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Evidence Referred in Self Study Document
All evidence referred in this document can be found in the List of Referenced Evidence document.
Northcentral University (NCU) welcomes this opportunity to share evidence of its continued development since The Higher Learning Commission’s last comprehensive review in 2012. The institution has worked hard on an ongoing basis to realize its Mission. NCU takes pride in its many accomplishments and has embraced this opportunity to reflect on these achievements and to build toward the future.

Led by the Board of Trustees, members of the entire NCU community have worked in collaboration to begin new initiatives and have continued to enhance those already in place. To name a few: NCU is proud of its creation of a Faculty Senate, through which faculty participation in the University’s governance has been strengthened; Program Advisory Councils have been created in each School, providing faculty and academic leaders with valuable perspectives from professionals in the field; and the University has bolstered its Strategic Planning process, resulting in the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan, *NCU: On the Move*.

NCU’s increased focus on technology is evidenced by the investment in a new online course platform (Course Room), and by the addition of the “The NCU Commons,” an online social and academic network that allows students, faculty, and NCU team members to connect and participate in University-wide and School-specific communities. Similarly, student support remains a focus. NCU has introduced the Academic Success Center, where students are provided access to academic coaching and writing support. Additionally, The Office of the Ombuds has been established to better support students throughout their programs.

Northcentral University is pleased with our continued improvement and we appreciate the learning inherent in the self-study process. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the many members of our community who participated in the self-study process, and we welcome the continued improvement that results from the accreditation process.

George A. Burnett, President and CEO
Self-Study Report Process and Participants
In November of 2013, NCU began the process of conducting a self-study in preparation for a comprehensive review by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC) in 2015. At that time, NCU’s President appointed co-chairs of NCU’s HLC Self-Study Committee, and five separate teams were identified to work on each of the HLC criteria. Members of the faculty, staff, and administration were assigned to each of the teams. A Chair was appointed to guide and organize each team.

The Self-Study process began with a three-day on-site meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, where all team members convened to discuss the self-study process, to engage with their colleagues, and to share ideas. During that process, Chairs of the individual teams assigned criterion sections to team members to research and evaluate. The Chairs created meeting schedules for teams to meet, present, review, and discuss their research and writing.

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<td>Smith</td>
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In the subsequent weeks and months, each team completed a substantial amount of institutional self-reflection and assessment based on group discussion and on the work of individual contributors. As a part of the process, teams worked together to identify and review institutional evidence to evaluate NCU’s compliance with each HLC criterion. This evaluative work culminated in the writing of detailed outlines for each criterion, which were combined and revised into a single draft Self-Study. This draft was shared with University constituents, including the Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership Team, Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Senate, Core and adjunct faculty, students, and team members with a request for feedback. Once feedback was received and incorporated into the draft, the self-study was reviewed and approved by Northcentral’s Board of Trustees on December 18, 2014 and submitted to HLC on February 16, 2015.

Institutional Overview

Northcentral University (“NCU” or “Northcentral”) was founded in 1996 in Prescott, Arizona. Northcentral University, Inc. is organized as a for-profit institution currently incorporated in Arizona as a C-corporation. Northcentral University is wholly owned by a Delaware entity, NCU Holdings, LLC, which has no other operating subsidiaries. Consistent with its Mission, Northcentral is a distance education institution that provides frequent and substantive interaction between students and faculty through an online, one-to-one model designed to promote student engagement, student satisfaction, and academic success.

At NCU, each course consists of one faculty and one student. In each course, individual faculty members engage in one-to-one interactions with individual students, promoting learning directly relevant to each student. This one-to-one model serves as the foundation for the entire student experience at NCU. Student services are designed to meet each individual student’s needs. Prior to enrollment, each student is oriented to the unique NCU approach. Academic Advisors work with each student throughout her or his studies at NCU. Moreover, Northcentral’s Learning Management System was specifically designed to support the one-to-one educational model.

Northcentral enrolls approximately 10,000 students, and employs over 900 individuals, including approximately 125 full-time faculty (referred to as “Core” faculty at NCU), over 400 adjunct faculty, and more than 400 staff members (referred to as “Team Members” at NCU). NCU’s headquarters is currently located in Prescott Valley, AZ with an administrative center located in Scottsdale, AZ. In June 2014, NCU opened the Center for Academic Innovation, located at 2488
Historic Decatur Rd., Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92106.

**Mission, Vision, Values**

**MISSION:** Northcentral University educates professionals throughout the world and provides an accessible opportunity to earn a U.S. regionally accredited degree. Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities. Northcentral commits to helping students achieve academically and become valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

**VISION:** Northcentral University is a premier online graduate university and a global leader in providing unprecedented access to U.S. regionally accredited higher education.

**VALUES:** I.D.E.A.s founded on integrity. We hold all members of our community to the highest ethical standards of professional and academic conduct and the rules and regulations of U.S. higher education.

- **Innovation:** We envision new and innovative education delivery systems, and support proven concepts of teaching and learning, including recent revisions to the NCU Course Room, and The NCU Commons, an online platform in which students can interact outside of the classroom. We encourage our community to seek solutions to educational challenges that will improve the quality of our programs and services.

- **Diversity:** We value diversity of thought and action as a strength that allows our community to transcend organizational and geographical boundaries. We expect members of our community to treat people with respect and dignity.

- **Excellence:** Our community is committed to excellence in academics and service. We value leadership and strive for continuous improvement in everything we do. We define and measure outcomes and take action to ensure that our community’s passion for excellence is never compromised.

- **Accountability:** We are deeply committed to holding each member of the University responsible for their scholarly and professional work. We expect financial responsibility in the actions of our students and University team.

**NCU: On the Move**

NCU has recently completed its 2015 Strategic Plan. This Plan was the result of a collaborative process culminating in Board of Trustees approval of University strategies on December 18, 2014. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee (which includes members from the faculty, staff and administration) worked to employ principles in the planning process that ensured alignment with the University's Mission, Vision and Values. Through this process, NCU’s 2015 Strategic Plan emerged from Academic Program Reviews, Departmental Reviews, and data provided by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. These processes (outlined in the NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook) engage constituents across the University. As such, the Strategic Plan is the result of extensive collaboration and data collection University-wide.

**Governance**

Northcentral University’s is governed by a Board of Trustees that operates pursuant to clearly articulated Board Bylaws, which are aligned with the Association of Governing Boards’ best practices. Pursuant to these Bylaws, Board members make all University decisions in “the best interest of the University.” The Chairman of the Board and all Officers are independent members of the Board. The Chair of each subcommittee of the Board is an independent member of the Board. Independent members of the Board make up a majority of the entire Board and of each Board committee.
Other key governance bodies are involved in engaging constituencies across the institution in governance activities. The primary, formal bodies that engage constituents in the governance process are the Senior Leadership Team, Academic Affairs Committee, and Faculty Senate. Student Advisory Boards and Program Advisory Councils also contribute by ensuring the involvement of additional constituencies in the governance process. Through these bodies, Northcentral University engages Board members, faculty, administrators, staff and students in institutional governance.

Administrative Structure

President’s Cabinet
The University is currently led by George Burnett, President and CEO. The President is hired and evaluated by the Board of Trustees. Dr. Scott Burrus, Provost and Chief Academic Officer; Dr. John LaNear, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Karen Whitney, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. David Harpool, General Counsel and Chief Human Resource and Compliance Officer; Patrick Pendleton, Chief Information Officer; Russ Natoce, Interim Chief Marketing Officer and Eric Stoddard, Chief of Staff, serve on the President’s Cabinet.

Senior Leadership Team
NCU’s Senior Leadership Team’s (SLT) promotes communication and collaboration and ensures the implementation of Northcentral University’s strategic and administrative plans. Additionally, the Senior Leadership Team approves all policies and ensures they are evaluated for administrative impacts and receive necessary support for implementation. The SLT reviews, develops and implements short- and long-range strategic and administrative plans for the University, and disseminates an understanding of the goals, purposes and plans of the University to the faculty and team members for their input and support. The SLT is co-chaired by the President and the Provost. Voting members include the Chair of the Faculty Senate, Deans, and other administrative leaders. The SLT has the following standing subcommittees: Retention, Diversity, Information Technology Steering, and Strategic Plan Steering.

Academic Affairs Committee
NCU’s Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) provides advice, counsel, direction, and decision-making for academic matters at Northcentral University. All AAC-approved policies and procedures are forwarded to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for final consideration. The AAC reviews and recommends policies and procedures that relate to the following:

- University faculty, their qualifications, professional development and work life.
- University curriculum, its content and its quality.
- Academic technology and its use in the teaching and learning activities of the University.

The AAC is chaired by the Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs. Voting members include Core and adjunct faculty members of the Faculty Senate, Assistant Deans, Academic Program Chairs and other academic administrators. The AAC has the following standing subcommittees: Assessment and Curriculum.

Faculty Senate
The Faculty Senate is a deliberative body composed of democratically elected faculty representatives. The Senate provides the voice of the collective faculty in matters of concern to them. Faculty Senators meet with their respective Deans monthly to discuss relevant School and University issues. Additionally, Faculty Senators are voting members of the AAC. The Senate Chair and Secretary of the Senate represent faculty at quarterly Board of Trustee meetings.
**Academic Leadership Team**

NCU’s Academic Leadership Team (ALT) advises the Provost about proposed academic initiatives and ensures the initiatives are executed according to the strategic plan. The ALT is chaired by the Provost. ALT membership includes the School Deans, Sr. Vice President of Academic Affairs, Sr. Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, Sr. Director of Learning Resources, and the Registrar.

**Accreditation and Authority to Operate**

NCU is authorized to operate and to offer and confer Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degrees by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education (AZPPSE). The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC) has continuously accredited NCU since 2003. Multiple programmatic accreditors also accredit Northcentral University. The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accredits all degree programs within the School of Business and Technology Management. The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) accredits the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy degree program. In addition, COAMFTE recently conducted a site visit to review the PhD program in Marriage and Family Therapy. NCU is awaiting the result of the visit; an accreditation decision is anticipated by May 2015. Finally, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) accredits eight specializations within NCU’s Master of Education degree program (those focusing on Pre-K through 12 education).

**Degree and Certificate Programs**

NCU programs are organized into four disciplinary Schools: Business and Technology Management; Education; Marriage and Family Sciences; and Psychology. NCU offers degrees at the Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral levels. NCU focuses primarily on graduate education (98% of current enrollment). All degree programs in all four Schools include a set of fundamental courses and a set of related specialization courses allowing the student to select coursework closely associated with his or her educational and career goals.

Doctoral candidates in all four Schools are supported by the Graduate School. The Graduate School has the professional faculty and resources to train and supervise dissertation chairs, develop research and dissertation-related curriculum, provide substantive, critical feedback to students as they develop their dissertation research, and oversee the dissertation process. Dissertation students work directly with faculty in the Graduate School, but also remain affiliated with their disciplinary School (e.g., the School of Education) throughout the dissertation process.
The degrees offered by Northcentral University are listed below.

### School of Business and Technology Management
- Bachelor of Business Administration
- Master of Business Administration
- Doctor of Business Administration
- Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

### School of Education
- Bachelor of Education
- Master of Education
- Education Specialist
- Doctor of Education
- Doctor of Philosophy in Education

### School of Marriage and Family Sciences
- Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy
- Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy

### School of Psychology
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
- Master of Arts in Psychology
- Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

All four of Northcentral University’s Schools also offer graduate-level certificates. These certificates are derived from existing programmatic curriculum and are taught using the same one-to-one teaching modality.

**Faculty Profile**

All NCU faculty members hold doctoral degrees and are hired based on their qualification to teach within a specific academic School or program. These specific qualifications are outlined in the NCU Faculty Handbook. Northcentral University has consistently followed Higher Learning Commission (HLC) “Guidance on Determining Qualified Faculty” in recruiting, hiring, and developing faculty. Faculty also meet any additional criteria established by programmatic accrediting bodies for programs particular to their Schools (such as ACBSP, COAMFTE, and TEAC).

At Northcentral University, “full-time” faculty members serve as Core faculty. Most Core faculty are primarily responsible for teaching courses in the disciplinary Schools and serving as Dissertation Chairs in The Graduate School. Some Core faculty are primarily charged with curriculum development, assessment oversight, or faculty coaching. Additionally, Core faculty engage in other academic responsibilities including participation in shared governance and institutional service. Northcentral University has significantly increased the number of full-time faculty (from 9 faculty in 2009 to approximately 125 in 2015).

In addition to the Core faculty, NCU also engages adjunct faculty who are paid on a task-based model. These tasks may include teaching courses or chairing dissertations. Other tasks may include serving as Subject Matter Experts (SME), developing curricula, developing and implementing assessment protocols, and participating in University and School committees.
Faculty members provide leadership in academic matters, including oversight of curriculum and expectations for student performance and assessment of student learning. Additionally, faculty members have routine involvement in setting academic requirements and establishing policy and processes through participation on these committees and their subcommittees. Faculty participate on formal governance committees such as the Faculty Assembly, Faculty Senate, the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), including the Curriculum and Assessment Subcommittees of the AAC, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including the Diversity and Retention Subcommittees of the SLT, and School Adjunct Councils.

The following is the composition of faculty, academic administration, operations, and other staff at Northcentral University.

![Percentage of Staff](image)

Source: Northcentral University HR department (12/31/2014)

**Student Profile**
Northcentral University attracts diverse students from around the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
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<td>% of Total</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,968</td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Northcentral University Reporting & Data Analytics Team*

As represented in the Table below, Northcentral University students resided in 58 different countries and all 50 American states as of January 2014.
The average age of NCU students is 43.5 years, and recent alumni survey results confirm that more than 97% of NCU’s graduates are employed or not seeking employment, and that NCU alumni generally increase earnings post-graduation.

**Previous HLC Reviews**
The Higher Learning Commission has accredited NCU continuously since 2003. NCU last engaged in a comprehensive self-study and visit in 2012. Since the 2012 HLC visit the following interaction has taken place:

**2012, HLC Request for Report on Finances**
On January 13, 2012, the HLC requested that Northcentral University submit a financial recovery plan, related to the University’s composite score for 2010, which placed NCU “Below the Zone” as defined by the U.S. Department of Education Financial Composite Index Evaluation Table.

*NCU Response*
In a letter dated February 29, 2012, NCU responded to the HLC by providing a thorough analysis.

*HLC Conclusion*
In a letter to NCU on June 21, 2012, the HLC provided notice that the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) voted to “accept the recommendation of the Financial Panel, affirming that NCU had addressed financial issues at a satisfactory level.”

**2013 HLC Request for Report on Finances**
In 2013, HLC sent NCU a letter stating that NCU’s composite scores for the 2011 fiscal year
were “Below the Zone,” and because this was a subsequent year during which NCU had low composite scores, that NCU was referred to a Financial Panel for review. The HLC requested an updated report to be delivered in September, 2013.

**NCU Response**
On September 24, 2013, NCU submitted a detailed report to the HLC, explaining the continued financial strength of the University, as well as strategies to further enhance its financial strength.

**HLC Conclusion**
On December 6, 2013, the HLC responded to NCU’s report. The HLC panel accepted the report, and wrote:

> The report provides an extremely professional analysis of income, debt, capital expenditures, cash flow, composite score calculations (excluding intangible assets), and enrollment projections. The auditor’s reports do not indicate any financial problems, and the US Department of Education has lowered the required letter of credit amounts based on their financial analysis.

As a result of the University’s continued financial strength, the United States Department of Education has lowered the University’s letter of credit requirement (the requirement was lowered to 10 percent, which is the lowest allowable level).

**2013, HLC Board Action Letter requiring a Monitoring Report**
Northcentral University was notified by the Higher Learning Commission in a letter dated July 9, 2013 that:

> At its meeting on June 27, 2013, the Board continued the accreditation of the University...
> The University is required to submit a monitoring report due May 2014, on Criterion Two, Core Component 2.E and Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, including the following specific information:
> - Definition of “full-time” faculty member;
> - List of faculty members with employment status (full-time, part-time or contract and 1099 or W2 status);
> - Update on the faculty hiring plan and analysis of the results of the plan;
> - Roles of faculty members in areas such as governance, Institutional Review Board membership, faculty development, assessment, and the quality of student work, and an update on any proposed or newly implemented changes to these roles;
> - Evaluation of the full-time faculty model pilot in terms of student learning, dissertation quality, faculty culture, and other key areas the University identifies;
> - Update on systems for tracking and analyzing faculty scholarship; and

The University is required to host its next comprehensive evaluation visit for continued accreditation in two years, 2014-15, with a particular focus in that review on the issues that the Board has determined remain unresolved as identified in this action.
**Monitoring Report**

The Monitoring Report responded to all requests for specific information stated in the July 9 letter, providing a definition of “full-time” faculty, a list of NCU faculty members with employment status, an update on the University’s faculty hiring plan, and an analysis of the results of that plan. Additionally, NCU provided information regarding the various roles of faculty members, an evaluation of the full-time faculty pilot, an update on systems for tracking and analyzing faculty scholarship, and a description of the use of assessment results to improve dissertation quality. Finally, as requested, NCU included a full report of its compliance with standards 2.E. and 3.C. of the Criteria for Accreditation.

In addition to the information specifically sought in the Monitoring Report, NCU also provided the Commission with information related to its compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation as acknowledged in the Board Action Letter. The four items addressed were Faculty Sufficiency (Core Components 3.C. and 4.A.), Scholarly Quality (Core Components 2.E. and 3.B.), Student Complaints (5.C. and 5.D.), and Systematic utilization of trend data.

**HLC Response to Monitoring Report**
On May 12, 2014, in its cover letter responding to the NCU Monitoring Report, the HLC stated:

> On behalf of the Commission, staff accepts the report on 2013 Criterion Two, Core Component 2.E and Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C. No further reports are required. The institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2014 – 2015.

Moreover, the monitoring report staff comment and action concluded:

> It appears from the interim report submitted by Northcentral University that the issues identified by the Commission were taken very seriously by the University. A thorough and detailed report responded in multiple ways to the issues identified and provided concrete data to support the assertions of the report. The University has clearly made progress on the issues. The next reaffirmation of accreditation visit will be important in verifying all of the data and changes that have been made at the University.

> **STAFF ACTION:** Accept the report on 2013 Criterion Two, Core Component 2.E and Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C. No further reports are required. The institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2014 – 2015.

**2014, Substantive Change Request**
In 2014, NCU informed the HLC of its intent to achieve approval by BPPE, and submitted a substantive change request to authorize its California location.

**HLC Response to Substantive Change Request**
In a letter dated December 18, 2014, the HLC notified NCU of its approval of the substantive change request. The letter stated:

> This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Northcentral University by the Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission at its meeting on December 15, 2014. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution’s new status with HLC....IAC concurred
with the evaluation findings and approved the additional location: San Diego, 2488 Historic Decatur Road, Suite 900, San Diego, CA 92106.

In a separate letter dated February 3, 2015, the HLC confirmed the December 18 letter, and informed WSCUC of NCU’s location approval in San Diego, CA.

**Summary**
NCU has supplied responses to all HLC requests, with affirmative responses from the HLC on each. NCU has benefitted from working closely with the HLC to identify areas for the University’s continuous improvement, and thanks the HLC for its facilitation of this highly beneficial exchange. With a new Strategic Plan and many more initiatives Northcentral University is confident it is prepared to move forward.
CRITERION 1 Mission

Northcentral University’s Mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

Northcentral University (NCU) adopted revised Mission, Vision, and Values in 2012. Input, feedback, and direction for the Mission originated with the NCU faculty and academic community. Using a collaborative approach, a refreshed Mission was crafted and presented to the Board of Trustees and was approved on March 13, 2012.

The Mission statement of NCU is:

Northcentral University educates professionals throughout the world and provides an accessible opportunity to earn a U.S. regionally accredited degree. Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities. Northcentral commits to helping students achieve academically and become valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

1.A. Northcentral University’s Mission is broadly understood within institution and guides its operations.

Northcentral University adopted the revised Mission, Vision, and Values in March 2012. During the collaborative process, the University community discussed these statements through face-to-face meetings and webinars. The University’s Mission and associated statements remain well-understood throughout the institution. Institutional leaders work to ensure that these ideas both guide University operations and inspire improvement of institutional efforts. To verify stakeholder understanding of NCU’s Mission, the University analyzed survey data collected from multiple constituencies.

Survey data indicate that participants overwhelmingly agreed that these statements, which clearly identify the institution as an online University offering one-to-one education to professionals throughout the world, matched their understanding of the institution.
Figure 1-1. Survey Data Regarding Northcentral Mission.

Students, staff, adjunct faculty, and other constituents surveyed in 2012 agreed that the Mission describes Northcentral University.

1.A.1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of Northcentral University and is adopted by the governing board.

As noted above, Northcentral University developed the most recent iteration of its Mission statement through a collaborative process culminating with Board of Trustees approval in March 2012. More than 250 University members, including students, staff, faculty, and guests of the University, participated in the inclusive meetings that led to the development of the March 2012 Mission, Vision, and Values statements. As the Board minutes from March 13, 2012 document, the Trustees’ deliberations included review of information collected from these stakeholders:

. . . as part of NCU’s August 2011 strategic plan, there was an opportunity to refresh the Vision, Mission, and Values statement . . . the University conducted focus groups in webinar meetings with various constituency groups including current students, faculty administrative team members, senior leaders, and Board of Trustees members. The purpose of the discussion . . . was to obtain feedback of the proposed Vision, Mission, and Values with a broad range of University constituents and the Board of Trustees to ensure that Board of Trustees’ feedback is reflected in the University’s final statement.
1.A.2. Northcentral University’s academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated Mission.

