road to educate its members in the art of assessment for mission fulfillment and continuous improvement purposes in preparation for its 2012 self-study. This 2020 self-study maps much of the university’s journey in continuing to improve in meeting NWCCU accreditation standards. However, the self-study only hints at the hours of program planning and development, assessment training, data gathering, analysis, program report writing, collaboration, growth and improvement. With so much continuous improvement and change, there has not been a lot of time for appreciation of what the university community has accomplished. The culture-changing value of strategic planning, the on-going accreditation process and, particularly, the comprehensive self-study, is that it advances a continuous improvement process that is inclusive, intentional and transparent.

This report is a detailed explanation, with evidence of DSU’s position in meeting NWCCU standards. A summary self-evaluation, according to the NWCCU rubrics for institutional effectiveness, was also applied to assist evaluators and the university in clarifying DSU’s status on standard compliance (see Appendix B: Identification of DSU’s Status on Each Standard One Standard). The university has not met the “highly-developed” level of performance for every rubric standard. Except for three standards’ subsections that are straddling the “emerged” and “developed” status, DSU performs at least at the “developed” stage of practice and persists in aspiring to a highly developed culture of continuous improvement, institutional effectiveness, and faithful mission fulfillment.

As with most educational institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the students and faculty at DSU. Characteristically, the university responded quickly, responsibly and intentionally to communicate and make appropriate plans and changes with human safety as a top priority. In large part, this response was due to the university’s G.R.I.T. and willingness to change in response to community needs. Some see DSU’s community college legacy as history, but it is rather a part of what makes DSU what it is today. The university, therefore, embraces its dual mission and recommits to serving all its students and all program levels well.

When a university or an individual commits to a significant value or goal, there is typically no instant miraculous transformation; but, often, this commitment involves a long process of development. DSU commits to the sometimes painful realization of shortcomings and the hard work of changing and growing. Important preparation in the continuous improvement process is assessing areas of weakness and threat, to which an institution should respond. Knowing strengths and opportunities is equally important, for they are the ground on which an institution can excel and develop distinction. On-going analysis that accompanied 2015 strategic planning and core theme assessment enabled the DSU community to identify its current areas of strength and continued need.

2019-20 Strategic Plan Accomplishments and Further Planned Actions
Core Theme Assessment & Mission Fulfillment Reports
The following SWOT lists from the 2020-25 Strategic Plan provide insight into DSU’s current and future identity.

**Strengths (Areas of Distinction)**
- Faculty, Staff, Administration and Students practice determination & GRIT
- Growth of enrollment and new programs
- Small class sizes
- Personalized instruction
- Caring, teaching-oriented faculty
- Supportive, student centered environment
- Agility and ability to change
- Affordable
- Active learning brand of teaching
- Commitment to innovation
- Community engagement
- Industry and educational partnerships
- Open access and open educational practices
- Effective fundraising

**Weaknesses (Areas Needing Improvement)**
- Low student retention and graduation rates
- Insufficient funds for growth
- Inadequate data governance, use of analytics and evidence-based decision-making
- Need to advance academic recognition to university stature
- Challenges in hiring fulltime faculty
- High use of part-time faculty
- Limited IT support, capacity and equipment
- Need to increase and improve facilities and renovate older buildings
- Non-competitive faculty/staff compensation
- Need for day care facilities
- Insufficient parking

**Opportunities**
- Attractive location & population growth
- Community support
- Market demand for STEM programs
- Lack of polytechnic institutions in the US
- Student interest and need for master’s degrees
- Alumni engagement and support
- Demand for online education
- Improving academic identity
- Adult learners going back to school
- Market demand for degrees
- Interest in degree completion programs
- Move to Division I athletics
Threats
• Disruptive competition
• Social/marketing impact of the Dixie name
• Online programs from other institutions
• Utah legislative mandates re. governance and direction of higher education
• Challenges of managing growth
• Insufficient real estate for campus
• Insufficient state and private funding
• Internal siloing as campus grows
• Lack of male students entering higher education

The five main goals evolved from the 2020-25 Strategic Plan’s institution-wide, SWOT analysis focus on four main aspirational attributes: open education, inclusive, comprehensive and polytechnic. These goals have been accepted through extensive stakeholder opportunities for participation in strategic planning development and feedback. Meaningful indicators of achievement, measures and benchmarks will be developed in 2020-21 by a highly representative ensemble of administrators, faculty, staff and students, under the guidance of the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the goal, subcommittee chairs. Strategic Planning website with 2020-25 Strategic Plan under development

GOAL 1  Academic Distinction
Establish regionally distinctive, academic programs by integrating the tenets of open education, inclusion, comprehensive, and polytechnic, while sustaining the prominence of a liberal education as the foundation of exceptional student learning and success.

GOAL 2  Strategic Enrollment Growth
Increase university enrollment to 16,000 student headcount through strategic, innovative, and data-informed initiatives and marketing focused on inclusive and affordable lifelong learning opportunities, with a special emphasis on student retention, academic success, and completion by identifying and lowering critical economic, technological, geographical, and institutional barriers.

GOAL 3  Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness
Establish a culture of evidence-based, performance management to optimize financial, facility, human, and information technology capital to elevate capacity and effectiveness.

GOAL 4  Community as University
Partner with Washington County and Kane County cities to blend the university, main campus with regional public and private spaces, human networks, organizations, and resources to formally designate and operate “Dixie State UniverCity,” an open, integrated and vibrant southern Utah learning ecosystem providing exceptional learning opportunities and catalyzing the economic and social development of

GOAL 5  Faculty and Staff Life
Establish policies, systems, and practices to ensure the success of diverse and ambitious people from across the nation who bring new ideas and whose values and career aspirations align with DSU’s mission and vision and are inspired to build a premier open, inclusive, comprehensive, polytechnic university.
These goals, along with specific objectives, indicators, and measures will guide DSU’s path for the next five years in the same way as the 2015 core theme objectives and strategic plan have been intentionally leading the university for the past five years. To do this well, DSU is compelled to advance its institutional effectiveness processes and practices. As one can deduce from the developments and initiatives listed in this report, DSU is on the continuous improvement path for meaningful assessment, evidence-based decision making, and change that results in a confidence that the university is fulfilling its mission.