Foundational components of NCU’s Mission include the one-to-one model and access to education at a distance. The one-to-one model serves as the foundation for the entire student experience at NCU. Student services are designed to meet each individual student’s needs and are provided via advanced delivery modalities. Prior to enrollment, each student is oriented to the NCU approach. Academic Advisors work individually with each student throughout her or his studies at NCU. Northcentral’s Learning Management System was specifically designed to support the one-to-one educational model.

Academic Programs
All academic programs at Northcentral University are taught by Doctoral faculty, using NCU’s online platform through its one-to-one teaching model. This approach aligns directly with NCU’s Mission, which states that Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities.

Additionally, NCU’s academic programs educate students in achieving academically and becoming valuable contributors to their communities and professions. Consistent with the Mission, students that participate in NCU programs are able to focus research on the needs of their individual communities. For example, Anta Moore, a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) graduate was NCU’s 2014 Dissertation of the Year Award winner. Moore’s dissertation was entitled “Experiences of African American Women Declining or Delaying Breast Cancer Surgery: A Phenomenological Study.” Her study was based on research that found despite having a lower incidence of Breast Cancer than Caucasian women, African American women were more likely to die from breast cancer than Caucasian women. African American women were also twice as likely to choose to delay or decline breast cancer surgery compared to Caucasian women, even when adjusted for socioeconomic factors. The findings from this study have significant potential use in research and practice. Dr. Moore’s program provided an opportunity to contribute to her community and profession.

Additional examples of how NCU’s programs prepare alumni to contribute to their communities and professions can be found on NCU’s public website.

Student Services
Northcentral University’s student support services align directly with NCU’s Mission, which emphasizes one-to-one relationships with academic support services staff. As an entirely online institution, Northcentral University provides all of its individualized student services to students at a distance through various modalities. Consistent with the University’s Mission, these services are provided on a one-to-one basis. A list of these services follows (they are also described in more detail in Criterion 4):

Academic Advising
Academic Advising supports the Mission by providing one-to-one interaction with students to support their progress through their academic programs. Academic Advisors are available at a distance to students around the world.

Academic Success Center (ASC)
Northcentral University’s Academic Success Center (ASC) offers individualized academic support services to students at a distance. NCU students have access to ASC services and resources through the telephone, email, and web-based applications to develop skills necessary to
succeed in their program of study.

**The NCU Commons**
The Commons is an internal social and academic network available to all NCU community members. It is available online to students and faculty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Commons allows students, faculty, and NCU team members to connect with each other and participate in University-wide and School-specific communities.

**Disability Services**
Disability Services provides individualized services to students through a variety of distance-based tools, including telephone, email, and videoconferencing software. Disability Services works with students to ensure the availability of appropriate support services where necessary to afford students with a disability equal opportunities to participate in NCU programs.

**Dissertation Center**
The Dissertation Center is an online repository for research and statistics information; statistics tutorials; Northcentral University dissertation handbooks and templates for applied and research degrees; and a variety of scholarly sources related to dissertation quality and student development. The Dissertation Center is available globally to faculty and students through the student and faculty portals.

**IT HelpDesk**
The HelpDesk provides global IT support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to students, faculty, and team members via email, telephone, and live online desktop sharing as needed.

**Library Services**
The NCU Library and all its resources are available online. The Library provides access to information resources and services such as content databases, reference, instruction, and interlibrary loans. Reference Librarians are available to provide one-to-one service to students in support of their learning.

**Student Financial Aid**
The Student Financial Aid (SFA) team assists students in obtaining financial support for University coursework through Department of Education Title IV programs and other financial agencies.

**Office of the Ombuds**
The Office of the Ombuds works in conjunction with Academic Advisors to provide students with individualized academic guidance, resources, solutions, and mediation.

**Enrollment Profile**
Northcentral University attracts diverse students from around the world.
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<td>2,438</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northcentral University Reporting & Data Analytics Team

Table 1-1. Northcentral University Student Population Diversity.

Northcentral University’s enrollment profile aligns with the Mission and NCU’s commitment to educate professionals throughout the world. As represented in this graphic, as of January 2015, Northcentral University students resided in 58 different countries and all 50 American states.

1.A.3. Northcentral University’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the Mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.).

NCU’s Mission, along with its associated Vision, Goals, Values, and identified strategic priorities, constitute a guiding framework for the processes that create the University’s planning and budgeting priorities. In broad terms, the University’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support its Mission by ensuring that the institution allocates wisely and appropriately its financial, human, technological, and physical resources.

To ensure that the University’s planning and budget priorities remain strongly aligned with its Mission (addressed more fully below in the discussion of core component 5.A.5. and 5.C.1.), the institution undertakes regular systematic strategic and operational planning, including revisions to the Strategic Plan, SWOT analyses conducted by academic and operational groups, guided discussions in onsite faculty symposia, and extensive discussion by Board of Trustees.

The University’s planning and budgeting priorities have led to increased hiring of full-time faculty to support Doctoral students, additional onsite faculty symposia, investments in instructional and assessment technology, faculty training, and the development of The NCU Commons. The University’s current planning and budgeting priorities are discussed in the narrative addressing Criterion 5.C.1., below.
1.B. Northcentral University’s Mission is articulated publicly.

Northcentral University articulates its Mission publicly, in numerous locations available to all of its constituencies.

1.B.1. Northcentral University clearly articulates its Mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

Northcentral University’s purpose, vision, values, goals, and plans are publicly available through a variety of sources, including:

- The Catalog
- The Public Website
- An open Facebook page
- Strategic Plan Viewbook
- NCU’s Newsletter, Higher Degrees
- Job Descriptions, which can be found in Career Opportunities section of the website.
- Posters and murals throughout NCU facilities
- Course Room
- Faculty Handbook
- New Hire Orientation
- Administrative Portal

1.B.2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of Northcentral University’s emphasis on the various aspects of its Mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

Reviewed regularly, Northcentral University’s Mission, Vision, and Values documents accurately reflect the institution’s emphasis on instruction, scholarship, research, application or research, clinical service, and public service. The University’s Mission, Vision, and Values are current, having been updated in 2012 (as outlined in Criterion 1.A. above). They are detailed below.

MISSION: Northcentral University educates professionals throughout the world and provides an accessible opportunity to earn a U.S. regionally accredited degree. Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities. Northcentral commits to helping students achieve academically and become valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

VISION: Northcentral University is a premier online graduate university and a global leader in providing unprecedented access to U.S. regionally accredited higher education.

VALUES: I.D.E.A.s founded on Integrity. We hold all members of our community to the highest ethical standards of professional and academic conduct and the rules and regulations of U.S. higher education.

- Innovation: We envision new and innovative education delivery systems, and support proven concepts of teaching and learning. We encourage our community to
seek solutions to educational challenges that will improve the quality of our programs and services.

- **Diversity**: We value diversity of thought and action as a strength that allows our community to transcend organizational and geographical boundaries. We expect members of our community to treat people with respect and dignity.
- **Excellence**: Our community is committed to excellence in academics and service. We value leadership and strive for continuous improvement in everything we do. We define and measure outcomes and take action to ensure that our community’s passion for excellence is never compromised.
- **Accountability**: We are deeply committed to holding each member of the University responsible for their scholarly and professional work. We expect financial responsibility in the actions of our students and University team.

NCU’s Mission outlines the institutional emphasis on academic achievement that encourages students to contribute to their communities and their professions. As outlined in Criterion 1.A.2., many of the Doctoral students craft their dissertation research in ways that achieves this aspect of the Mission. The University’s Vision clearly outlines NCU’s emphasis on graduate education and mode of delivery, while the Values outline a commitment to teaching and learning.

1.B.3. **The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services Northcentral University provides.**

NCU’s Mission documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides. Specifically, the key phrases below identify key facets of these programs and services:

- Nature: Educates “students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities”;
- Scope: “throughout the world”;
- Intended constituents: “professionals” pursuing graduate education at a distance.

The NCU Catalog accurately acquaints students and potential students with higher education programs and services provided at the University. The degrees offered by the Schools are described in detail. This information is also communicated on the NCU website.
1.C. **Northcentral University understands the relationship between its Mission and the diversity of society.**

Northcentral University embraces a broad definition of diversity as reflected in the fulfillment of its Mission.

1.C.1. **Northcentral University addresses its role in a multicultural society.**

Diversity is one of NCU’s five core Values and is central to NCU policies, programs, faculty and team members, and practices. In order to facilitate greater attention to and application of diversity-related initiatives, the President established a Diversity Subcommittee of the Senior Leadership Team, which is populated by constituents from around the University. The purpose and scope of the Diversity Subcommittee outlines the goal of promoting policies and practices that are inclusive, respectful, and aligned with NCU’s global vision. As evidenced in the NCU curriculum, NCU offers specializations related to diversity, multiculturalism, and a global vision (e.g., Gender Diversity Studies in the School of Psychology; International Education, Global Training, and English as a Second Language in the School of Education; and International Business in the School of Business and Technology Management). To further ensure diversity is a core consideration throughout the University, all Schools modified their individual missions and goals to include aspects of diversity in July 2010.

All NCU faculty and other team members are offered annual diversity training designed to ensure cultural competency in administrative and organizational practices. Northcentral University’s hiring process is intentionally inclusive. NCU recruits globally to fill faculty and academic administration positions, and places job postings in specialized locations that target diverse candidates.

NCU posts open positions on the following minority and diversity-related websites:

- LatinosInHigherEd.com
- DiversityEmployment.org
- DiversityWorkers.com
- Diversity.com
- Diversityjobs.com
- Diversity-jobs.com
- Hispanic-jobs.com
- LatPro.com
- Asian-jobs.com
- BilingualEdge.com
- WomansWork.com

As a result, NCU is able to attract a diverse population to apply for open positions at the University. All eligible applicants are reviewed without consideration of age, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Moreover, the virtual work option offered for many roles at NCU allows for diversity of family circumstances and provides working hours that fit individual schedules.
### Table 1-2: Northcentral University Faculty by Gender, Race, and Hispanic Origin: August 2014

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Source: Northcentral University Human Resources

### Table 1-3: Northcentral University Staff by Gender, Race, and Hispanic Origin: August 2014

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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Source: Northcentral University Human Resources

1.C.2. **Northcentral University’s processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its Mission and for the constituencies it serves.**

As noted above, NCU practices reflect value for human diversity in many ways, including the adoption of Diversity as one of the institution’s core Values; the President’s creation of the Diversity Subcommittee of the Senior Leadership team; faculty and senior leaders’ service on that committee; and faculty development and teaching of courses and academic specializations relating to human diversity. As also noted above, many of the institution’s processes underscore the relationship of diversity to NCU’s Mission, including hiring processes through which the University pursues diversity in employment and through annual required training on topics such as diversity and the prevention of discrimination and harassment.

The University also supports diversity by supporting team members with disabilities. As articulated in the *NCU Team Member Handbook*, “Northcentral University reasonably accommodates qualified individuals with disabilities as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and other appropriate statues.” Team members with disabilities request accommodations through Human Resources, which works to identify accommodations to assist team members.

For its student population, Northcentral University embraces and complies with the ADA and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Northcentral University provides team members with training resources that prepare them to support students with disabilities.
1.D. **Northcentral University’s Mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.**

Northcentral University’s contribution to the public good rests within the Mission, which, in part, involves providing professionals with access to academic programs. This access offers NCU students an opportunity to pursue graduate degrees that might otherwise be inaccessible due to geography, personal, or professional constraints.

Consistent with the NCU Vision and Mission, the majority of NCU students seek Doctoral degrees. Guided by NCU faculty in fulfillment of the Mission, student research seeks solutions to the challenges within the students’ respective fields. Additionally, NCU alumni contribute to their professions and to society by becoming licensed marriage and family therapists, educators, consultants, research psychologists, and higher education and business leaders.

1.D.1. **Actions and decisions reflect on an understanding that in its educational role Northcentral University serves the public not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.**

Northcentral University provides affordable access to graduate level education at a distance. More than 90 percent of Northcentral students are working professionals, and the education they receive at Northcentral University is designed so that they can immediately apply it in their professional context.

As evidenced in Criterion 3.E.2., Northcentral University’s dissertations impact students’ local communities and organizations. The focus of student dissertation topics varies from student to student ranging from principal perceptions in community schools to exploring the needs of the Homeland Security community.

NCU supports faculty service to the public good. As part of their funded professional development, faculty are supported in service to their communities and professions. Northcentral University tracks the professional development activities of faculty by category. In 2014 faculty reported engagement in 144 activities in the “Practical Services to the Field” category. For example, faculty members served as:

- President, Illinois Council for Children with Behavior Disorders
- Board of Governors member, Children’s Dyslexia Center, Inc.
- Board of Directors member, Florida Center for the Blind
- Advisory Panel member, APA Online Psychology Laboratory
- Board of Governors member, Delaware Board of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Professionals

NCU has multiple faculty members and academic leaders who serve on professional organizations. Their service to communities and professions includes service to accrediting agencies, such as the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

1.D.2. **Northcentral University’s educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.**
The Bylaws of Northcentral University’s Board of Trustees ensure the primacy of institutional educational responsibilities, as articulated in Criterion 5. As demonstrated in University spending over the past several years (see Figure 1-2 below), Northcentral University has made and continues to make significant investments in continuous improvement of its educational offerings.

**Figure 1-2.** Category Income Statement.

First, the University has significantly increased its investment in full-time faculty and faculty scholarship and development. The number of full-time faculty has been increased (from 9 faculty in 2009 to approximately 125 in 2015). In addition to increasing the number of full-time faculty, NCU ensures the availability of professional development funds for faculty, providing $1,500 for each faculty member annually. Additionally, Northcentral funded six research awards to provide six faculty members with half-time release to conduct research this year. And, in 2015, Northcentral increased its commitment to funding faculty research stipends by budgeting a total of $100,000 (twenty at $5,000).

Secondly, NCU invested in new and existing organizational structures to support student success. The University created the Office of the Ombuds to assist Doctoral students struggling to complete the dissertation process. In 2014, the University expanded the Academic Success Center, adding coaching resources to support students throughout their programs.

Thirdly, NCU has made a significant commitment to upgrade technology infrastructure and other computer services vital for helping students achieve their particular educational goals. The University has developed a new online course platform. Additionally, support staff members were hired in areas such as IT services and course development.

1.D.3. Northcentral University engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its Mission and capacity allow.

As Northcentral University has grown, its participation in community events and direct contributions to communities of interest have increased. For example, the University has served
the Prescott and Maricopa County, AZ communities by contributing to local organizations, including:

- the Arizona Foundation for Women;
- Yavapai Big Brothers and Big Sisters to increase the number of mentors working with children in Lake Valley Elementary School;
- Yavapai Big Brothers and Big Sisters to introduce YBBS’s Best Practice One-on-One Mentoring Program at Bradshaw Mountain Middle School;
- Child Help, a Scottsdale-based national organization focused on child abuse prevention;
- the Hungry Kids project, a volunteer organization that provides children in need with a weekly bag of groceries to take home to their families; and
- the Boys and Girls Club for youth programming in the Prescott Valley community.

Additionally, Northcentral University has provided significant academic and scholarship support to Child Help, a leading national non-profit organization dedicated to helping victims of child abuse and neglect. NCU faculty reviewed Child Help’s “Grades 1-6 Speak Up Be Safe” curriculum and contributed to the development of curricula for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and children in Grades 7-12. In addition, the University helped Child Help develop a virtual training program for its program facilitators. Finally, the University offers Child Help staff a preferred tuition rate on its Doctoral and Master’s degrees, Certificates of Advanced Graduate Studies, and Bachelor’s degrees in Business and Technology Management, Marriage and Family Sciences, Education, and Psychology.

A third example of how NCU engages meaningfully with external constituencies is through its Journal of Online Education, which is publicly available online.

Northcentral University has embraced and is committed to the principles of the United States Department of Defense Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding, and signed the 2014 version of the DOD Memorandum. Northcentral University is a Servicemembers Opportunity College and has designated military admissions and advising team members. NCU’s educational model makes it possible for those in the armed forces to access courses wherever they are.
CRITERION 2 Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Northcentral University acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Northcentral University demonstrates integrity, ethics, and responsibility through all of its organizational actions, policies, and procedures. Consistent with the University’s core Values, stakeholders adopt the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The University identifies four core Values founded on Integrity:

**Innovation**: We envision new and innovative education delivery systems and support proven concepts of teaching and learning. We encourage our community to seek solutions for educational challenges so we improve the quality of our programs and services.

**Diversity**: We value diversity of thought and action as a strength that allows our community to transcend organizational and geographical boundaries. We expect members of our community to treat people with respect and dignity.

**Excellence**: Our community is committed to excellence in academics and service. We value leadership and strive for continuous improvement in everything we do. We define and measure outcomes, and take action to ensure our community’s passion for excellence is never compromised.

**Accountability**: We are deeply committed to holding each member of the University responsible for their scholarly and professional work. We expect financial responsibility in the actions of our students and University team.

2.A. Northcentral University operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

Northcentral University holds all members of its community to the highest ethical standards of professional and academic conduct. Multiple Northcentral University documents and policies demonstrate the University’s commitment to operate with integrity in all areas of University operations.

**Governance Integrity**

The University is overseen by an independent Board of Trustees that operates pursuant to clearly articulated Board Bylaws, which are aligned with the Association of Governing Boards’ best practices. The Board is made up of eight independent and five ownership Trustees. All Board members understand that their legal obligation is to make all University decisions “for the benefit
of the University and public good.” The Chairman of the Board and all Officers are independent members of the Board. The Chair of each subcommittee of the Board is an independent member of the Board. Independent members of the Board make up a majority of each committee. Pursuant to the Bylaws, the ownership Trustees have no additional rights.

The Board is self-perpetuating and has full responsibility for selection of new Trustees. Further, when the Board contemplates transactions, Trustees with a financial interest in the transaction must abstain from voting, and only non-conflicted Trustees vote. Board minutes reflect the vote for all formal Board actions. As a result of this Board governance structure, Board actions are free from interests that could compromise the institution’s Mission, integrity, or autonomy.

The Board of Trustees and the administration of Northcentral University take their responsibility to University constituents seriously, and ensure that the University is in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws. Compliance is managed by the Office of Legal Affairs to foster the highest levels of identification, communication, resolution, and implementation supporting the shared governance model.

**Financial Integrity**

The University upholds the integrity of its financial reporting through annual independent external audits. An independent audit firm conducts an audit of the University’s financial statements in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States and standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller of the United States. Based on the results of these audits, the University received unqualified (“clean”) audits from its independent auditors for each of the previous five years. The audits include correspondence from the auditor stating that there are no management letters for 2013.

Northcentral University also participates in Title IV financial aid audits conducted by an independent external auditor, which complies with requirements for financial aid administration. The auditor evaluates NCU compliance with federal regulations, adherence to policies and procedures, and conformance with internal controls. These audits are submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

The University awards financial aid in a fair and ethical process. The University’s philosophy ensures students are awarded aid from the Title IV student financial assistance programs in a consistent and equitable manner. The University also ensures students meet the eligibility requirements before awarding financial aid. In addition, when students withdraw or are dismissed from the University, Northcentral University completes the return of Title IV calculation as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education to ensure ineligible funds are returned to the appropriate financial aid programs.

**Academic Integrity**

Northcentral University has policies in place to ensure and exemplify the academic integrity of the University. These policies include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, academic freedom, acceptable use, and policies related to the Institutional Review Board. Northcentral University requires individualized login and password credentials for each student.

Northcentral University emphasizes academic integrity throughout the course of students’ programs. Northcentral University is committed to supporting students and faculty in understanding and applying standards of academic integrity. The University considers it a serious violation to plagiarize another’s work, even unintentionally. It is also committed to taking appropriate steps to ensure these standards are met, including:
• using Turnitin.com, an industry-recognized text matching service to screen student assignments;
• requiring all students to complete an academic integrity questionnaire, no later than the end of their first course;
• providing materials about academic integrity on the student and faculty pages.

The University also requires faculty to process at least one assignment of their choosing per course through the text matching service website to ensure plagiarism is not occurring.

Students have access to the University Catalog, which includes all required policies and procedures such as the academic integrity policy (also posted in the Student Course Room). Before the end of a first course, students are required to complete the Academic Integrity tutorial and questionnaire to ensure they are aware of Northcentral University’s policy. In addition, every time students submit assignments, they must acknowledge an academic integrity reminder that states all submitted assignments must be their own work.

**Integrity in the Student Code of Conduct**
As documented in the student Catalog, Northcentral University established a code of conduct policy for students. Each student is expected to understand the terms and conditions set forth in the policy. Violation categories include, but are not limited to: dishonesty; cheating; plagiarism; forgery; misuse of materials; harassment; stalking; humiliation; name-calling; offensive language; cyberbullying; threatening communications; misconduct in speech; written communication or behavior that is disrespectful or unprofessional, racist, sexist, ageists, or otherwise prejudicial; disruption or obstruction of the normal operations of the University; conduct that is disorderly, lewd, lascivious, indecent or otherwise inappropriate; and failure to cooperate during a University investigation. Substantiated violations may result in disciplinary sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University.

**Integrity of Concerns, Grievances, and Appeals**
Students are encouraged to make every reasonable effort to resolve disputes through informal means and at the lowest reasonable level in the institution. Northcentral does provide a formal process for documenting and responding to student concerns and disputes that relate to the application of University policy or procedure. Pursuant to this process, students are provided a multi-level approach to seek resolution to complaints.

Additionally, the University provides a clear process for appealing a final course grade issued by a faculty member. The appeal must be submitted through the appeals web form to the faculty member who issued the grade no later than 10 calendar days after the student received notification of the final course grade. All appeals are reviewed by the applicable School Dean. Any grade appeal being adjudicated by the Dean requires a final decision within 5 days. The appeal decision made under the authority of the Dean is final.

Complaints filed with external agencies are tracked and managed by the Office of Legal Affairs.

**Integrity through Academic Freedom**
The Board of Trustees of Northcentral University endorses the concept of academic freedom contained in the American Association of University Professors’ “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments.” Further, the Board of Trustees of Northcentral University supports the American Council on Education’s “Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities.” These commitments are also restated in the Faculty Handbook.
Faculty and students are not restricted in their ability to research, publish, and discuss topics relevant to their field of study. While NCU’s syllabi are standardized, the NCU pedagogy, in particular that faculty provide individualized feedback, provides the opportunity for faculty to share their academic perspective and responsible conclusions in their teaching.

**Acceptable Use Policy**
Northcentral University’s policies also hold its students, faculty, and staff accountable for an acceptable use of information technology. According to the acceptable use policy, communications and Internet access should be conducted in a responsible and professional manner reflecting the University’s commitment to honest, ethical, and non-discriminatory practices. To further these goals and ensure the security of institutional, faculty, and student information, the University has articulated specific restrictions and prohibitions on the use of information technology. These restrictions include, but are not limited to, never sharing a user ID or allowing others to use it, forging the source of electronic communications, downloading confidential information, and using the institution to gain unauthorized access to any computer system.

**Copyright Law**
In addition, the Northcentral University Library is committed to compliance with intellectual property laws and the preservation of the rights of copyright owners and users of copyrighted materials. The Library strives to inform all its constituencies of the rights and responsibilities under the fair use provisions of the Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. Section 107), the Fair Use Guidelines, and the U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) regarding photocopied materials.

**Institutional Review Board**
Northcentral University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees all research conducted under the University’s auspices. NCU has a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for the Protection of Human Subjects approval on file (Number FWA00020152; expiration 04/12/2018). All individuals involved with research activities are required to complete training in research ethics through the CITI Collaborative Institution Training Initiative. This training requirement applies to faculty, team members, and students who conduct research; IRB members, including the IRB chair; and faculty who serve as supervisors of research activities.

**Hiring and Faculty and Team Member Policies**
NCU is an equal opportunity employer to all qualified persons and does not discriminate by race, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, or in any other way in any of its policies, practices, or procedures involving applicants, students, faculty, staff, and the public. The University has faculty and staff throughout the world in an effort to create and maintain a diverse community.

As outlined in the Team Member Handbook, all team members must treat colleagues, students, and visitors in a manner consistent with University policies and the law. Northcentral University’s policy states that any person who feels discriminated against or harassed in the workplace should bring the matter to the attention of his or her supervisor or the Human Resources Department. The University strictly prohibits retaliation against any team member who brings forward a complaint.

**Administration, Faculty, and Staff**
Policies throughout Northcentral University ensure the ethical conduct and practice to which all team members must adhere. The Team Member Handbook contains a code of conduct and ethics and a standards of professional conduct policy that applies to all constituents of the University,
including administrative staff, faculty, team members, and students. The University embraces a set of values and beliefs that underlie its business practices and contribute to its reputation for integrity in all business transactions.

Team members are encouraged to report suspected violations of the code through the confidential team member helpline. This helpline is monitored by an independent third party, which allows anyone who reports to remain anonymous if they choose. All violations are reported to the General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer for resolution. The team member helpline was implemented in October 2013 and announced to the entire staff. Reports can be made electronically, via email, or by phone. It is Northcentral University’s policy that no officer or team member, who, in good faith, reports a violation of the code, shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences.
2.B. Northcentral University presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Northcentral University provides clear and accurate information about its programs, financial charges, degree-granting authority, and accreditation to students, prospective students, and members of the public as well as to accreditors and state and federal regulatory agencies. The University operates with a strong emphasis on transparency. Northcentral University places in its Catalog and on its website an accurate statement of its affiliation with its regional and programmatic accreditors.

All communications to students, including marketing to prospective students, are reviewed by the Office of General Counsel. The University presents information to students and the public in numerous locations:

- Program pages from Catalog (Sample)
- Program pages from website (Sample)
  - Specialization pages (Sample)
  - Licensure pages (Sample)
- Admissions requirements from Catalog
- Admissions requirements pages from website
- Application for MFT and PLC programs
- Faculty pages from website
- Tuition pages from Catalog
- Tuition pages from website
- Board of Trustees pages from website
- Accreditation pages from Catalog
- Accreditation pages from website
- Tuition Table

The homepage of the NCU website, www.ncu.edu, provides visitors with a listing of all of the Schools at the University, as well as a list of academic programs available within each School. Program descriptions, requirements, courses, and tuition information are included in the NCU Catalog, which is accessible to students as well as to the public via the NCU website and available to students from the Student Portal. The requirements for NCU programs are also listed on the NCU website, as well as in the Catalog. The tuition costs at Northcentral University are also clearly and completely presented to the public and students through the website, Catalog, and enrollment agreement. When Northcentral University changes tuition rates, students are notified in advance by email and by updated student enrollment agreements. The Catalog includes tuition costs as a base per course tuition rate, as well as the rates for the entire program. This tuition table is also included on the student’s enrollment agreement.

The University is committed to providing prospective students with clear, comprehensive, and accurate information and disclosures about degree programs and costs. NCU’s training programs for Enrollment Advisors focus on these attributes. To aid new students in navigating the Student Portal and to acclimatize them to the University environment and online education, Northcentral created a student orientation email. Weblinks referenced in the email provide students with guidance on accessing degree plan information, using the student portal, and managing student
Some of NCU’s programs have unique requirements. In those cases, additional information is made available to students. A state-by-state summary for the Marriage and Family Therapy programs has been created to provide prospective and current students the requirements by state for licensure upon graduation. The application for enrollment for the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy, and Master of Education PK-12 Principal Leadership Specialization programs includes a questionnaire the student must complete in order to ensure that the student has researched the licensure requirements in their state.

Northcentral University accurately represents its relationship with all accreditors on the NCU website under “Accreditation”. On the NCU public website, the Privacy Policy and Consumer Information section includes all federally required disclosures. Within this section, NCU provides consumer information related to FERPA, ADA, Rehabilitation Act, Higher Education Opportunity Act, and Student Right to Know.

Control
NCU is governed by an independent Board of Trustees pursuant to Bylaws drafted to represent the best practices of the American Association of Governing Boards. Board of Trustees, academic leadership including the Faculty Senate, and all Core faculty are listed on the Northcentral University website under “Our People.” In this section, prospective and current students can find biographies of all leaders and faculty as well as pictures of most members.
2.C. The governing board of Northcentral University is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

Northcentral University’s Board of Trustees is governed by Bylaws that ensure that the governing Board is sufficiently autonomous to provide appropriate oversight of the University.

2.C.1. The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance Northcentral University.

Northcentral University is a private, for-profit university with an organizational structure that allows the University to operate independently as an academic institution. The University is overseen by an independent Board of Trustees that operates pursuant to clearly articulated Board Bylaws, which are aligned with the Association of Governing Boards’ best practices. Eight independent and five ownership Trustees make up the Board. All Board members understand that their legal obligation is to make every decision “for the benefit of the University and public good.” The Chairman of the Board and all Officers are independent members of the Board. The Chair of each subcommittee of the Board is an independent member of the Board. Independent members of the Board make up a majority of each committee. Pursuant to the Bylaws, the ownership Trustees have no additional rights.

The Board of Trustees meets a minimum of four times per year for half-day meetings. The Board is self-perpetuating and has full responsibility for selection of new Trustees. Further, when the Board contemplates transactions, Trustees with a conflict of interest in a transaction must abstain from voting, and only non-conflicted Trustees vote. All Trustees complete annual conflict of interest disclosure forms, which are reviewed by the Board of Trustees committee on governance annually. All Northcentral University Trustees (independent and ownership) have fiduciary duties to the University requiring that they act only in the “best interest of the University.” Board minutes reflect deliberation and votes for all formal Board actions. As a result of this Board governance structure, interactions with ownership and governance are free from interests that could compromise the institution’s Mission, integrity, or autonomy.

2.C.2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of Northcentral University’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

As stated in the Bylaws, all Trustees have a fiduciary duty to the University and shall conduct themselves at all times for the benefit of the University.

The Board of Trustees functions through committees and as a whole and is responsible to ensure the University is meeting its Mission. Board committees are designed to ensure consideration of internal and external constituencies. These committees meet regularly and are apprised of relevant University initiatives. The committees include Academic Affairs; Audit; Finance; CEO Selection, Performance and Compensation; Governance; Legal Affairs; and IT. The committees also meet with University leaders prior to the Board of Trustee meetings to discuss agenda items that require board review and/or approval, as evidenced in the Committee meeting minutes.

During the Board of Trustees meetings, the Board reviews and discusses the University’s performance and progress. Strategic initiatives, academic updates, and plans are presented and
voted on during these meetings. Members of faculty leadership regularly attend Board of Trustee meetings and periodically, students are invited to attend and discuss University concerns with the Board of Trustees. In fulfilling their fiduciary duty, Board members take into account the best interest of the internal and external constituencies when making decisions.

Updates are provided by the various committees, and the Board is able to address any concerns they have for the well-being of the University. Resolutions and motions are documented in the meeting minutes, including which Board members approved or abstained from voting.

2.C.3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of Northcentral University.

Eight independent and five ownership Trustees make up the Board of Trustees. The Board Chair must be an independent member. Each Board committee is chaired by an independent Trustee. Independent Trustees make up the majority of each committee. The bylaws contain a conflict of interest policy, which prohibits conflicted Trustees from participating in discussion or voting on conflicted transactions. The eight independent Trustees are free from undue influence from the ownership. Ownership Trustees have no additional or exclusive rights beyond those of other independent Trustee.

2.C.4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of Northcentral University to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

The Board has responsibility for oversight of the entire University, but delegates the day-to-day management of Northcentral University to its academic and administrative team members. Committees have been established by the President to assist the administration with fulfilling its commitments to the Board and to the University’s community.

The President has established formal structures and processes of governance and decision-making that are outlined in the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM) and include: Senior Leadership Team and subcommittees, Academic Affairs Committee and subcommittees, and Faculty Senate (including School Adjunct Councils). Additional committees, such as the President’s Cabinet and Academic Leadership Team are advisory in nature, but contribute to the decision-making processes in support of the University Mission. These committees, their purposes, and membership are spelled out in the Policy and Procedure Manual.

Faculty members provide leadership in academic matters, including oversight of curriculum and expectations for student performance and assessment of student learning. Additionally, faculty members have routine involvement in setting academic requirements and establishing policy and processes through participation on these committees and their subcommittees. Faculty participate on formal governance committees such as the Faculty Senate, the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), including the Curriculum and Assessment Subcommittees of the AAC, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including the Diversity and Retention Subcommittees of the SLT, and School Adjunct Councils.
2.D. Northcentral University is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

The Board of Trustees of Northcentral University endorses the concept of academic freedom contained in the American Association of University Professors’ “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments.” Further, the Board of Trustees of Northcentral University supports the American Council on Education’s “Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities.” These commitments are also restated in the Faculty Handbook.

Faculty and students are not restricted in their ability to research, publish, and discuss topics relevant to their field of study. While NCU’s syllabi are standardized, the NCU pedagogy (wherein faculty provide individualized feedback) provides the opportunity for faculty to share their academic perspective and responsible conclusions in their teaching.
2.E. Northcentral University’s policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

Northcentral University’s Catalog, Faculty Handbook, Team Member Handbook, and Dissertation Resource Manual (and accompanying documents) ensure that students, faculty, and staff acquire and apply knowledge responsibly.

2.E.1. Northcentral University provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

Northcentral University is committed to ensuring that its students and faculty adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Northcentral faculty and staff enforce policies to promote honesty institution-wide. Each syllabus contains the definition of academic integrity. Upon entry at NCU, students complete a training module that specifically outlines NCU policies on academic integrity and honesty. Northcentral’s policies related to academic integrity and the code of conduct are also provided in the University Catalog, the Faculty Handbook, Team Member Handbook, and the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Policy and Procedures Manual
As with most institutions of higher education, Northcentral University maintains a central repository of official policies that provide the underlying structure for University practices. Titled the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM), the repository includes policies and practices related to both academics and operations. The PPM contains various policies that have been described in the aforementioned subcomponents, such as the academic integrity and code of conduct policies. These are also found in the Northcentral University Catalog and Faculty Handbook. The PPM is regularly reviewed in order to verify that NCU’s policies and practices are in alignment. The update is an internally mandated procedure that ensures accountability to NCU’s Board of Trustees and University executive leadership.

Faculty
Faculty members at Northcentral University are trained to respond to suspected violations of academic integrity. This training occurs in the first training course offered to new faculty members, CFE5000. In this course, among other training, faculty members are taught to use NCU’s text matching service (Turnitin). Faculty also learn about academic integrity policies, review the academic integrity training and quiz that students complete, and are trained on how to respond to suspected integrity violations by working with the Dean’s office in their respective Schools.

Pursuant to NCU’s Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members are required to submit at least one assignment for every student per course to a text matching service (Turnitin) to check for potential plagiarism incidents. Faculty members can submit more than one activity or document as needed. Also, all Doctoral comprehensive examinations and dissertation milestone documents must be submitted to Turnitin for review. Faculty members are trained to use this text matching service and to interpret the resulting reports. If a faculty member believes that a student has plagiarized either someone else’s or their own work, they are the first to begin the academic integrity enforcement process by submitting a Notice of Possible Academic Integrity Violation to the student and the Assistant to the Dean of the School in which the student is enrolled. The
process then moves to various possible stages based on whether this is the student’s first, second, or third offense and nature of the alleged offense. Faculty must be able to verify their decision to initiate this policy based on their own professional experience, their training at Northcentral University, and the information provided by the text matching program.

**Academic Integrity Committee**

Suspected violations of academic integrity are reported to the Dean’s office resulting in a decision concerning an appropriate sanction. If the incident is the student’s first offense, the student may be allowed to revise and resubmit the assignment or they may receive a zero for the assignment. Before the student is allowed to do so, faculty may be asked to provide additional instruction to the student on how to recognize when they are plagiarizing and how to avoid the activity in the future. Students are referred to the Academic Success Center for further resources as well. In the case of second or later violation, or a violation is deemed to be an egregious violation, the Academy Integrity Committee will convene and the faculty member is encouraged to attend the committee meeting. The Academic Integrity Committee will review the student assignment and the accompanying text matching report to determine the nature and extent of the violation. The committee then discusses the incident, determines whether or not a violation has occurred and votes on a course of action for each incident. Potential outcomes of this committee process could include a decision that the incident was not a violation of academic integrity or a decision that an academic integrity violation did occur. If a violation did occur, the consequences could include an option to revise and resubmit the assignment, a score of zero for the assignment, a failing grade for the course (F or U) or recommendation of dismissal from the University. Any recommendations for dismissal are forwarded to the Office of the Provost for a final decision. Once a decision is made regarding each case, the Office of the Dean for the student’s School sends notification of the outcome to the student, faculty, and Academic Advisor, and the violation is noted in the student’s record.

**Research Integrity**

Northcentral University provides oversight and support for all research and scholarly activities conducted by students, faculty, and team members. Oversight of human subject protection relative to research and scholarly activity resides with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). NCU has a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for the Protection of Human Subjects approval on file (Number FWA00020152; expiration 04/12/2018). Prior to any data gathering, all research proposals must be reviewed and approved by the IRB to ensure ethical compliance.

In accordance with federal regulations (Title 45, Part 46, Code of Federal Regulations) and University policy, all research conducted by any member of the Northcentral University community must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the safety, welfare, rights, and dignity of research participants are protected. To ensure that Doctoral students, dissertation chairs, and committee members have a solid foundation in the IRB process, the University requires these faculty and Doctoral students to successfully complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) course in the protection of human research subjects. Once the CITI course is completed, students and faculty earn a certificate, which needs to be renewed every two years to remain current.

The procedures for the continuing review of all research activities involving human subjects are codified in Northcentral University’s Federal Wide Assurance of Compliance with Department of Health and Human Service Regulations for the Protection of Human Research Subjects. The IRB reports quarterly to the Academic Affairs Committee and keeps detailed minutes and other records of its activities.
Students
Students are provided support ensuring integrity appropriate to their program in a variety of ways. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides students with guidance and resources relating to applying knowledge responsibly. The Library provides guidance on how to access and use information responsibly. The faculty, when making research assignments, provide guidance on conducting ethical research. The Northcentral University Dissertation Center provides Doctoral students extensive support relating to integrity in research and scholarly practice. In particular, the *Dissertation Resource Manual* and *NCU Doctoral Guidebooks for PhD and Applied Doctorates* provide support for integrity of research and scholarly practice.

2.E.2. **Northcentral University students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.**

Guidance on the ethical use of information is provided to students within the curricula, through published policies, and specific academic support services, including the Northcentral University Library, Academic Advising, and the Academic Success Center (ASC).

Curricula
Faculty reinforce proper citation and documentation of information presented in written assignments. All students are introduced to the foundations of research and scholarly writing in the first two courses of the graduate and Doctoral curricula. In these courses (PSY 5101, PSY 7101), students must demonstrate an ability to locate and cite resources appropriately.

Prior to beginning any program at the University, students are expected to complete the Academic Integrity tutorial and submit documentation noting understanding of fair and ethical use of informational resources. The completion of the tutorial is documented as part of the students’ academic record. Also, at least one assignment in every course is submitted to a text-matching service, Turnitin.com, to ensure students are not violating academic integrity policies published and widely available through the institution’s website. In addition, all dissertations are submitted to Turnitin.com at least once in each milestone phase to ensure originality of the content.

Additionally, students are provided policies and resources that inform their ethical use of information resources throughout their programs at NCU. These documents include:

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Fair Use Policy

**Northcentral University Library**
The NCU Library provides specific dedicated resources for the ethical use of research. The Library facilitates the research activities of students, faculty, alumni, and team members. The Library provides learning opportunities designed to encourage the development and expansion of information skills. The Library continually evaluates resources and student, faculty, alumni, and team member needs to ensure the best possible search and reference tools are made available.

The NCU Library provides an Information Literacy Tutorial, which introduces students to the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Standards. The
tutorial requires “individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ACRL, 2014). Specifically, the tutorial covers the five concepts listed below and contains 37 multiple-choice questions that serve as a self-diagnostic tool for identifying gaps of knowledge necessary for conducting effective research at the University, specifically including the recognition of legal and ethical issues surrounding information.

The five concepts in the Information Literacy Tutorial are:
1) The importance and need for information in everyday lives;
2) The ability to develop search strategies for identifying and locating relevant information;
3) The need to evaluate information effectively in the face of its increasing proliferation;
4) The ability to effectively communicate and present new information from resources gathered; and
5) The recognition of legal and ethical issues surrounding information.

In 2014, the tutorial was completed 2,528 times. The average score on the self-diagnostic tutorial for NCU was 81%. Scores by program and number of respondents are represented in the chart below.

![2014 IL Tutorial Results by Degree Program](chart)

**Figure 2-1.** 2014 IL Tutorial Results by Degree Program.
Academic Success Center (ASC)
The primary goal of the Academic Success Center is to provide students, faculty, and alumni with the tools and resources required for successful scholarly writing. The ASC provides numerous resources, including a writing handbook, information on academic integrity, guidance on forms of writing, APA frequently asked questions (FAQ) and guides, and grammar and information for international students. The University regularly tracks student use of the ASC services.

2.E.3. Northcentral University has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Pursuant to the academic integrity policy, Northcentral University is committed to supporting students and faculty in understanding and applying standards of academic integrity. The academic integrity policy applies to all course assignments submitted by a student to faculty. For each course, faculty are required to submit at least one student paper per course to the text-matching service, Turnitin.

Suspected violations of plagiarism are reported to the Dean’s office, resulting in a decision concerning an appropriate sanction. In the case of a serious first violation or a second or later violation, the Academic Integrity Violation Committee makes the final decision. Sanctions include asking the student to resubmit the paper, giving the student a failing grade for the paper, recording a failing grade for the course, and/or academically dismissing the student from the University.
CRITERION 3 Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

Northcentral University provides high-quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A. Northcentral University’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

NCU uses multiple methods of ensuring that its educational programs are appropriate in terms of content, standards, rigor, and length. Each program and course is vetted through the appropriate committees (Assessment Subcommittee, Curriculum Subcommittee, and the Academic Affairs Committee). Each program also gets external review through its Program Advisory Council (PAC) and the Five-year Program Review Process. Additional external review is provided by disciplinary accreditors as described below.

3.A.1. Northcentral University courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

Northcentral University awards Bachelor’s, Master’s, Specialist, and Doctoral degrees through its School of Business and Technology Management; School of Education; School of Psychology; and School of Marriage and Family Sciences. The Graduate School supports the discipline-specific Schools by overseeing all phases of the dissertation process.

All Master’s degree programs at NCU require the equivalent of a Bachelor’s level degree for admission. Doctoral programs require completion of a Master’s degree prior to admission. If the prior degree is obtained within a discipline other than that of the desired degree at NCU, the applicant may be required to take discipline-relevant courses to ensure the student possesses core competencies at the prior degree program level (e.g., applicants with a Master’s degree in Business seeking admission to the Doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy are required to take additional graduate courses in family therapy as part of the Doctoral program). Admissions criteria, curricula, and Institutional and Program Learning Outcomes for all NCU programs are clearly stated and published in the Catalog and are available through the website.

Graduate programs’ student learning outcomes reflect higher order learning than those required within undergraduate programs. Pursuant to the NCU Course Development Guidelines and the Institutional Assessment Handbook, each academic course and program at Northcentral University has specifically defined outcomes that guide the content and instruction provided. These outcomes (and their assessment) are written to distinguish the level of mastery that is expected at each degree level. In consultation with School Deans, academic leadership, and Program Advisory Councils, faculty establish program outcomes. Beyond the program level, faculty establish learning outcomes for each course and design course activities to help students learn and to achieve the stated Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). All learning outcomes are
created to ensure that courses offered at each level are distinct and appropriate to the degree level.

Faculty members at Northcentral are also involved in establishing expectations for student performance, primarily through the development and approval of Course and Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Each School has a faculty member serving in the role of Director of Assessment to coordinate these activities. Faculty involvement in establishing outcomes is detailed in the NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook. Specifically, faculty members recommend, review, and approve the learning outcomes that are used in each degree program. Also, faculty participate in the process of designing and approving rubrics and other assessments used to evaluate achievement of these outcomes.

In addition to the Academic Program Review and Five-year Program Review processes, NCU ensures that curriculum and student expectations are current and appropriate by including review by two groups:

**Program Advisory Councils (PACs)**
Deans and curriculum representatives from each of the Schools at Northcentral University collaborate regularly with standing Program Advisory Councils (PAC). PAC membership is composed of professionals in the fields of education, psychology, business, counseling, and research. These advisory councils examine, review, and make recommendations for the future development of academic programs, curriculum, and related materials to assure courses and supporting materials are current and appropriate.

**Programmatic Accreditation**
The following programs have received specialized programmatic accreditation, which also validates the currency and appropriateness of their programs, curricula and expected level of student performance:

- School of Business – Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
- School of Marriage and Family Sciences – Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE)
- School of Education MEd Program, PK-12 Specializations – Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)

**3.A.2. Northcentral University articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, postgraduate, and certificate programs.**

Pursuant to the NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook, each academic course and program at Northcentral University has specifically defined outcomes that guide the content and instruction in every course within each program. These outcomes and assessment of these outcomes are written to distinguish the level of mastery that is expected at each degree level. In consultation with School Deans, academic leadership, and Program Advisory Councils, faculty establish program outcomes. Beyond the program level, faculty establish learning outcomes for each course and design course activities to help students learn and to achieve the stated Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). These CLOs, and the learning activities required to achieve each CLO, are clearly stated in the course syllabi. Learning outcomes are created to ensure that courses offered at each level are distinct and appropriate to the degree level.

The University-wide Course Development Guidelines require the use of Bloom’s taxonomy levels by degree level to ensure the appropriate differentiation is addressed. The guidelines
articulate expected student mastery standards (per Bloom’s) to further ensure differentiation of expectations at degree levels. NCU’s program development process encourages accountability for each department to identify the rationale, possible effect, and alignment of the Mission with department outcomes.

As part of the Academic Program Review process, NCU faculty continually evaluate the rigor and performance level expectations for programmatic and Course Learning Outcomes using Bloom’s Taxonomy, which in turn informs the design of related course activities used for learning outcomes assessment measurements.

The development of Program and Course Learning Outcomes allows for learning outcomes to be assessed and analyzed for program review purposes. In order to clarify the connection from course activities to course and program level outcomes and to the NCU Mission, an extensive curriculum mapping (sample) initiative was piloted in 2009-10, and implemented across the University in 2011-12 as part of the Academic Program Review process. A full curriculum map is available in criterion 4.B.1.

NCU differentiates between research degrees (PhD) and applied degrees (EdD, and DBA), and NCU curriculum differentiates between degree level expectations (i.e. Bachelor’s versus Master’s versus Doctoral) as articulated in the Institutional Assessment Handbook.

3.A.3.  Northcentral University’s program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

All Northcentral University courses are delivered through one distance delivery modality. All programs and curricula follow the same program quality assurance process described in Criterion 4. Northcentral University’s curriculum is standardized across programs ensuring consistency in program quality and learning goals. Processes such as course creation, assessment, program review, and outcomes approval are consistent throughout the University.
3.B. Northcentral University demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

In order to achieve the University’s Institutional and Program level Learning Outcomes, students are required to engage in academic inquiry, and acquire, integrate, assess, and apply specific skills, insight, and knowledge. The University’s graduate students are required to actively participate in research and academic discourse throughout their academic programs.

Institutional Level Outcomes

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) (also referred to as core competencies) reflect a broad level of knowledge, skills, and abilities that all students must meet, regardless of the academic program. NCU has previously participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and built the ILOs to be consistent with the HLC expectations. These ILOs were based on the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU) rubrics, used by over 2,000 educational institutions, and were vetted by faculty and approved by the Academic Affairs Committee.

Institutional Level Outcomes include:

1) Written Communications
2) Oral Communication
3) Quantitative Reasoning
4) Critical Thinking
5) Information Literacy
6) Research Skill; Inquiry and Analysis (graduate students)

3.B.1. Northcentral University’s general education program is appropriate to the Mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.

Northcentral University is primarily a graduate education institution. Bachelor’s level students constitute fewer than 2% of the institution’s enrollment. To be admitted to NCU, entering undergraduate students must have achieved at least an associate degree (or have completed general education requirements). These requirements are listed for each of the Bachelor’s degree completion programs in the Catalog for Education, Business, and Psychology. All NCU General Education courses were phased out in 2013 and are no longer offered.

Northcentral’s Catalog delineates requirements for acceptance into Bachelor’s degree completion programs. The Catalog also provides explicit detail on the required general education credits for admission.

3.B.2. Northcentral University articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

As previously stated, Northcentral University phased out all general education courses at the end of 2013. The University no longer mandates its own general education program, but rather
evaluates the general education courses completed by students applying for admission to the undergraduate program.

Baccalaureate level programs are offered in Education, Psychology, and Business. NCU’s undergraduate programs follow a degree completion model in which students are required to have earned at least 60 semester hours prior to matriculation. The Bachelor’s in Education is a 30-hour degree completion program for students transferring from Rio Salado College per NCU’s consortial agreement. Students in this program are required to have completed 39 semester hours of general education prior to enrolling at NCU.

The Business and Psychology programs require 30-33 semester hours in major courses. Prior to enrolling at NCU, students must demonstrate completion of 36 semester hours of general education courses with a minimum of three semester hours in college level mathematics, and six semester hours in English composition, humanities, natural sciences, and social/political sciences. Students must also demonstrate completion of nine semester hours of general education electives. In addition, these programs require a minimum of 30 semester hours of upper division electives. In short, the required courses in the major field of study ensure appropriate disciplinary depth, while breadth is assured by the scope of general education and electives, including credits taken at the upper division. Specific requirements for each degree are found in the NCU Catalog.

3.B.3. Every degree program offered by Northcentral University engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

The Northcentral University Institutional Learning Outcomes are mapped (sample) to Program Learning Outcomes, Course Learning Outcomes, and course activities, as demonstrated in the Outcomes Alignment Model included in the Institutional Assessment Handbook and below.

![Outcomes Alignment Model](image)

**Figure 3-1. Outcomes Alignment Model.**

NCU courses require students to collect, analyze, and communicate discipline-specific information through engagement with appropriate disciplinary literature by assigning readings.
and including links to current literature in the field. NCU courses have specific Course Resource pages identifying appropriate literature in the NCU Library. Graduate courses require students to seek additional scholarly literature and other sources to support learning and assignment requirements. Master’s programs at NCU require completion of a capstone course. Capstone courses require students to demonstrate awareness of current literature in the field. Doctoral programs at NCU require completion of a dissertation, which is an extensive project demonstrating currency in the literature of the field.

3.B.4. The education offered by Northcentral University recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

Northcentral is diverse by nature and inclusive by design. Diversity is one of NCU’s five core Values and is central to NCU policies, programs, faculty and team members, and practices. The President established a Diversity Subcommittee of the Senior Leadership Team, which is populated by various constituents from around the University. The purpose and scope of the Diversity Subcommittee outlines the goal of promoting policies and practices that are inclusive, respectful, and aligned with NCU’s educational Mission.

The goals of the Diversity Subcommittee and NCU’s conception of diversity are consistent with NCU’s Value of Diversity. An example of this is evidenced in the NCU curriculum. Specifically, NCU offers specializations related to diversity and global inclusion, (for example, Gender Diversity Studies in the School of Psychology; International Education, Global Training, and English as a Second Language in the School of Education; and International Business in the School of Business and Technology Management). To further ensure diversity is a core consideration throughout the University, all Schools modified missions and goals to include diversity as a key consideration in July 2010.

In addition, NCU sponsored a co-curricular opportunity for students, faculty, and other academic leaders to engage in a cultural exchange in association with the University of Havana in Cuba. This opportunity provided faculty and students with first-hand exposure to diverse human and cultural perspectives.

3.B.5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and Northcentral University’s Mission.

NCU faculty members participate in ongoing research and other scholarly work including publications, presentations, workshops, and other training. Northcentral University provides grants that support and promote faculty scholarship. Currently, these include: 1) faculty research awards to work on research projects; 2) professional development funds for faculty to attend and present at research conferences; 3) grants through the Provost’s office to help cover research materials and related costs; and 4) faculty research stipends. This faculty involvement in scholarship informs their work as Subject Matter Experts for curriculum development and revisions, as well as the teaching and feedback they provide to students in their courses.

As a Doctoral granting institution, NCU continually examines ways to strengthen its graduate and research culture by providing resources that actively encourage faculty scholarship. The University supports full-time faculty travel for conference attendance and presentations and has announced research support grants to support faculty scholarship. The NCU graduate culture includes individual faculty research, interdisciplinary research, and student and faculty research
partnerships. Historically, Northcentral University has offered grants and professional development resources that support faculty research. In Fall 2014, Northcentral University expanded this offering to also include a blind reviewed, competitive application process whereby faculty are eligible for one of two University funded research programs: 1) faculty research awards, which provide a half-time load reduction; and 2) stipends for research activities.

All faculty are supported in their professional development and are encouraged to engage in scholarship through publication in academic journals and by presenting at peer reviewed conferences. In 2014, NCU faculty were active in scholarship and publications. NCU also publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Online Doctoral Education*, which is publicly available.

Student scholarship is encouraged through NCU programs, particularly in the doctoral programs during the dissertation stage. NCU promotes student scholarship through the “Dissertation of the Year” award program and by hosting a Dissertation Poster Session each year at commencement to provide new graduates an opportunity to present their research in a face-to-face setting before their peers, faculty, and administrators.
3.C. Northcentral University has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

Northcentral University retains a robust faculty and staff complement, ensuring high quality programs and student services. Northcentral faculty members are categorized as Core faculty and adjunct faculty. Each of these categories is defined below.

Faculty
Faculty members are drawn from the academic community, industry and business to guide students in pursuit of educational and degree objectives. Faculty are selected for their interest in promoting learning, professional expertise, real world experience, academic background, and the ability to communicate their knowledge and experience to students in the distance-based learning environment. In the one-to-one model, an individual faculty member is assigned for each student enrolled in each course.

At Northcentral University, “full-time” faculty members serve as Core faculty. As outlined in the Northcentral University Faculty Handbook, faculty are defined as:

Core Faculty – are exempt-salaried faculty members with a full-time appointment. Most Core faculty are primarily responsible for teaching courses in the disciplinary Schools and serving as Dissertation Chairs in The Graduate School. Some Core faculty are primarily charged with curriculum development, assessment oversight, or faculty coaching. Additionally, Core faculty engage in other academic responsibilities including participation in shared governance and institutional service. On rare occasions, some Core faculty are provided part-time appointments based on institutional or programmatic needs.

In addition to the Core faculty defined above, NCU also has adjunct faculty, defined in the Faculty Handbook as:

Adjunct Faculty – are part-time faculty members who are paid on a task-based model. Tasks may include teaching courses or chairing dissertations. Other tasks may include serving as Subject Matter Experts (SME), developing curricula, developing and implementing assessment protocols, and participating in University and School committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counts of Faculty by Employment Status as of 10/31/2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Faculty (full-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty (part-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1. Counts of Faculty by Employment Status as of 10/31/2014.

Staff
NCU has a full complement of staff to support student learning. Listed among staff roles are Financial Aid and Academic Advisors, academic support roles including the Academic Success Center, Library, and additional student support via Disability Services, IT Helpdesk, and other roles (outlined in detail in Criterion 3.D.1. below).

3.C.1. Northcentral University has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members
to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

NCU employs 100% Doctoral faculty (i.e. all faculty members hold a Doctoral degree) that includes approximately 125 full-time (Core) faculty. In 2012, NCU’s Board of Trustees approved a plan to substantially increase the ranks of full-time faculty. Pursuant to this plan, NCU Core faculty ranks increased from 9 (2009) to 25 (2011) to 72 (2012). NCU now employs approximately 125 Core faculty. Additionally, NCU has a faculty staffing model that ensures the availability of a sufficient number of faculty.

Northcentral University has established a culture that encourages faculty retention. Approximately 60% of current faculty members teaching at NCU today started teaching with NCU between the years of 1998-2012.

Northcentral faculty are involved in teaching and non-teaching activities.

**Teaching Activities**

Faculty provide students with appropriate and ongoing feedback about academic performance and how it can be improved. The one-to-one teaching model used at NCU creates a classroom environment that is unique to each student. Faculty members in the disciplinary Schools participate in specialized training in NCU’s pedagogical model, teaching through feedback – a teaching approach that takes into account NCU’s one-to-one teaching model coupled with NCU’s online delivery modality. The teaching through feedback course trains faculty how to develop and deliver appropriate, meaningful feedback on student work. School-specific coaching plans work to reinforce the approach and provide faculty with ongoing support in working with individual students.

Graduate School Chairs receive intensive training related to the dissertation process and expectations for providing student feedback. Once Graduate School Chairs complete training, they receive ongoing coaching from their School Director.

Faculty teaching loads were established following a faculty productivity study conducted in 2013. This study, using faculty-generated data on workload, determined that the current loads in NCU’s one-to-one format allow for student engagement, while providing faculty a portion of time to pursue non-teaching activities that are consistent with the NCU Mission. Currently, dissertation faculty are assigned an average of 37 students; other full-time faculty are assigned an average of 57 students.

**Non-Teaching Activities**

Currently, the primary non-classroom roles for NCU faculty include oversight of curriculum, assessment, and participation in governance and service. Faculty members participate in formal governance committees such as Faculty Senate, Adjunct Councils (ensuring the unique voice of adjuncts is included), the Academic Affairs Committee and its subcommittees for Assessment and Curriculum. Through participation in these governance structures, faculty members provide oversight and leadership in academic matters including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance and assessment of student learning. Additionally, they have routine involvement in setting academic requirements, policy and processes, and participate in strategic planning at the University. Faculty involvement in these activities is also articulated in the *Faculty Handbook*. 
Governance
Faculty involvement in governance is structured around a democratically elected Faculty Senate. This approach allows for faculty to have a representative voice in a manageable, working shared governance body within the University and individual Schools while not overburdening faculty with committee assignments and meetings. Additionally, faculty members serve on the Adjunct Councils, the Academic Affairs Committee and its subcommittees for Assessment and Curriculum. Through these governance structures, faculty exercise oversight of curriculum, expectations for student performance, assessment, establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff, and service to the University.

NCU faculty participate in course and program development. These faculty have appropriate professional and academic credentials, ensuring an understanding and commitment to disciplinary and professional standards. NCU adheres to specific guidelines regarding faculty qualifications and staffing and degree content established by its programmatic accreditors (ACBSP, COAMFTE, and TEAC). In consultation with School Deans, academic leadership, and Program Advisory Councils, faculty establish program outcomes, which are reviewed by the Curriculum and Assessment Subcommittees of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC). These outcomes go before the Academic Affairs Committee for final approval.

As outlined in the NCU Course Development Guidelines and the Institutional Assessment Handbook, each academic course and program at Northcentral University has specifically defined outcomes that guide the content and instruction in every course within each program. These outcomes and assessment of these outcomes are written to distinguish the level of mastery that is expected at each degree level.

Scholarship
Faculty are required to engage in scholarship and professional development. Each School has expectations for faculty development. These expectations are articulated in the Faculty Handbook and are tracked by each school and the University.

Establishment of Academic Credentials for Instructional Staff
NCU recognizes the importance of involving its current faculty in the vetting and hiring processes of its future faculty. Now that NCU has moved to an increasingly full-time faculty, it has been able to involve faculty in the important responsibility of faculty selection. Faculty are now involved in the establishment of academic credential standards for instructional faculty and they review position requirements and job postings for each new faculty position. Additionally, faculty members serve on faculty search committees and evaluate potential faculty candidates based on their credentials and experience related to open position requirements.

Faculty Roles in Service to the University
Faculty members also participate in service activities that are aligned with the Northcentral Mission. These activities are coordinated with their academic leaders, in each School. As part of their service, faculty serve on a variety of standing committees. Faculty also participate in Academic Program Reviews as part of their service obligation to the University (these activities are described in further detail above). Faculty play a vital role in the University’s accreditation efforts by participating in HLC self-study teams. As needs of the University arise, faculty are involved in service through participation on ad hoc committees in addition to the standing committees mentioned above.

3.C.2. All Northcentral University faculty are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial programs.
All NCU faculty members hold Doctoral degrees and are hired based on their qualification to teach within a specific academic School or program. These specific qualifications are outlined in the NCU *Faculty Handbook*. Northcentral University has consistently followed Higher Learning Commission (HLC) “Guidance on Determining Qualified Faculty” in recruiting, hiring, and developing faculty. School Deans also ensure that faculty meet any additional criteria established by programmatic accrediting bodies for programs particular to their Schools (such as ACBSP, COAMFTE, and TEAC). Additionally, each School completes a course-by-course audit to verify faculty qualifications for each course they are assigned to teach.

Human Resources and the Faculty Resource Center perform verification of applicants’ Doctoral degrees through the evaluation of official transcripts. This initial evaluation of credentials is conducted based on requirements listed in specific position descriptions for each faculty role, which are designed by the Dean and faculty within each School. Faculty members are not selected for hire or assigned to teach students at NCU until their official transcripts are received and appropriately evaluated during the hiring process.

**Consortial Programs**
The only “consortial” academic program available at Northcentral is the Bachelor of Education completion program. The BEd program exists as a partnership between Northcentral University and Rio Salado College (RSC) in Arizona. RSC faculty members are vetted directly by the State of Arizona and tracked by the Rio Salado system. As they are accountable to follow the state specific standards in Arizona, the RSC faculty members are deemed appropriately credentialed to teach the initial 90-credits required for the BEd degree. Northcentral University has oversight of the final 30-credit completion portion of the degree. Based on NCU’s approval of the degree program with the State of Arizona, NCU faculty members that work in this program have been found to meet all Arizona Department of Education requirements.

**3.C.3. Faculty at Northcentral University are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.**

Pursuant to the NCU *Faculty Handbook*, NCU conducts annual faculty reviews following a schedule determined by the original hire date of each faculty member. Annual reviews examine specific performance standards that address both institutional standards consistent with NCU’s Mission, School-specific standards, and additional standards required for programmatic accreditations. The protocol used to evaluate NCU faculty is described in detail in the Northcentral *Faculty Handbook*, and is made available to faculty during the onboarding process.

The annual review process addresses multiple aspects of faculty performance, including quality of teaching, participation in faculty and professional development activities, adherence to policies (e.g., timeliness in returning work and use of text matching service), and participation in non-teaching responsibilities (e.g. attendance at required faculty meetings, support of curriculum revision, etc.). Faculty evaluation processes for all faculty are consistent with the Human Resources process for all team members, which involves feedback from multiple sources. In the four disciplinary Schools, this includes peer feedback through the Quantifying Teacher Quality (QTQ) process and ongoing feedback from the Associate Director of Faculty Support and Development, the Assistant Dean, and the Dean of each School. The QTQ process includes rubric-driven feedback provided to each faculty member via Taskstream. According to the most recent data from the last Quarter of 2014, on a scale of 1-5 (5=advanced feedback), Core faculty score an average of 4.36 out of 5 on the QTQ.
Table 3-2. 2014 Core Faculty QTQ Scores.

During the annual evaluation process, goals are established to ensure continual faculty development to improve teaching and learning. Currently, Graduate School faculty are evaluated annually pursuant to the NCU Team Member Handbook. The NCU Team Member Handbook outlines the hiring and evaluation policies for staff members.

Faculty complete a self-evaluation as part of the review process. Simultaneously, faculty coaches review their notes on coaching sessions and examine recent faculty work to complete the evaluation of teaching quality. Faculty coaches then submit reviews to Deans for revision and approval and send them to faculty with an invitation to discuss their review and self-evaluation with their faculty coach and Dean or designee. The NCU faculty review process has the notable feature of being significantly based on an examination of actual work with students. NCU faculty teach primarily through feedback provided to students based on student work, and all faculty work is archived in the Learning Management System, so NCU is able to examine work directly with a particular focus on adherence to NCU’s teaching approach.

Additional Evaluations

Once new faculty members are onboarded and complete the initial training with the Faculty Resource Center, they continue to participate in coaching and informal evaluations during the year. Faculty members meet with their faculty coach two to three times per year to discuss their teaching and receive formative feedback on their work.

Ad Hoc Reviews

Additional performance reviews for faculty members may be conducted at any time if need arises based on student concerns or other evidence of performance issues. Ad hoc reviews of this nature can be informal and limited in scope to a specific concern that may be raised (e.g. timeliness in responding to student communications). Or, in some cases, ad hoc reviews may be formal and comprehensive following the established annual review process if concerns or evidence warrant a more thorough evaluation. In either case, ad hoc reviews are documented and shared with faculty members with a focus on supporting and enhancing faculty performance whenever possible.

3.C.4. Northcentral University has processes and resources for assuring that
faculty are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

Processes reflecting faculty development activities are shared between the Faculty Resource Center (FRC) and the Schools. The FRC provides teaching development opportunities to ensure faculty are adept in their teaching within the NCU pedagogical approach. In 2013, as a result of transitioning to NCU’s current faculty model, a faculty development process was developed and implemented. Pursuant to this process, new faculty are oriented with a series of three courses introducing NCU’s pedagogy and Learning Management System. In their second year, faculty complete an additional series of three courses (1, 2, 3) designed to enhance their ability to engage students effectively.

Associate Directors of Faculty Support and Development within each School conduct one-to-one coaching sessions with individual faculty members to improve teaching effectiveness. Coaching occurs on both a regular basis and on an as-needed basis. Faculty can select areas of concern to focus on in coaching, or coaching sessions can be based on issues raised in annual reviews and other evaluations of the faculty member’s work. Coaching sessions may also be triggered by student concerns with individual faculty.

Additionally, the FRC offers an ongoing, monthly webinar series on topics of interest to faculty. Faculty input on webinar topics is solicited, and these suggestions are used to determine the topics for future webinars and for developing further faculty development courses. These webinars are recorded and made available to faculty for either first time or repeated viewing.

The Graduate School provides separate faculty development for its faculty who serve primarily as Dissertation Chairs. Guiding students through the dissertation process requires additional training, support, and awareness of NCU policies, resources, and Graduate School expectations. This training is outlined in the Graduate School training located in the Dissertation Center. The training includes

- A welcome letter;
- Modules on the mission, students and program;
- Degrees and milestones;
- Dissertation expectations;
- Dissertation Tracking System

Specifically, the training is designed to familiarize faculty with the dissertation process, the Dissertation Tracking System (DTS), the Graduate School, and the resources available through the Dissertation Center. This training also helps faculty identify common student mistakes associated with developing research questions, choosing a methodological approach, and selecting data collection techniques in an effort to more effectively assist students with the initial dissertation structure. Faculty members are also provided with information to craft strategies and identify available resources to better respond to student needs. Lastly, faculty members are prepared to begin their new duties with a clear understanding of their role as Chair and the level of scholarly work expected from students at NCU.

Dissertation Chairs are also required to successfully complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training module (described in CFR 3.5). The Graduate School also provides a training process for Core and adjunct faculty who wish to serve as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) on dissertation committees.

Faculty members maintain currency in their disciplines by participating in professional and academic activities in their field, such as attending conferences or seminars, publishing or
presenting research, and by obtaining advanced degrees and credentials. The *Faculty Handbook* outlines specific School and program-level requirements for professional development activities that apply to Core and adjunct faculty (detailed below). These requirements were designed to reflect School values and any School-specific professional accreditation body requirements. Though each School maintains its own standards for professional development activities, Northcentral tracks these activities on a University-wide basis. For these purposes, NCU created University-level categories for ease of reporting faculty accomplishments for the University as a whole (detailed below).

Aside from providing training and tracking faculty participation in professional development activities each year, NCU provides several opportunities for financial support for research and professional development. Each School has an annual budget that includes funding for travel and related expenses for professional development for faculty. Specifically, in 2014 Northcentral budgeted professional development opportunities for all Core faculty members in the amount of $1,500 per faculty member. Adjunct faculty members may receive up to $500 per year through honoraria for significant contributions to scholarship while representing Northcentral University. The professional development budget for faculty and team members for 2015 is $363,980.

The School-specific requirements for professional development are described in the *Faculty Handbook* and are articulated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Professional Development Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>One (1) of the following for every year of employment:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Obtain new professional certification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Publish an article or book</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Present a paper at a conference</td>
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<td>• Conduct research-related consultation</td>
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<td>• Engage in a professional-related service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Present at a professional conference, meeting, or workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assume a leadership role in a professional organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Serve in a professional community</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Business and Technology Management</td>
<td>Faculty teaching in any level program (Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral) must complete one (1) activity for every year of employment in any of the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using professional expertise to solve practical problems in the private or public sectors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Supporting professional organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Activities <em>directly tied</em> to the academic discipline of the faculty member and consistent with the stated mission of the Business School or program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty teaching in a Doctoral program must also engage in one (1) activity in any of the following categories for every three years of employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The scholarship of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The scholarship of discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The scholarship of integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The scholarship of application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>One (1) of the following for every year of employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Obtain new professional certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Publish an article or book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Present a paper at a conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consult in field of expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage in a professional-related service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Present at a professional conference, meeting or workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Obtain a new professional membership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School of Marriage and Family Sciences

**School of Marriage and Family Sciences faculty** must complete one (1) activity in each of the five (5) categories listed below, for a total of five professional development activities every year of employment. The bulleted items under each category heading below are examples of activities that demonstrate completion of these requirements.

1. **Professional Development**
   - Completion of CEUs for professional licensure
   - Participation in a local, regional, state, national, or international MFT conference
   - Completion of a training course or workshop related to your area of teaching

2. **MFT Practitioners**
   - Part-time work in a private practice, group practice or other MFT agency
   - Renewal of an MFT license
   - AAMFT Membership
   - AAMFT Approved Supervisor credential
   - Systemic Consultation work

3. **Diversity Training and Experience**
   - Participation in a diversity related training course or workshop
   - Participation in research relating to a diverse population
   - Participation in a cultural event involving a culture different from your own

4. **Service to Community and/or Profession**
   - Volunteer work or other service in your community
   - Pro bono counseling services
   - Service on a committee or board position within a local, regional, state, national, or international MFT association
   - Editor or reviewer for a professional journal
   - Abstract reviewer for AAMFT Annual Conference or other related conferences

5. **Research Experience and/or Training**
   - Participation in a research course or workshop
   - Acceptance of a research article for publication
   - Completion of a research focused presentation
   - Participation on a dissertation committee
   - Completion of the dissertation training for SMEs
   - Editor or reviewer for a professional research activity

School of Psychology

**Two (2) activities every year of employment:**

- Obtain new professional certification
- Publish a peer-reviewed article or book
- Present a paper at a conference
- Consult (check with your Assistant Dean before you consult)
- Engage in a professional-related service
- Present at a professional conference, meeting or workshop
- Obtain a new professional membership
- Participate in diversity training
- Complete a CEU
- Editor or reviewer of professional journal
- Serve in the community

**Table 3-3. Professional Development Requirements by School.**

**Process for Tracking Currency / Professional Development**

NCU adopted the Taskstream tool, which allows faculty to input their professional development activities on an ongoing basis. The system requires faculty to input specific types of professional development as outlined in the School-specific requirements table above. The form used by faculty to input activities is presented in Figure 3-2 below. As faculty entries are submitted, they
are reviewed by a faculty administrator in each School (typically the Assistant Dean) and approved or returned with a request for additional clarifications or alternative activities. NCU’s faculty members demonstrate currency as indicated by completion of School-specific professional development activities.

![Figure 3-2. Screen Shot of Form Faculty Members Use to Report Professional Development (using SBTM as the example).](image)

Though each School maintains its own standards for professional development activities, Northcentral tracks the activities on a University-wide basis. For these purposes, NCU created University-level categories for ease of reporting faculty accomplishments for the University as a whole.

These are the University-level categories:

- Peer Reviewed Publication;
- Non-Peer Reviewed Publication;
- Presentation at a Conference;
- Attendance at a Conference;
- New Professional Certification;
- Practical Service to Field;
- Coursework or Training;
- New Professional Membership;
- Diversity Training/Experiences; and
- Other.

As an example of faculty professional development, the table below presents information produced in Taskstream. It shows a synopsis of activities completed by faculty members in 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY-WIDE CATEGORIES</th>
<th>Total Activities Per School</th>
<th>2014 TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SBTM</td>
<td>SMFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Reviewed Publication</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Peer Reviewed Publication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation at a Conference</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at a Conference</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Professional Certification</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Services to the Field</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework or Training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Professional Membership</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Training/Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-4. Faculty Professional Development by Category and School for 2014 (taken directly from the Taskstream database). Abbreviations: The School of Business and Technology Management (SBTM), School of Education (SOE), School of Marriage and Family Sciences (SMFS) and School of Psychology (SOP).

Training for Faculty to be Adept in Teaching and Research
The faculty and team member hiring, onboarding, and evaluation processes at NCU are guided by the NCU Team Member Handbook and the NCU Faculty Handbook, both of which are readily available to all NCU team members. These handbooks articulate the policies and procedures for hiring, performance evaluation, and benefits available to faculty and team members. During the onboarding process, faculty applicants must complete a teaching task focused on providing feedback to a mock student using specific guidelines. These applicants also participate in a reflection on the experience. The results of the feedback task and the reflection are used to inform faculty-hiring decisions.

3.C.5. Faculty at Northcentral University are accessible for student inquiry.
NCU maintains policies and procedures to ensure faculty participation and availability for student inquiry and feedback, as indicated by the Faculty Handbook. NCU policy promotes faculty-student interactions from the beginning of each course. For instance, welcome letters are required to be sent to students within one week of their course start date. Welcome letters clearly indicate course expectations and the faculty members’ communication policies, contact preferences and office hours. Faculty are expected to have a minimum of one fixed hour per week during which they are available to engage with students. Another NCU policy ensures students receive feedback on assignments and inquiries in a timely manner. This timeliness policy requires NCU faculty to respond to student inquiries within 48 hours. NCU faculty members are also required to submit feedback on all assignment submissions within 4 days of the assignment due date. In 2014, faculty reviewed nearly 270,000 assignments. Approximately 93% of these assignments were returned to students on time.

In addition to timely responsiveness, NCU enacts policies regarding the quality of communication between faculty and students. Asynchronous faculty-student communication is used for feedback on assignments, feedback response times, and email and messaging.
communication within the online course room. Synchronous communication occurs by way of faculty-student meetings via phone, Skype and/or web conferencing tools such as WebEx and Google Talk. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty members via these synchronous methods at least once per course. Synchronous faculty-student meetings provide opportunities for detailed interaction to support the learning process.

As faculty-student communication within NCU entails both synchronous and asynchronous communication, faculty are provided with various training opportunities oriented specifically to engagement with students in the online environment. One example of this is the faculty development course “Learning Relationships at NCU” offered by the FRC. As evidence for quality faculty-student communication, on post-course surveys, students report a mean score of 4.3 on a Likert scale ranging from 0-5 with respect to faculty providing meaningful feedback on assignments. A stratified figure is shown below.

2014 Post Course Survey Average by School
My instructor offered meaningful feedback on my assignments (n=21,034)

![Figure 3-3. 2014 Post Course Survey Average by School.](image)
-21,304 responses to the question out of 45,038 post-course survey responses for course starts 01/01/2014 to 01/01/2015
--Each column represents the average rating by School on a 5 pt. scale (‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’).
---Overall average for all four Schools is 4.30 on a 5 pt. Scale

3.C.6. Northcentral University staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

All NCU team members are qualified, trained, and supported within their area of responsibility. NCU team members are supplied with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to succeed in each of their respective positions. At Northcentral, student support services include Academic Advising, Financial Aid, the Registrar, the Academic Success Center, the Library, and IT Helpdesk. NCU has enacted policies and practices to establish and evaluate qualifications, provide initial and ongoing training, and support professional development for support service team members. These topics of qualifications, training, and professional development are addressed below.
Team Member Qualifications
NCU team members in student support services are appropriately qualified in their area of service. NCU is diligent in hiring sufficient numbers of top-quality student support team members. The following table displays the current qualifications as support team members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member Position/Role</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advisors</td>
<td>Academic Advisor</td>
<td>Bachelor’s required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Advisors</td>
<td>Tuition Planners</td>
<td>Bachelor’s preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar Office</td>
<td>Student Support Specialist</td>
<td>Associate’s required or 2 years of experience within a college or university office of student records or enrollment administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring / Writing Center</td>
<td>Academic Coach/Tutor</td>
<td>Master’s required. University-level tutoring experience required. NTA/CRLA certified preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>ALA accredited MLS degree required. Second Master’s degree or education background in social sciences preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Helpdesk</td>
<td>Service Desk Analyst</td>
<td>AS degree or 2 years of experience in a Help Desk/Service Desk environment using and/or supporting Windows, Macintosh, PDA/Smartphone/Handheld technology. Internal candidates with less experience may be considered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-5. Current Qualification Requirements for Support Team Members.

When new team members are needed for any of the support service positions, individuals are recruited through NCU’s Human Resources (HR) team. All positions within these support service teams have a written, detailed position description, which outlines the qualifications and responsibilities for each position. HR provides an initial review of all applications to ensure that candidates are qualified for the position. Team leaders and others involved in hiring decisions also confirm that candidates are qualified for the given position. In order to confirm this, NCU developed a spreadsheet that lists all current team members that work in student support services teams. For each individual, the qualifications were reviewed by the team leader and confirmed as having been met.

Team Member Training
Upon being hired, all NCU team members are trained within their functional area. Team members are provided with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to succeed in each of their respective positions.

NCU has developed an internal training program for Enrollment Services team members. Training for Enrollment Services team members also focuses on continuous support for career and developmental growth. Participation in required trainings is tracked using sign-in sheets, which are kept by the Learning and Development Team. The Training Sign in Sheet Tracker contains an index of all trainings facilitated by Learning and Development (or supporting team members) dating back to 2010. All individual attendance records can be accessed upon request. The Learning and Development Team maintains a record of all New Hire and Career Progression trainings completed by Enrollment Services team members (Enrollment Advisors, Enrollment Specialists, and Re-Entry Advisors) dating back to October 2012 (this file is too large to include in the dropbox, but is available upon request). The record includes a course description of each training module.
Training for Academic Advising is based on the *Academic Advising Excellence Handbook*, which was developed by academic advising leadership. The Learning and Development team supports professional development opportunities for Academic Advisors, and ensures ongoing advisor development through internal training and individual coaching. Student service quality is monitored to ensure Academic Advisors are providing accurate information and quality student service.

**Team Member Professional Development**

NCU promotes an atmosphere that encourages and rewards ongoing growth and professional development. By budgeting specific financial resources to support staff professional development, NCU ensures the availability of development opportunities.

NCU ensures that each team member is allowed leave time annually to support continuous learning in work-related or university-sponsored development opportunities. NCU student support team members can secure release time for professional development endeavors such as workshops, conferences, seminars, webinars, and meetings hosted by university professional organizations.

NCU has a Professional Development policy that is published in the *Policy and Procedures Manual* and the *Team Handbook* that outlines the responsibility of team members to both pursue professional development activities and to share the information they gained at a professional development program with their team members at NCU. This policy is listed below.

**Northcentral University Professional Development Policy**

Northcentral encourages employees to enhance knowledge and skills and network with other professionals by pursuing professional memberships, certifications, development, and/or training: thus improving potential for future opportunities.

Northcentral encourages Core employees to attend at least one professional development workshop, seminar, or professional organization conference or convention each year, provided resources are available.

Upon returning from the professional development activity the employee will be responsible for scheduling time to share the information gained with members of their team.

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of all possible discounts, including those available by registering as far in advance of the event as possible.

Professional development costs may be reimbursed provided resources are available and the activity meets the following parameters:

- Training must pertain to the current position, career advancement or to enhance skills that would advance the capabilities, body of knowledge of the team member or the team.
- Professional certifications, association dues/memberships, and licensure must have a direct relationship to the job the employee performs, is in Northcentral’s best interests, and aligns with its future planning and direction.

**Figure 3-4.** Northcentral University Professional Development Policy.

Team leaders encourage team members to join organizations and attend events that promote excellence in their field. To do so, NCU has compiled a list of the most relevant associations for each University team to utilize as part of their professional development. In 2014, team leaders were responsible for tracking both professional development events that their members attended externally and the subsequent sharing of best practices with internal team members.

NCU also offers professional development through the tuition discount program. The tuition discount program provides employees a low-cost, high-quality professional development option. In 2013 alone, 134 NCU team members enrolled in 460 courses. The professional development opportunities available for each student services team are listed in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Academic Advisor</td>
<td>Experience within the program they support; attend internal and external training; conferences; webinars related to support and advising (Including National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Advising</td>
<td>Tuition Planners</td>
<td>On-the-job training; attend internal and external training; annual conferences and webinars from the Department of Education and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar’s Office</td>
<td>Registrar Support Specialist</td>
<td>Attend internal and external training; conferences; webinars related to support and advising (AACRAO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring / Academic Success Center</td>
<td>Academic Success Center Coordinator</td>
<td>Attend internal and external training; annual conferences and webinars on professional development and training support (NCLCA and NTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Attend external training; annual conferences and webinars (American Library Association (ALA) and ACRL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Helpdesk</td>
<td>Service Desk Analyst</td>
<td>On the job training and internal professional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-6. Professional Development Requirements for Student Support Services Team Members.

**Qualifications, Training and Professional Development Summary**

The Learning and Development Team captures and tracks the qualifications, training and professional development information for all student service team members. Their records include information for each individual that works in any of the student services teams. Specifically, all of the following information is available for each team member:

- A listing of all internal trainings completed at the University along with dates of completion;
- A listing of all external trainings completed along with dates of completion;
- A listing of all professional development activities completed, including dates completed, and whether the activity was approved by the team leader as meeting the requirements for professional development for the position; and
- Whether or not the individual met the required qualifications for the position, and if not, an explanation of any compensating factors.

Due to the number of details that are tracked, the record is large and is available for review upon request.
3.D. Northcentral University provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

As the foundation for establishing excellence in its academic programs, Northcentral University recruits, hires, evaluates, and develops the faculty and student support team members needed to carry out its Mission. The University provides a wide variety of programs and services to support student learning and effective teaching for all its academic offerings. NCU adheres to a staffing model formula for its faculty members.

3.D.1. Northcentral University provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

Northcentral University support services to advance student success. University team members provide each student personal attention, consistent with NCU’s one-to-one model. The institution maintains a student centric attitude and encourages the establishment of strong relationships with its students. Because all of NCU’s students attend online, each of the University’s functional and service areas are made available to students at a distance.

Academic Advising
Academic Advisors (AAs) are part of the Student Services Team at Northcentral University. Academic Advisors are trained in accordance with the Academic Advising Excellence Handbook and serve as the primary point of contact for students to address questions about navigating their degree plans and the Catalog. Academic Advisors are available to students via telephone, email, and chat 12 hours a day. AAs help students become acclimated with their portal, and educate them about the various resources available to them.

All Academic Advisors are trained to provide information regarding course selection, scheduling, and graduation requirements. After enrollment, students discuss their academic history, academic goals, career outlook, and preference of future support with their Academic Advisor. Through these interviews, advisors are able to individualize a student’s support structure and help identify challenges specific to their academic goals. AAs answer phone calls, emails, and internal University messages from students and provide personalized guidance. All advisors are also trained on Satisfactory Academic Progress regulations (SAP), and schedule regular meetings with students to discuss their academic progress. When students have questions, the AA will direct the student to the appropriate department and follow up to ensure that the student receives the answers and information being sought. Advisors provide a student success tour and a walk to class orientation. There is a dedicated Academic Advisor to assist students with career counseling and placement.

Student Financial Services
The Financial Aid team provides a variety of services, including assistance with the financial aid application process, tuition planning, assistance with scholarship searches, and exit counseling regarding student loans. The Financial Aid team provides continuing service at a distance throughout the students’ educational programs.

Academic Success Center (ASC)
Additional student support is provided through the Academic Success Center (ASC). The primary goal of the ASC is to provide students, faculty, and alumni with the tools and resources required for successful scholarly writing. The ASC provides academic coaching in scholarly writing,
reading, statistics, and time management training. The ASC also provides numerous resources including a writing handbook, information on academic integrity, guidance on forms of writing, APA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and Guides, and ESOL information for International Students. NCU tracks student usage of and satisfaction with ASC services.

**Dissertation Center**
The Dissertation Center is a repository for research and statistics information, statistics tutorials, NCU dissertation handbooks, templates for applied and research degrees, and a variety of scholarly sources related to dissertation quality and student development. Some of the primary resources include literature review quality standards and published articles related to the distinction between applied and research degrees.

**IT Helpesk**
The HelpDesk provides IT support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to students, faculty, and team members via email, telephone, and live online desktop sharing as needed.

**Library Services**
The NCU Library and all its resources are available online. The Library provides access to information resources and services such as reference, instruction, and interlibrary loans. The Library routinely evaluates its operations ensure it needs to of NCU meets the students and faculty.

**Office of the Registrar**
The Office of the Registrar is the official record-keeper of the University and is responsible for maintaining the accuracy and integrity of all student academic records. The Office of the Registrar uses practices to ensure quality service that complies with best practices outlined by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). The office receives ongoing training and professional development through various self-service trainings and industry guidance offered through AACRAO.

**Office of the Ombuds**
The Office of the Ombuds is organized under the Office of the Provost as a source of student complaint resolution and de-escalation. The Office of the Ombuds works in conjunction with Academic Advisors to provide students with academic guidance, resources, solutions, mediation, and in collaboration with the Graduate School, supports dissertation completion for students at-risk for completion.

**Disability Services**
Northcentral University maintains compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing a confidential process whereby appropriate accommodations are provided to students with disabilities. As discussed in the Catalog, the accommodation process is an interactive process between the student, Disability Services, and the student’s School.

Disability Services works with students to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford students with a disability the equal opportunity to participate in Northcentral University programs. Disability Services team members meet with each student requesting services to collaboratively develop a reasonable plan for accessing and completing NCU programs.

**The NCU Commons**
The Commons is an internal social and academic network for all NCU community members. It is available online to students and faculty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Commons allows
students, faculty, and NCU team members to connect with each other and participate in University-wide and School-specific communities. In these communities, members follow and contribute to academic discourse, updates and news in their field of study, resource sharing, and collegial support. The Commons delivers live activity streams of aggregated content, news, events, and discussions occurring across the campus to each member in the Commons.

3.D.2. **Northcentral University provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.**

In alignment with its Mission, Northcentral University provides professionals with broad access to graduate programs. Additionally, these programs are provided entirely at a distance. As such, each program requires students to demonstrate academic success at the prior degree level. All Master’s degree programs at NCU require the equivalent of a Bachelor’s level degree for admission. Doctoral programs require completion of a Master’s degree prior to admission.

When a student completes a prior degree within a discipline other than that of the desired degree at NCU, the applicant may be required to take discipline-relevant courses to ensure the student possesses core competencies at the prior degree program level. The Catalog articulates the degree programs requiring these courses (e.g., applicants with a Master’s degree in Psychology seeking admission to the Doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy are required to take leveling courses in family therapy as part of the Doctoral program).

Northcentral University provides learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students in a number of ways, including the Academic Advisors, Foundations courses, the Library, the Academic Success Center, and 24 hours a day, 7 days a week IT support.

- **Academic Advisors** guide new students through a student success orientation (walk to class) that introduces them to Northcentral University’s Learning Management System and provides tips for academic success (e.g., time management, use of Library, Academic Success Center, communication). Academic Advisors serve as primary contacts for students who need help navigating through degree plans and the Catalog, getting accustomed to the LMS portals, and learning about available resources.

- **Foundations courses** – Select programs provide preparatory instruction in the Foundations in Graduate Education course. The Foundations course is often the first course in a program sequence. The course serves as a student’s primary orientation to the expectations of graduate education at NCU. Foundations courses provide orientation and skill building in time management, academic integrity, writing, APA, critical thinking, goal setting, library searches, and self-evaluation.

- The **Northcentral University Library** provides ongoing and up-to-date instructional support to students via various live and asynchronous delivery methods. The purpose of Library instruction is to help ensure student preparation for success at NCU. This instruction includes an introduction to the use of library databases and other resources. Additionally, instruction is designed to increase overall information literacy skills. Students are made aware of Library instructional services via Library blog posts, student announcements, welcome letters, monthly Library Workshop Schedules, and individual interactions with reference librarians.
The Library provides instructional workshops that are typically 30 to 60 minutes in length. The workshops are delivered through the University’s online conferencing software, GoToMeeting. Workshops are geared toward both new users (e.g., Library Orientation, Searching 101) and more advanced users (e.g., Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis, Introduction to Tests and Measurements). To accommodate all schedules, recorded sessions of all Library workshops are available on the Library Workshop Videos page on the Library’s website. In 2011, the Library delivered 79 instructional workshops to 240 live participants; there were 2,371 workshop video views. In 2012, the Library delivered 54 instructional workshops to 296 participants; there were 3,621 workshop video views. In 2013, the Library delivered 78 instructional workshops to 369 participants; there were 2,097 workshop video views.

The Library also provides Library Quick Tutorial Videos, 5- to 8-minute instructional videos typically focusing on a specific resource (e.g., RefWorks, EBSCOhost) or topic (e.g., Search Like an Expert). Additionally, the Information Literacy Tutorial is available from the Library’s website and within foundational courses. This tutorial educates students on information literacy concepts as prescribed by the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries. Each section is followed by a brief quiz that tests participants on their knowledge of information literacy. Finally, for students who would like additional preparatory instruction on the use of the Library, individual research consultations are available. Research consultations are in-depth, customized, one-to-one meetings with a reference librarian to review Library resources and search strategies.

- The Academic Success Center provides learning support and preparatory instruction through academic coaching in scholarly writing, reading, statistics, and time management training. The ASC also provides numerous resources including a writing handbook, information on academic integrity, guidance on forms of writing, APA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and Guides, and ESOL information for International Students.

3.D.3. Northcentral University provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.

Northcentral University provides academic advising resources well suited to the unique needs of its mostly graduate student population. The focus of academic advising at Northcentral University is on excellence and creating a tiered support approach for all phases of a student’s program. The Academic Advising team is trained by program and student tenure within the program. The Academic Advisor job titles are known as New Student Advisor (NSA), Degree Program Advisor (DPA) and Graduate School Advisor (GSA).

New Student Advising

Every new student is assigned to a New Student Advisor (NSA). The NSA role is designed to help acclimate a student into the University culture and provide the foundational support all students need when starting a program. Upon enrollment, students meet with their Academic Advisors to discuss their academic history, academic goals, career outlook, and preference of future support. Through these interviews, advisors work to individualize a student’s support structure and identify challenges specific to his or her academic goals. Each new student is guided through a student success tour and a walk to class orientation to learn about the Course Room; support services such as the Library and Academic Success Center; and University policies. New Student Advisors support students through their first three courses, direct students to support resources, and help students acclimate to the University.
Degree Program Advising
Once students have successfully completed their first three courses, students are introduced to their Program Degree Advisors (DPA). DPAs support Doctoral students through the completion of comprehensive exams. DPAs support all other students through graduation. DPAs receive extensive training and have education or industry experience with the program fields they support.

Graduate School Advising
Doctoral students are transferred to GSAs upon completion of comprehensive exams. GSAs support these students through graduation. In close coordination with Graduate School faculty, GSAs provide advising support to Doctoral students throughout the dissertation process.

School of Marriage and Family Sciences Advising
The School of Marriage and Family Sciences provides programs that have unique clinical requirements. As such, a dedicated group of Academic Advisors are trained to support students in these unique programs. These advisors meet regularly with faculty and School leadership to ensure supportive academic advising is provided.

3.D.4. Northcentral University provides to students and faculty the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, and museum collections as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

As a fully online institution, technology is central to all of NCU’s teaching and functional areas. NCU designed and created a Learning Management System (Course Room) to provide an enriched online experience for NCU students.

The following resources that support teaching and learning at NCU are provided at a distance:

Course Room
The NCU Course Room is tailored to support teaching and learning in NCU’s one-to-one model and graduate program focus and is designed to:

- Provide access to syllabi, course content, and learning materials for current courses;
- Allow for communication between students, faculty, Academic Advisors, and other University team members;
- Facilitate access to the Academic Success Center;
- Provide interaction between students and faculty on assignments;
- Provide access to academic program updates and support services;
- Connect with the student book store;
- Facilitate academic engagement between students and faculty through the Commons;
- Connect students and faculty with the Library to access course-relevant resources.

Library
The Northcentral University Library collection consists of academic and scholarly resources, such as journals, eBooks, dissertations, videos, financial data and reports, etc. that are appropriate for graduate-level research. The collection is measured annually using the Serials Solutions (SS) Client Center, which aggregates holdings for each individual database. The numbers provided in the table below represent the Library’s total unique holdings. The number of e-journals and e-books in the collection has increased steadily over the past three years. In 2013, the number of e-
books increased approximately 23% from the previous year, while the number of e-journals increased nearly 12%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Type</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-Books</td>
<td>73,842</td>
<td>107,876</td>
<td>133,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Journals (unique titles)</td>
<td>24,616</td>
<td>31,194</td>
<td>34,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic resources/databases</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertations/Theses</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>1,589,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-7. Library Total Resource Holdings.

An index of Library databases is available online.

The Northcentral University Library is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Library service levels are informed through analysis of student feedback (including the annual Library Satisfaction Survey) and are based on utilization data. Reference librarians are available from 8am – 9pm (MST) on Mondays-Thursday, and from 8am– 5pm on Fridays-Sunday, a total of 79 service hours per week. These hours are consistent with the National Center for Educational Statistics average number of service hours per week. Northcentral University receives few inquiries regarding expanding the Library’s hours. The Library’s databases are accessible 24 hours a day, and during non-service hours students requiring assistance are provided with Library Guides, Library FAQs, and Learn the Library page, which contains several recorded webinars.

**IT Helpdesk**

At Northcentral University, technology plays a vital role in enhancing effective learning. This is reinforced by providing technical support for NCU’s students, faculty, and team members. The University Helpdesk was expanded to offer 24 hour/7 days a week/365 days a year support to accommodate students on different time zones and assist with technical problems whenever needed.

**Clinical Practice Sites**

NCU ensures that out-of-class learning experiences, including clinical work, practicum, and internship work, are adequately resourced, well developed, and subject to appropriate oversight. One example of effective out-of-class experiences is in the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) practicum and internship processes in both the Master’s and PhD programs. The MFT team has developed innovative ways to interact with students and facilitate the necessary clinical training. Specifically, the MFT program provides a unique opportunity for students to engage and participate in clinical training by partnering with facilities in the students’ local communities. A platform offering secure, web-based video conferencing tools allows students the opportunity to interact, participate, and gain experience, along with evaluation and support from NCU’s clinical supervisors who are part of the MFT faculty. Using this web-conferencing platform allows MFT students to work in their local communities and participate in supervised clinical sessions while engaging with other NCU students and MFT faculty.
3.D.5. Northcentral University provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Northcentral University provides extensive guidance to students in the effective use of research and information resources. Beginning in the Foundations and continuing through the signature assignments, competency exam, and dissertation process, students are required to engage critically with scholarly research and information.

Curriculum
All academic programs at Northcentral University include components that demonstrate that the discovery and use of knowledge is integral to educational success. Northcentral students are required to produce evidence of their intellectual inquiry through signature assignments or dissertation research. While students are provided with guidance on the use of research and information resources throughout their programs, NCU develops specific courses to provide targeted guidance in the effective use of research and information resources. Each program has courses related to research and the effective use of research and information resources. See attached for sample research course, comprehensive exam, and dissertation course syllabi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MFT5496</td>
<td>MFT Practicum II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT7495</td>
<td>MFT Practicum I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU7701</td>
<td>Research Topic, Problem, Purpose and Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU7703</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7701</td>
<td>Research Topic, Problem, Purpose and Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7702</td>
<td>Research Methods and Designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7703</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7704</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU7701</td>
<td>Research Topic, Problem, Purpose and Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU7703</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7701</td>
<td>Research Topic, Problem, Purpose and Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7702</td>
<td>Research Methods and Designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7703</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT5495</td>
<td>MFT Practicum I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM7704</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY7109</td>
<td>Planning Dissertation Research in Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY7108</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY7106</td>
<td>Quantitative Research Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY7103</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT8951</td>
<td>MFT Doctoral Practicum I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT7109</td>
<td>Planning Dissertation Research in MFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT7107</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Design in MFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFT7106</td>
<td>Quantitative Research Design in MFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU8207</td>
<td>Planning Dissertation Research in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU8207</td>
<td>Planning Dissertation Research in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU8202</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dissertation Center
The Dissertation Center is a repository for research and statistics information, statistics tutorials, NCU dissertation handbooks, templates for applied and research degrees, and a variety of scholarly sources. This information provides students instruction in the effective use of research and information resources.

Academic Success Center
The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides students with guidance in the use of research and information resources. The ASC provides academic coaching in scholarly writing, reading, and statistics. The ASC also provides numerous resources including a writing handbook, information on academic integrity, guidance on forms of writing, and APA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and Guides.

Library
The Northcentral University Library, whose collections are accessible online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, facilitates research activities of students, faculty, alumni, and staff. The Library provides a wide range of learning opportunities designed to support the use of research and information resources. The Library also provides specific guidance on the ethical use of information resources through tutorials, such as the Information Literacy Tutorial and various links to many other areas connected to the ethical use of information. The Information Literacy Tutorial is embedded in the curriculum of NCU’s Foundations courses as an additional support to help students understand the use of information resources.

The NCU Information Literacy Tutorial introduces students to the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Standards which, according to the ACRL, requires “individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ACRL, 2014). Specifically, the tutorial
covers the five concepts listed below and contains 37 multiple-choice questions that serve as a self-diagnostic tool for identifying gaps of knowledge necessary for conducting effective research at the University, specifically including the recognition of legal and ethical issues surrounding information.

The five concepts in the Information Literacy Tutorial are:

1) The importance and need for information in everyday lives;
2) The ability to develop search strategies for identifying and locating relevant information;
3) The need to evaluate information effectively in the face of its increasing proliferation;
4) The ability to effectively communicate and present new information from resources gathered; and
5) The recognition of legal and ethical issues surrounding information.
3.E. Northcentral University fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

Northcentral University’s commitment to a rich educational environment is accomplished through academic programs, qualified faculty, and continuously-improved infrastructure.

3.E.1. Co-curricular programs are suited to Northcentral University’s Mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

Consistent with the Mission, NCU co-curricular activities are oriented towards working professionals, being educated in online graduate degree programs. Thus, co-curricular activities are oriented differently than those in traditional academic settings. NCU has committed to a variety of co-curricular activities designed to support students’ personal and professional development. Co-curricular programs at NCU include: 1) the institutional online learning community known as The NCU Commons; 2) several student associations and Student Advisory Boards; 3) support for dissertation students; 4) Honor Societies; 5) Study Abroad opportunities; and 6) Alumni Services.

The NCU Commons
The NCU Commons is the University’s academic social network. The Commons is a co-curricular program at NCU in that it serves as a platform for student and faculty communication, collaboration, and interaction. The Commons is the internal virtual space for the NCU community—students, faculty, and team members—to contribute and share ideas outside of courses. It is a space for people to think and learn, to connect with colleagues and School communities, and to participate in NCU’s own professional learning community.

Student Associations and Advisory Boards
Student associations and advisory boards have been established at NCU for the purpose of facilitating connection and support among specific groups of students and between students and faculty. The School of Marriage and Family Sciences has a Marriage and Family Therapy Student Association (MFTSA). This MFTSA has monthly meetings, a peer mentoring program, and has set up in person meetings in regional locations on occasion for students in the MFT programs. The MFTSA also sponsors a quarterly Guest Lecture by inviting prominent scholars in the MFT field to present their work and research to the students and faculty of the University, as well as to external professionals who are invited to attend. These student associations provide support and opportunities to connect for students within the related academic programs. These efforts are congruent with the academic goals of the University and designed to support students in their academic and professional success.

Additionally, the Schools of Education, Business, Psychology, and Marriage and Family Sciences have student advisory boards/councils. Student engagement on these bodies provides them opportunities for engaging in leadership activities that contribute to the overall direction of the University. Students interact with faculty and School leaders to share ideas and present questions that impact their time at NCU.

Support for Dissertation Students
NCU offers several activities relating to support of Doctoral students that are in the dissertation stage. Further, the Student Portal displays an ongoing schedule of all dissertation defense meetings that students are allowed to attend in order to learn from the process and presentations of other students. Doctoral candidates also have access to the NCU Dissertation Center, which
includes a repository of resources, the Dissertation Resource Manual, templates for each of the dissertation milestone documents, and links to external resources.

Specifically, the School of Education offers Doctoral students quarterly webinars called From Student to Scholar in which a guest speaker presents and invites discussion on topics related to the dissertation journey.

**Honor Societies**

Honor Societies for each of the academic programs have been established to promote the quest for excellence and academic success. These honor societies are described in detail on the NCU public website. Each honor society has specific requirements for candidacy and at least annual induction ceremonies to facilitate recognition, connection, and ongoing interest in membership. Honor Societies facilitate the NCU Mission to help students “achieve academically.”

**Study Abroad**

In 2014, NCU conducted a study abroad experience for students and faculty. The trip involved collaboration between NCU and the University of Havana in Cuba. Eleven NCU students and four academic administrators visited Cuba for a weeklong process of collaboration and information exchange about the social structures, mental health needs, business and educational processes in Cuba. Positive student response has led to the planning of a second trip that will occur in April, 2015.

**Alumni Services**

NCU offers alumni services in the form of alumni communities, alumni events, the Distinguished Alumni Program, and the Higher Degrees student and alumni newsletter. These alumni programs have been established to support and recognize students and alumni in their efforts to contribute to their communities and professions and to maintain their commitment to lifelong learning.

**3.E.2.** Northcentral University demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students’ educational experience by virtue of aspects of its Mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

**NCU’s Mission-Based Commitment to Providing Access to Graduate Education**

Northcentral University’s contribution to the public good rests within the Mission, which includes providing professionals with access to academic programs. This access offers NCU students an opportunity to pursue graduate degrees that might otherwise be inaccessible due to geography, personal, or professional constraints. NCU’s academic programs produce students who contribute to their communities and professions.

**NCU’s Mission-Based Commitment to Students’ Communities and Professions**

The majority of NCU students seek Doctoral degrees. Student research, guided by NCU faculty, seeks solutions to the challenges within the students’ respective fields. NCU alumni contribute to their communities and professions by becoming licensed marriage and family therapists, educators, consultants, research psychologists, and higher education and business leaders. NCU recently dedicated an issue of the student and alumni newsletter, Higher Degrees, to service. The issue details service projects and commitments of NCU students and alumni.

As a Doctoral level institution focused on professional adult learners, Northcentral University engages its students in research and service learning through its AEL model, action-based research capstones, and dissertation process. To demonstrate NCU’s commitment to supporting
student contribution to their communities and professions, NCU encourages students to discover, solve, or investigate real world problems in their dissertations and Master’s level capstone projects.

**Examples of Student Work Related to Communities and Professions**

Northcentral University’s dissertations impact students’ local communities and organizations. The focus of student dissertation topics varies from student to student ranging from principal perceptions in community schools to exploring the needs of the Homeland Security community. Examples of student dissertation topics related to communities and organizations are in Table 3-8 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Student</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katz , Marc - March , 2013</td>
<td>A Qualitative Exploration of the Perceptions of a Special Education Professional Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France , Paul C - April , 2012</td>
<td>Exploring the Educational Needs of the Homeland Security Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born , Kimberly - May , 2012</td>
<td>Student and Principal Perceptions of the California High School Proficiency Examination in Community Schools: A Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilgore , Earl Leon - December , 2012</td>
<td>Exploring Information Sharing within an Intelligence Community: A Case Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3-8. Examples of Student Dissertation Topics Related to Communities.*

**Northcentral University in the Community**

Northcentral University is committed to supporting organizations within the local community. In 2013, The University donated over $28,000 to organizations such as the Child Help, Ed Map, and The Yavapai Big Brothers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donation Amount</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>ChildHelp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$13,936.00</td>
<td>EdMap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,150.00</td>
<td>Arizona Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>City of Prescott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600.00</td>
<td>Yavapai Big Brothers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3-9. University Community Donations.*
CRITERION 4 Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

Northcentral University honors its Vision of providing a high-quality learning experience for its students. The University’s one-to-one teaching model and 100% Doctoral faculty offer students a quality learning experience provided by experts in their fields of study. The University recognizes that student success requires significant investments to cultivate, train, and evaluate its faculty. The University also pays significant attention to the assessment of student learning, faculty performance, and the quality of student services. Since NCU’s last comprehensive visit, the University has developed a comprehensive integrated system of continuous improvement. The University has committed significant resources to ensure that its institutional assessment practices are consistent with HLC standards and its Mission. This chapter documents the assessment infrastructure and processes.

4.A. Northcentral University demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

Northcentral University responsibly provides quality educational programs and is dedicated to continuously improving them.

4.A.1. Northcentral University maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

NCU is a current participant in HLC’s Assessment Academy, which has provided the institution with valuable guidance and external review of its developing assessment and planning processes. Consistent with this participation in the Assessment Academy, Northcentral University has implemented program protocols to standardize program review and assessment. These protocols include the Academic Program Review (APR) process and the Five Year Program Review process.

Academic Program Reviews (APRs)
APRs have been conducted beginning with the 2008-2010 review cycle. APRs were originally conducted on a staggered three-year cycle. In 2014, the University determined that APRs conducted on a three-year cycle were not frequent enough to meet the need for timely actionable
information. To address both strategic depth and tactical agility, the University transitioned to an annual process that includes quarterly updates and evaluation of action plan progress.

The *Institutional Assessment Handbook* (IAHB) describes the goals of the APR process and the role of APRs in the overall institutional assessment scheme. It also provides a detailed guide articulating step by step instructions for completing the work in the Taskstream APR workspace. Faculty and team members in the Schools and Office of Assessment and Institutional Research collect and report data for each APR following steps outlined in the IAHB.

The APR provides Schools with an organized means of analyzing data and artifacts to comprehensively evaluate program performance and envision ways of improving student experience and outcomes. This process leads to School initiatives (action plans) designed to operationalize and track progress of steps taken to improve programs.

The structure of NCU’s Academic Program Review process provides Schools the flexibility necessary to meet discipline-specific objectives while maintaining a systematic University-wide process for assessment. This process ensures the ability to tie specific action plan items to data, incorporating estimated costs that translate into budget requests, and mapping the items to specific accreditation standards and expressed goals of the institution.

**Actions Resulting from Academic Program Reviews**

*School of Education*

The School of Education used the information obtained from the APR process to improve its school assessment plan and achieve TEAC accreditation for the MEd PK-12 specializations.

- Developed and implemented a School-wide assessment plan covering all programs to align with TEAC expectations;
- Realigned the School of Education curriculum to meet national requirements for teacher preparation;
- Implemented a core set of courses in the Master’s degree program to improve program outcome alignment and assessment;
- Created training and documentation to support faculty and students in the Comprehensive exam.

*School of Psychology*

The School of Psychology used the APR process to improve student learning.

- Created new certificate specializations;
- Updated School mission statement to include global research;
- Placed all PhD Psychology courses in a two-year revision cycle.

*School of Business and Technology Management*

The School of Business and Technology Management used information from its APR process to inform incorporation of applied learning in all programs consistent with best practices in business education.

- The first course in the MBA was redesigned to better engage MBA students;
- MBA program outcomes were enhanced to improve student learning;
- The MBA curriculum was revised to reflect the new program outcomes.

*School of Marriage and Family Sciences*

The School of Marriage and Family Sciences used the APR process to develop program action plans that contribute to curricular improvement.
Five Year Program Reviews
The University developed and implemented a process of strategic program review that includes a formal external review of the programs outside those completed by concurrent programmatic accrediting bodies. This program review process is described in detail in the Five Year Program Review Handbook. These reviews ensure the University evaluates the effectiveness of its programs in a regular and systematic manner. Five-Year Program Reviews include feedback from faculty, Professional Advisory Committees (PACs), Student Advisory Boards, and other stakeholders. The results of these reviews enable faculty and other stakeholders to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. The assessment cycle timetable for regular program reviews is presented in Table 4-1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business and Technology Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBA</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDD</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and Family Sciences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAMFT</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>MA</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-1. Five Year Program Review Schedule 2015-2019.

4.A.2. and 4.A.3. Northcentral University evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

Northcentral University has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

Northcentral University’s student transcript evaluation policies and procedures provide a detailed
and standardized process for the evaluation of applicant transcripts. These policies ensure that best practices in transcript evaluation are applied to all credit hours considered for transfer. These policies and procedures are consistent with the principles articulated by the following:

- American Council on Education
- National Association of Credential Evaluation Services
- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
- U.S. Armed Forces, the College Board’s Advanced Placement program, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES).

Guided by Northcentral University policy, the evaluations of external agencies, and the resources listed above, transfer credit evaluators determine the quality of credits and the credits that will be accepted into the University’s academic programs. Northcentral University transfer policies are detailed below.

**Institution-Wide Transcript Evaluation Policies**

**Domestic Academic Institutions**
Northcentral University only accepts other institutions’ credits for transfer that:

- Have been completed at a regionally or nationally accredited academic institution;
- Relate to the program and degree pursued and are equivalent to the degree program requirements, including specified electives;
- Appear on an official transcript from the institution where they were earned.

**Domestic Military Service**
As recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE), U.S. military training and other appropriate course experiences may be considered for transfer into a Northcentral University academic program. Except for military training courses specifically designated by ACE as equivalent to graduate coursework, military transfer credit is limited to the Bachelor's programs at the University.

**Prior Learning: Experiential, Military, and Testing**
Prior learning credit is credit that students are given for learning that has taken place outside an academic environment. Prior learning credit may be awarded for on-the-job training, military service, seminars, hobbies, volunteer work in the community, independent study, and/or noncredit courses. At Northcentral University, a student can apply for prior learning credit by submitting either of the following:

- Transcripts for prior learning assessment portfolios from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL);
- Transcripts from U.S. Army or Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) or Navy and/or Coast Guard ratings (where credits awarded are based on ACE recommendations).

In order to receive prior learning credit at Northcentral University, the student’s experience must match the learning experience provided in a university course. The student also must demonstrate how his or her prior learning experiences are equivalent to the selected university course through an evaluative process in which School Deans have the final decision about which credits will be accepted.

Prior learning credits can also be awarded based on a student’s performance on select
examinations. The only examination scores that can be used as the basis for transfer of credit are the Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), and Excelsior College (formerly Regents College) exams.

**International Academic Institutions**

For international students applying for the transfer of credits to an academic program, Northcentral University accepts credential evaluations through any evaluation agency accredited by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). In addition, credential evaluations from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) are accepted.

**Degree-Level-Specific Transcript Evaluation Policies**

In addition to the transcript evaluation policies that apply to all course credits considered for transfer into a Northcentral University academic program, each degree level has performance policies that must be met before credits will be considered for transfer. The policies are described in detail in the NCU Catalog. In summary, these criteria are:

- **Undergraduate** – Student must have earned a grade of C or better in each course to be transferred. Students may transfer a maximum of 90 lower and upper division semester credits;
- **Master’s** – Student must have earned a grade of B or better in each course to be transferred, and the course must have been completed within the past 5 years. Students may transfer a maximum of 6 semester credits (with the exception of the MAMFT, which allows for a maximum of 15 semester credits);
- **Doctoral** – Student must have earned a grade of B or better in each course to be transferred, and the course must have been completed within the past 7 years. Students may transfer a maximum of 9 semester credits.

**Program-Specific Transcript Evaluation Policies**

Currently, five programs have unique evaluation tracks that may require additional credit to be earned prior to entering the core of the program. The programs are PhD in Psychology; PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy; PhD in Business Administration; Doctor of Business Administration; and Master of Business Administration. The five programs have two possible entry tracks: evaluation and direct entry. The evaluation track requires all or some of the standard curriculum to be fulfilled prior to starting the remaining core sequence of each program. For the PhD in Psychology, up to 12 credit hours are required if an applicant does not have a Master’s degree in Psychology or a related field. For the PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy, an individual who has previously completed a Master's degree in a clinical/therapy discipline (other than a COAMFTE accredited Marriage and Family Therapy program) must have a transcript evaluation to determine if previous coursework meets some or all of the 36 hours of standard curriculum requirements. For the Doctor of Business Administration and PhD in Business Administration, each applicant is required to have a conferred Master’s degree in a generalized or specialized business area and an undergraduate degree in Business. For the Master of Business Administration, an applicant is required to have a conferred undergraduate degree in Business. Otherwise, he or she is required to successfully complete a specified course prior to starting the core sequence.

**4.A.4.** Northcentral University maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school
students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

Prerequisites
Course prerequisites are proposed by faculty or academic leadership and are reviewed by the Curriculum Subcommittee and, ultimately, approved by the full Academic Affairs Committee. Subsequent to approval, the prerequisites are published in the Catalog. Required course prerequisites are enforced during the registration process.

Dual Credit
The institution does not participate in any dual credit programs.

Advanced Placement Credit
Advanced placement (AP) credit is accepted upon review of appropriate documentation by the University including transcripts from the institution where the AP work was conducted, and official score reports from the College Board.

Expectations for Student Learning
Faculty members establish expectations for student learning, primarily through the development and approval of Course and Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Each School has a specified faculty member serving in the role of Director of Assessment to coordinate these activities. Faculty involvement in establishing learning outcomes is detailed in the NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook. Specifically, faculty members recommend, review, and approve the learning outcomes that are used in each degree program. Also, faculty participate in the process of designing and approving rubrics and other assessments used to evaluate achievement of these outcomes.

Consistent with the Institutional Assessment Handbook, pre-selected course assignments that best measure specific Course Learning Outcomes are evaluated by faculty. The selected assignment(s) provides the best opportunity in a specific course for students to demonstrate their achievement of related program outcomes. Student performance on each selected assignment is assessed against program outcomes using a rubric developed by faculty specifically to evaluate performance against a specific learning outcome. Results of this assessment are used in program review and ongoing curricular improvement.

Each program or course of study typically has five-to-eight discipline-specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) that outline the most important skills and concepts that students must learn in order to succeed in their field of study. The program outcomes are approved by the program’s faculty and the NCU Assessment Subcommittee, and are consistent with program accreditation requirements and expectations of the field of practice.

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) (also referred to as core competencies) reflect a broad level of knowledge, skills, and abilities set by the University that all students must meet, regardless of the academic program. NCU has previously participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and built the ILOs to be consistent with the HLC expectations.

Learning Resources
The institution has multiple resources for learning that are offered to students and faculty, including the following centers, resources, and departments. The University’s functional and service areas are all made available to faculty and students at a distance.
**Academic Advising**

Academic Advisors are available to students via telephone, email, and chat 12 hours a day. All Academic Advisors are trained to answer questions regarding course selection, scheduling, and graduation requirements. All Advisors are also trained on Satisfactory Academic Progress regulations (SAP), and schedule regular meetings with students to discuss academic progress. Academic Advisors meet regularly with each of the Schools to discuss policy changes, at risk students, and new services. Additionally, students participate in a number of different interviews with their Academic Advisor to discuss their academic history, academic goals, career outlook, and preference of future support. Through these interviews, Advisors are able to individualize a student’s support structure and help identify challenges specific to their academic goals.

**Academic Success Center (ASC)**

Northcentral University's Academic Success Center (ASC) offers NCU academic support services to all students at a distance through various means. NCU students use ASC services and resources through the telephone, email, and web-based applications to develop skills as self-directed learners and succeed in their program of study. The ASC provides academic coaching in scholarly writing, reading, statistics, and time management training. The ASC houses a library of resources on scholarly writing, critical thinking, academic integrity, and APA formatting, available online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for students and faculty. NCU tracks student usage of ASC services.

**The NCU Commons**

The Commons is an internal social and academic network for all NCU community members. It is available online to students and faculty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Commons allows students, faculty, and NCU team members to connect with each other and participate in University-wide and School-specific communities. In these communities, members follow and contribute to academic discourse, updates and news in their field of study, resource sharing, and collegial support. The Commons delivers live activity streams of aggregated content, news, events, and discussions occurring across the campus to each member in the Commons.

**Disability Services**

Disability services are available to students through a variety of distance-based tools, including telephone, email, and videoconferencing software. Disability Services works with students to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford students with a disability the equal opportunity to participate in Northcentral University programs. Disability Services team members meet with each student requesting services to collaboratively develop plans for accessing and completing NCU curriculum.

**Dissertation Center**

The Graduate School is also responsible for maintaining the Dissertation Center, an online repository for research and statistics information, statistics tutorials, Northcentral University dissertation handbooks and templates for applied and research degrees, and a variety of scholarly sources related to dissertation quality and student development. The Dissertation Center is available to faculty and students through the student and faculty portals.

**IT Helpesk**

The HelpDesk provides IT support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to students, faculty, and team members via email, telephone, and live online desktop sharing as needed.

**Faculty Resource Center**

The Faculty Resource Center serves both the faculty and the University in separate ways. The FRC serves faculty by cultivating teaching expertise through an extensive onboarding process.
The FRC also offers faculty a variety of educational opportunities and teaching discussions across Schools and disciplines. The FRC serves the University by collaborating with Schools to conduct faculty evaluations, managing communications to faculty, presenting faculty-facing documents and information outlets, and informing faculty policies and procedures. In these roles, the FRC works extensively with all University stakeholders ranging from senior administration to academic operations to business operations.

Library Services
The NCU Library and all its resources are available online. The Library provides access to information resources and services such as reference, instruction, and interlibrary loans. The Library supports learning outcomes by promoting information literacy throughout the institution.

Office of the Registrar
The Office of the Registrar is the official record-keeper of the University and is responsible for maintaining the accuracy and integrity of all student academic records. The Office of the Registrar uses practices to ensure quality service that complies with best practices outlined by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). The office receives ongoing training and professional development through various self-service trainings and industry guidance offered through AACRAO.

Student Financial Aid
Student Financial Aid (SFA) assists students in obtaining financial support for University coursework through the federal government and other financial agencies.

Office of the Ombuds
The Office of the Ombuds is organized under the Office of the Provost as a source of student complaint resolution and de-escalation. The Office of the Ombuds works in conjunction with Academic Advisors to provide students with academic guidance, resources, solutions, mediation, and in collaboration with the Graduate School, supports dissertation completion for students at-risk for completion.

The Graduate School
The Graduate School faculty work with students to provide research and design guidance during the dissertation stage. Graduate School faculty are all credentialed with terminal degrees and actively involved in scholarship and research. As part of the hiring process, the School provides chairs and subject matter experts extensive training on the processes and procedures related to the milestone review process, theirs role in the promotion of appropriate doctoral socialization, and the provision of feedback in the online environment.

Faculty Qualifications
All NCU faculty members hold Doctoral degrees and are hired based on their qualification to teach within a specific academic School or program. These specific qualifications are outlined in the NCU Faculty Handbook. Northcentral University has consistently followed Higher Learning Commission (HLC) “Guidance on Determining Qualified Faculty” in recruiting, hiring, and developing faculty. School Deans also ensure that faculty meet any additional criteria established by programmatic accrediting bodies for programs particular to their Schools (such as ACBSP, COAMFTE, and TEAC). Additionally, each School completes a course-by-course audit to verify faculty qualifications for each course they are assigned to teach.

4.A.5. Northcentral University maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
The Provost serves as the University accreditation officer responsible for providing assistance and resources for programs seeking or renewing accreditation with professional and educational bodies. In addition to the Academic Program Reviews described previously, the quality and rigor of academic programs are strengthened through specialized accreditation reviews.

Six Northcentral University academic programs have received accreditation from their respective accrediting boards (detailed below).

Within the School of Marriage and Family Sciences, the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MAMFT) has received accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). COAMFTE is a specialized accrediting body for clinical training programs issuing Master's, Doctoral, and Postgraduate degrees in Marriage and Family Therapy throughout the United States and Canada. The PhD program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Northcentral University recently was reviewed by COAMFTE for programmatic accreditation. COAMFTE has provided feedback from their review and will issue a decision in May. Since 1978, COAMFTE has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the national accrediting body for the field of marriage and family therapy.

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accredits the School of Business and Technology Management’s programs and degree offerings, including Bachelor of Business Administration, Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Business, Master of Business Administration, Post-Master’s Certificate in Business, Doctor of Business Administration, and Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration. As an accreditor whose focus is consistent with the NCU Mission, ACBSP "develops, promotes, and recognizes best practices that contribute to continuous improvement of business education." ACBSP emphasizes the importance of "learning how to learn" by balancing teaching and research activities to enhance the quality of classroom instruction and contribute to student learning.

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) accredits eight specializations (those focusing on PK-12 Education) in NCU’s Master’s of Education degree program. Northcentral University’s Master of Education program was granted initial accreditation by TEAC for the period from June 24, 2013, to June 24, 2018. Founded in 1997, TEAC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving academic degree programs for professional educators who will teach and lead in PK-12 schools. TEAC’s goal is to support the preparation of competent, caring, and qualified professional educators.

4.A.6. Northcentral University evaluates the success of its graduates. Northcentral University assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, Northcentral University looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its Mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps, AmeriCorps).

Recent alumni survey results show that more than 96 percent of Northcentral University graduates are employed or not seeking employment. Those results also indicate NCU alumni generally increase earnings post-graduation.

Formal measures include the annual alumni survey and the employer satisfaction survey. The dedicated alumni webpage www.ncu.edu/students-and-alumni is maintained as a resource sharing and networking avenue for alumni, current students, and faculty.
Annual Alumni Survey
Northcentral University’s Marketing Department, works jointly with the School Deans and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, to survey Northcentral University alumni. This annual survey is designed to measure employment characteristics of the University’s graduates, track their changes in promotions and salary, assess the benefits of degree programs, and survey alumni needs.

Sections of the survey address graduate information such as location and demographics, education information, employment, self-employment, and alumni involvement in professional activities. The most recent survey results are summarized below in Criterion 4.B.2.

Employer Satisfaction Survey
Northcentral University conducts an annual employer satisfaction survey designed to measure the satisfaction of employers with the education received by their Northcentral University graduates as well as measure the institutional effectiveness in producing graduates with the appropriate job-related skills. The 2013 employer satisfaction survey was conducted by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research in July 2013. Twenty-three employers responded. Ninety-six percent were very satisfied or satisfied with Northcentral University graduates employed at their organizations. A summary of results is located in 4.B.2.

NCU Alumni Association
A dedicated web page for the NCU Alumni Association provides an interactive portal for alumni, students, and faculty to access current alumni information. Topic sections include alumni benefits, alumni contributions, alumni events, distinguished alumni, links to the Student and Alumni Store, and Higher Degrees, the online student and alumni newsletter. Higher Degrees is a proprietary online quarterly newsletter that provides another portal for alumni, student, and faculty information. Alumni and students can share accomplishments at alumni@ncu.edu to be published in the NCU “Newsworthy” section of the newsletter. For example, during 2013, several alumni reported career promotions at U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, MeadWestvaco Corporate, Southern New Hampshire University, and Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (WAMFT).

From the alumni survey and on the alumni web page, alumni and active students report on their presentations and publications. Examples of papers that students have reported presenting include those published in: International Journal of Business and Social Science, Forensics Magazine, Journal of International Education Research, Oxford University in the United Kingdom; The International Journal of Technologies in Learning, Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs International Conference; International Journal of Emergency Medicine; and Learning Solutions.
4.B. Northcentral University demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

Northcentral University’s assessment plan is contained in the *Institutional Assessment Handbook*.

4.B.1. Northcentral University has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

NCU’s student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated and reflected in program policies and curricula. Student learning outcomes are included in course syllabi and the NCU *Catalog*. Each academic course and program at Northcentral University has specifically defined outcomes that guide the content and instruction.

Faculty collectively take responsibility for curriculum and assessment through their participation on the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) and its subcommittees for both Assessment and Curriculum. As new programs or program changes are proposed, NCU faculty review course outcomes as voting members of the Assessment Subcommittee of the AAC pursuant to the scope and purpose outlined in the *Policies and Procedures Manual* (PPM). Additionally, the faculty review curriculum proposals as voting members of the Curriculum Subcommittee pursuant to the scope and purpose outlined in the PPM. Finally, faculty members (including the full Faculty Senate) exert collective responsibility over curriculum and assessment as voting members of the AAC pursuant to the scope and purpose outlined in the PPM.

These governance structures ensure faculty’s individual participation and collective responsibility for establishing curriculum and standards of performance (including course and program outcomes) and for conducting assessment of those outcomes. Pursuant to the NCU *Course Development Guidelines*, Northcentral follows a clearly articulated design process for course development. In accordance with these guidelines, course development occurs through collaboration between Core faculty members who are responsible for oversight of curriculum in each degree program, Core and adjunct faculty members who serve as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and NCU’s instructional design team.

Each School has a Core faculty member serving as Curriculum Director who coordinates with the School’s faculty on all curriculum projects. In each of the four disciplinary Schools, curriculum changes are informed by faculty as well as the Program Advisory Council (a council of invited external professionals with expertise in the field who meet semiannually to review program information and provide guidance to program faculty). Faculty engage with curricular changes at multiple points in the process. Both Core and adjunct faculty can serve as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for curriculum development and revisions. Faculty members review and approve new curriculum and curriculum changes as participants on the Curriculum Subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Faculty members at Northcentral are also involved in establishing expectations for student performance, primarily through the development and approval of Course and Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Each School has a faculty member serving in the role of Director of Assessment to coordinate these activities. Faculty involvement in establishing outcomes is detailed in the NCU *Institutional Assessment Handbook*. Specifically, faculty members recommend, review, and approve the learning outcomes that are used in each degree program.
Also, faculty participate in the process of designing and approving rubrics and other assessments used to evaluate achievement of these outcomes.

The *Institutional Assessment Handbook* documents Northcentral University’s curriculum-embedded institutional assessment structure, which provides a system for comprehensive assessment while insuring a functional feedback loop. The institution’s systematic program assessment is implemented within the philosophy of ensuring continuous quality improvement of student learning and the improvement of contexts in which that learning occurs. It is within this framework that the following comprehensive assessment and feedback values were conceived and implemented.

Pursuant to the NCU *Institutional Assessment Handbook*, each academic course and program at Northcentral University has specifically defined outcomes that guide the content and instruction in every course within each program. In consultation with School Deans, academic leadership, and Program Advisory Councils, faculty establish program outcomes. These outcomes and assessment of these outcomes distinguish the level of mastery that is expected at each degree level.

Beyond the program level, faculty establish learning outcomes for each course. They design course activities to help students learn and to achieve the stated Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). These CLOs, and the learning activities required to achieve each CLO, are clearly stated in the course syllabi. Learning outcomes are created to ensure that courses offered at each level are distinct and appropriate to the degree level. The Assessment Subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Committee reviews Program and Course level Learning Outcomes prior to consideration of the full committee.

The development of Program and Course level Learning Outcomes allows for learning outcomes to be assessed and analyzed for program review purposes. In order to clarify the connection from course activities to course and program level outcomes and to the NCU Mission, an extensive curriculum mapping initiative was piloted in 2009-10 and implemented across the University in 2011-12 as part of the Academic Program Review process.

Taskstream LAT is the tool that supports Northcentral University’s direct assessment of student learning in all degree programs. It helps academic leadership evaluate the quality of the programs and courses, and to assess how well students are meeting outcomes throughout their program of study and their level of achievement in the culminating experience courses. These direct assessments provide meaningful feedback to students to help them better understand their progress through the program and the relevance of assessment to their learning.

Taskstream LAT helps the University organize its evaluation of the quality of programs by assessing how well students are meeting program outcomes over time. Consistent with the *Institutional Assessment Handbook*, Taskstream involves the pre-selection of course assignments that best measure specific Course Learning Outcomes. The selected assignment(s) provides the best opportunity in a specific course for students to demonstrate their achievement of related program outcomes. Student performance on each selected assignment is assessed against program outcomes using a rubric developed by faculty specifically to evaluate performance against a specific learning outcome.

Northcentral’s proprietary student Learning Management System (Course Room) houses the necessary information from which to acquire curriculum mapping aligning individual course activities with Course Learning Outcomes and to the appropriate level of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
The first step in the development of student learning outcomes assessment is creating outcome maps or curriculum maps, which are documented within Taskstream and Course Room. These maps detail the connections between course activities to course, program specific and University-wide learning outcomes (also known as Institutional Learning Outcomes or core competencies) within the context of the University’s Mission. The assessment pyramid (below) illustrates the hierarchical connection between Course, Program, and Institutional Learning Outcomes.

**Figure 4-1: Outcomes Alignment Model**

*Course Activities:* Course activities support the course outcomes, providing a roadmap for developing assessment strategies. Course activities form the foundation of the course and are designed to be measurable, attainable and relevant to the course subject. Students participate in activities to meet each course outcome and to help them to build transferable and assessable skills. Course activities include multiple measures of student learning.

*Course Outcomes:* Each course within a program has associated with it a list of learning outcomes. The course outcomes direct the focus of course content and help ensure that what the student learns in the course is in line with the program and/or institutional outcomes as well as accrediting body requirements. In addition, the course outcomes serve a pedagogical function—they tell the students what they will gain by taking the course, addressing what the student must know in order to function in real world situations.

*Program Outcomes:* Each program, or course of study, typically has 5 to 8 discipline-specific learning outcomes that outline the most important skills and concepts that students must learn in order to succeed in their field of study. The program outcomes are approved by the program’s faculty and Assessment Committee, and are consistent with program accreditation requirements and expectations of the field of practice. PLO-specific rubrics are housed in Taskstream LAT.

*Institutional Outcomes:* Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO’s) (also called core competencies) reflect a broad level of knowledge, skills, and abilities set by the University that all students must meet, regardless of the academic program. Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO’s) were vetted by faculty before they were formalized.

To complement the University’s investment in technologies to support the assessment of student
learning, the University commits significant human resources to the assessment of student learning. In addition to a University Director of Assessment, Assessment Coordinator, and Director of Core Competencies, each School is staffed with a School Director of Assessment that oversees University-wide assessment practices of the School and development of such supplementary assessment practices as required or expected in the discipline, including programmatic accreditors.

4.B.2. Northcentral University assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and cocurricular programs.

Through indirect and direct measures of assessment, NCU assesses achievement of curricular learning outcomes consistent with its claims.

**Indirect Measures of Assessment**

Northcentral University administers a number of surveys to students and graduates. A list of surveys is provided below along with the years in which each survey was fielded. Surveys are managed by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research with input from faculty and academic leaders.

- Post-course survey that assesses satisfaction with learning outcomes, course content, and faculty performance (limited data from the last two years due to some data loss during certain months and change in survey design);
- Team member engagement survey proprietary (2013);
- Graduate employer satisfaction survey (2013);
- Alumni survey (2013, 2014);

*Report in progress

**2013 Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)**

The 2013 Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL), a student satisfaction survey administered nationally by the enrollment management consulting group Noel-Levitz, was conducted in August 2013. The PSOL was previously administered in 2003, 2006, 2010, 2011, and 2012. The 2013 survey was administered to a sample population of 4,579 students who had taken at least three courses out of a total active student population of 6,450 who had taken at least three courses. The survey was open August 14 to September 14 and received 1,275 responses for a response rate of 28%.

The PSOL is the only satisfaction tool designed specifically for students in online distance learning programs that measures both student perceptions of importance and satisfaction in the areas of advising, enrollment, student services, instructional services, and institutional perceptions. Students’ results are compared to national results. As part of its service, Noel-Levitz provides item analysis, a strategic planning overview, summary question responses, and comparative and trend analyses.

**Trend Report**

Noel-Levitz retains PSOL responses and provides comparison data across multiple years. Items characterized as “summary” questions purport to illustrate areas of overall satisfaction.
### Summary

**So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=Much worse than expected</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=Quite a bit worse than I expected</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=Worse than I expected</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=About what I expected</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=Better than I expected</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=Quite a bit better than I expected</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=Much better than expected</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=Not very satisfied</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=Neutral</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=Satisfied</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=Very satisfied</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1=Definitely not</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=Probably not</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=Maybe not</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=I don't know</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=Maybe yes</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=Probably yes</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=Definitely yes</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Post Course Survey**

The post course survey is intended to measure student perceptions of performance in five key areas identified in the table below.

**Table 4-3. Post Course Survey Aggregated Results.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Average Student Experience</th>
<th>Average Course Materials</th>
<th>Average Faculty Performance</th>
<th>Average Academic Advisor Perf.</th>
<th>Average Pace and Length</th>
<th>Average Overall Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SoBTM</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoEdu</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoMFS</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoPsy</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graduate Satisfaction Survey
A survey instrument designed to measure satisfaction among Northcentral University graduates was originally deployed in 2009 and has since been deployed annually. Satisfaction has been highly correlated with retention in the literature, particularly in the areas of course content and delivery, faculty performance, and academic advising (Helgensen, 2007; Herbert, 2006; Tinto, 2005). Using a compilation of question items from both Keaveney and Young (1997) and Kara and DeShields (2004) and revising questions to make them more relevant to Northcentral University’s learning environment, a survey was developed to measure NCU Graduate satisfaction.

Overall Satisfaction
Ten survey items in the graduate satisfaction survey were used to measure overall satisfaction. Positive response choices (i.e., agree, strongly agree) were aggregated and are shown below by year. The highest rated item across years was “Institutional resources (e.g., Library, Academic Success Center, and Dissertation Center) met my expectations”. The lowest rated item across years was “I was satisfied with the way changes were communicated to me during my program”. Respondents reported an increase in satisfaction for 2014 in each topic of inquiry over 2013 results.

Table 4-4. Graduate Satisfaction Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Satisfaction</th>
<th>2013 – 4.00 (n=235)*</th>
<th>2014 – 4.26 (n=334)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cost of my education at NCU was a worthwhile investment.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the quality of faculty at NCU.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the quality of education at NCU compares favorably to similar institutions.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of my program.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with NCU’s unique one-to-one mentoring model.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, my academic needs were generally met by the institution.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional resources (e.g., Library, Writing Center, Dissertation Center) met my expectations.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the way changes were communicated to me during my program.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Academic Advisor helped me to achieve my academic goals. 3.76 4.12
I would recommend Northcentral University to others. 3.98 4.28
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience at Northcentral University. 4.01 4.25

*2013 MOE of ±5.6% at the 95% confidence level; Total invites 1,063 in which 235 responses were received.
**2014 MOE of ±3.5% at the 95% confidence level; Total invites 581 in which 334 responses were received.
The method of survey delivery was altered in June 2014 so that graduates were invited to complete the survey at the time they submitted their graduation request. Preceding survey invites were sent the year following the year a student graduated.

2014 Library Survey Results
The Library Satisfaction Survey is administered annually to determine student satisfaction levels with Library resources and services. The Survey was previously given in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. The 2014 Library Satisfaction Survey was administered to 2,035 graduates, 515 faculty and 6,672 active students. The overall response rate of the 2014 Library Satisfaction Survey was 19% among 9,222 faculty, students and alumni. Results of the survey indicate significant satisfaction.

University learning resources, including the Library is the one area of the University that students report the highest rate of satisfaction in other contexts. Overall Library satisfaction is reported below.

Overall Library Satisfaction
Respondents were asked if overall, they were satisfied with the NCU Library. Aggregating positive response choices (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree), ninety two percent of respondents indicate “overall, I am satisfied with the NCU Library” (n = 1585). Current student and faculty were slightly more satisfied than alumni.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
<td>2.96%</td>
<td>25.67%</td>
<td>66.78%</td>
<td>1418</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
<td>27.37%</td>
<td>67.37%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>6.94%</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>29.17%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
<td>25.93%</td>
<td>66.06%</td>
<td>1585</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-5. Overall Library Satisfaction Results.

Contributing to Lifelong Learning (question posed only to Alumni)
Aggregating positive responses (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree), ninety percent of graduate respondents indicate “NCU Library services and resources are important in continuing my lifelong learning” (n =157). No significant improvement in satisfaction levels was observed from the previous year.
The NCU Library services and resources are important in continuing my lifelong learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68.79%</td>
<td>21.02%</td>
<td>6.37%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
<td>3.18%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-6. Alumni Library Satisfaction Results.

2013 Team Member Engagement Survey Results

The 2013 Team Member Engagement Survey was designed to measure Team Members’ opinions related to engagement within roles, teams and the University as a whole as well as to identify ways in which to increase Team Member Engagement. The Survey was conducted by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) for the first time in December of 2013. Surveys were sent to all Team Members, which included 580 full-time and 448 part-time faculty and staff. The survey generated 490 responses for a response rate of 48%.

Table 4-7. Team Member Engagement Aggregated Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment (avg. = 4.20):</td>
<td>My immediate team leader regularly gives me constructive feedback on my job performance.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have access to the resources I need to successfully do my job.</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My team leader gives me the autonomy to complete my work.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission, Vision, Values (avg. = 4.53)</td>
<td>NCU behaves in a manner that is consistent with its Values.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I support NCU's Mission, Vision, and Values.</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment (avg. = 4.41):</td>
<td>I would recommend NCU to my friends and acquaintances as a good place to work.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How committed is an employee to their organization?</td>
<td>It is likely that I will continue my employment at NCU for the foreseeable future.</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Citizen Behavior: (avg. = 4.20)</td>
<td>I trust the leaders at the University to set the right course.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we like the people we work with?</td>
<td>Team members across the University are more than willing to help me.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward: (avg. = 3.61)</td>
<td>The opportunity for career growth at NCU is available.</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation—of any sort.</td>
<td>I receive proper recognition for the work I do for NCU.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Engagement: (avg. = 4.56)</td>
<td>My job allows me to utilize my strengths.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is closest to job satisfaction and is a measure of employee/job</td>
<td>I feel sufficiently challenged in the work that I do for NCU.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni Survey
Northcentral University’s Marketing Department, working jointly with the School Deans and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, created Northcentral’s Alumni Survey. This annual survey is designed to measure employment characteristics of Northcentral graduates, track their changes in promotions/salary, assess the benefits of degree programs, and monitor alumni needs for marketing purposes.

2014 Alumni Survey Analysis
On February 1, 2014, Northcentral alumni who graduated between January 1, 1999 through January 30, 2014 were invited to participate in the 2014 Alumni Survey. The survey remained active for three weeks in which 988 respondents completed the survey of the 4,473 invites sent; a response of 22%. Of the 988 respondents, 61 indicated obtainment of a Certification of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS). Respondents indicating completion of a CAGS were discharged from the remainder of the Alumni survey. Results were provided in the analysis report.

Alumni Employment
Of 927 Alumni Respondents, ninety-six percent indicated they are employed, retired or unemployed by choice (75% ‘full-time’, 9% ‘part-time’, 7% ‘self-employed’, 4% ‘unemployed not by choice’, 3% ‘retired’, and ‘2% ‘unemployed by choice’).

Alumni Working in Field
Alumni respondents who indicated full and part-time employment (n=781) were asked if they are working in the field in which they earned their degree. Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated that they are working in the field in which they earned their degree. Respondents also provided commentary as to why they are not working in their degree field, which included military deployments and the inability to locate work.

Alumni Professional Development
Respondents were asked if they continued their education after earning their degree at Northcentral. This may include educational webinars/conferences, professional publications/presentations, professional certifications/licensure, professional memberships, training courses, etc. Sixty-four percent of respondents indicate that they have continued their education; twenty percent indicate that they plan to continue their education in the future; and fifteen percent indicated no plans for continuing their education (n=988). Most respondents who indicated no plans for continuing their education cited the completion of a terminal degree.

2013 Employer Satisfaction Survey
A survey instrument was developed to measure the satisfaction of employers with the education received by their NCU-graduate employees as well as to measure the institutional effectiveness in producing graduates with the appropriate job-related skills. The results from the 2013 survey, to which 23 employers responded, concluded that 96 percent of employers were very satisfied or satisfied with Northcentral University graduates employed at their organizations. Ninety-six percent of respondents stated they would hire another Northcentral University graduate.

Post-Course Surveys
Students’ opinions related to course quality are collected via a post-course survey provided to
students upon completion of courses. These surveys are also used to assess students’ satisfaction levels related to the quality of the instruction provided in courses. The surveys are compiled, aggregated, and presented to the Schools for analysis.

Direct Measures of Assessment
The NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook details and guides ongoing direct assessment activities. Faculty members engage in systematic assessment of student learning outcomes at three levels: institutional, academic program, and course level.

The systematic assessment program is implemented within the philosophy of ensuring continuous quality improvement of student learning and the improvement of contexts in which that learning occurs. Main foci of the comprehensive assessment structure are direct assessment of student learning and indirect measures of institutional effectiveness such as end of course student surveys, faculty surveys, alumni and employer surveys, and archival data such as retention, persistence, and graduation rates. The assessment infrastructure relies on both people as described above (e.g., faculty and team members) and technology (specifically, Taskstream).

**Figure 4-2. Taskstream LAT Performance by Standards Report.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Performance by Standards Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report Generated by Taskstream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRF Template</td>
<td>PhD of Marriage &amp; Family Therapy DRF Template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD of Marriage &amp; Family Therapy Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program(s)</td>
<td>PhD Marriage &amp; Family Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>145 Authors matched search criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Generated</td>
<td>Thursday, October 03, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4-2 above graphically represents output of Taskstream LAT, which is sent to Deans on a continuing basis. Rubric criteria are the standards on which the assessments are made; Folio Area is the Course and Assignment reviewed; DRF (Direct Response Folio) identified the program and template used; Authors evaluated is the number of student projects assessed in the period; Average for Group (raw) indicated the score and possible score; and the Average for Group is the mean of all assessments for this assignment and corresponding outcome(s).**

Consistent with the Institutional Assessment Handbook, pre-selected course assignments that best measure specific Course Learning Outcomes are evaluated by faculty. The selected assignment(s) provides the best opportunity in a specific course for students to demonstrate their achievement of related program outcomes. Student performance on each selected assignment is assessed against program outcomes using a rubric developed by faculty specifically to evaluate performance against a specific learning outcome. Results of this assessment are used in program review and ongoing curricular improvement. Each program, or course of study, typically has five-to-eight discipline-specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) that outline the most important skills and concepts that students must learn in order to succeed in their field of study. The program outcomes are approved by the program’s faculty and the NCU Assessment Subcommittee, and are consistent with program accreditation requirements and expectations of the field of practice.

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) (also called core competencies) reflect a broad level of knowledge, skills, and abilities set by the University that all students must meet, regardless of the
academic program. NCU has previously participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and built the ILOs to be consistent with the HLC expectations.

Co-Curricular Activities
Consistent with the Mission, NCU’s co-curricular activities are oriented towards working professionals being educated in online graduate degree programs. Thus, co-curricular activities are oriented differently from those in traditional academic settings. NCU has committed to a variety of co-curricular activities designed to support students’ personal and professional development (discussed in Criterion 3.E.1.).

4.B.3. Northcentral University uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Within its integrated continuous improvement processes, Northcentral University uses assessment data to develop initiatives designed to improve student learning and outcomes. Direct assessment data and indirect measures of assessment are used to inform annual Academic Program Reviews (APR), Five Year Program Reviews, and Department Reviews, which have direct links to strategic planning and budgeting as indicated in the figure below.

Figure 4-3. Strategic Planning and Budgeting Assessment Links.

Evidence of the use of assessment data to inform initiatives and curricular improvements is found in the Action Plans that issue from APRs, Five Year Program Reviews, Department Reviews (that together inform the Strategic Plan), and budget requests. Some examples are found below.

The School of Marriage and Family Sciences’ Department Review includes Strategy 3, which focuses on retention and improving student learning and outcomes. Assessment data are cited as identifying the need for implementing objectives 3.2 and 3.5, which focus on curriculum
improvements and student engagement and which are also mapped to regional and disciplinary accreditation criteria/standards.

Within the School of Psychology, assessment information is identified as informing the APR for the PhD in Psychology’s Strategy 3 (Student Success), Objective 3.3 where the information is used to guide teaching and curriculum development, improvement, and prioritization strategies. The School of Psychology also cites assessment data as informing Strategy 4 of the Department Review, which centers on continuous review and improvement efforts in Objective 4.2, specifying curricular changes and course revisions informed by assessment information.

The School of Education used assessment information to inform Department Review Action Plan item 2.1, Alignment of Curriculum. In addition, assessment information was used in the Department Review Action Plan item 2.4, Curriculum Revisions to justify a request of $255,000.00 per year over a 3 year period to revise curriculum.

The annual program review (APR) also provides Schools with feedback from various metrics that lead to school initiatives designed to improve programs. Specifically, APRs provide Schools with data and analyses that indicate how programs need to maintain current processes, change current processes, and add processes. The processes examined within each program include those related to student, faculty, and program outcomes. Data-driven feedback then is utilized to develop action plans regarding those three outcomes. Once action plans are developed based on the feedback, they are reviewed periodically until the next APR in order to ensure the feedback leads to actions that are fulfilled.

For example, in the School of Marriage and Family Sciences, programs conduct two annual faculty retreats during which administrative faculty, full-time faculty, and part-time faculty participate in a program review of student, faculty, and program outcomes. Specifically, the Director of Assessment and the Director of Curriculum provide data to all faculty members generated by course rubrics, student learning outcome rubrics, post-course surveys, an annual student survey, an annual faculty survey, an annual communities of interest survey, an annual alumni survey, student clinical evaluation forms, student progress evaluations, and metrics provided by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. In June 2013, preliminary data on the effectiveness of full-time foundation faculty gathered by the Program Director suggested a full-time faculty model would benefit students and faculty in performance and satisfaction.

Based on the preliminary data, the University piloted a full-time faculty model within the Master’s and PhD programs of Marriage and Family Therapy. Over the next six months, seven full-time faculty members were hired. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation was performed by the Director of Assessment. A qualitative study of faculty perspective was conducted that engaged faculty members in recorded interviews leading to the conclusion the full-time model improved faculty satisfaction as well as a culture with a perceived improvement in student performance and satisfaction. The study showed student persistence improved with full-time faculty. The conclusion reached by analysis of the preliminary data and discussion with faculty members was that a full-time faculty model is beneficial.

4.B.4. Northcentral University’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

As has been documented in previous sections of 4B, Northcentral University employs assessment methodologies that involve substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff
members, including:

- The implementation of Taskstream, an automated, cloud-based assessment management tool that guides improvements to teaching and learning;
- The University-wide use of Academic Program Review, a systematic and structured process by which key performance indicators inform curricular improvements, program development, and budgetary needs;
- The development of a reflective and strategic Five Year Program Review process;
- Continuous refinement of surveys providing indirect measures of assessment;
- The creation of a Faculty Senate, which includes democratically elected faculty representatives from each School;
- Required Academic Department Reviews;
- A strategic planning process that integrates APRs, Five Year Reviews, and Department Reviews that include broad stakeholder participation;
- Alignment of strategic planning with the budgeting process;
- The adoption of the American Association of Colleges and Universities rubrics to assess Institutional Learning Outcomes.

**Higher Learning Commission’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning**

In 2013, Northcentral University was accepted to participate in the Higher Learning Commission’s Assessment Academy. The following individuals represent the University in this endeavor:

- Ray Rodriguez, Sr. Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
- Charlene Lalli, Director of Assessment
- Patricia Johnson, Director of Assessment, School of Education
- Heather Hussey, Director of Core Competencies
- Robert Haussmann, Dean, School of Psychology

Northcentral University representatives attended the HLC Assessment Roundtable meeting in St. Charles, IL (October 16-18, 2013). The latest update was submitted in September 2014, and feedback was received from HLC. The Assessment Academy Team is preparing an update for submission in February 2015.
4.C. Northcentral University demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

Northcentral University uses its assessment processes to identify ways to improve retention, persistence, and completion in all programs it offers.

4.C.1. Northcentral University has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its Mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

The University has clearly defined goals for student attrition and completion, as are reflected in the annual budget. These goals are established through academic strategic planning and the budgeting process, and tracked by Schools, Deans, and the Vice President of Retention and Student Success. Each School maintains a retention plan (SOE, SBTM, SOP, SMFS) that articulates activities and goals to support the overarching retention and persistence goals.

Retention and completion goals are established in light of the University’s Mission to provide working professionals with a graduate education. To begin the process, NCU examines the previous year’s retention data. Following analysis of these data, and the projected impact of planned improvements, the University forecasts ambitious improvements in retention by program. Even though these goals are ambitious, the NCU is confident that these goals are attainable, evidenced by the inclusion of these goals in the operational budget.

4.C.2. Northcentral University collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

Persistence information is collected in NCU’s student information system and is available to the Retention Subcommittee, Deans, and the Vice President of Retention and Student Success. Schools receive weekly reports displaying student attrition data by individual student. Based upon analysis of the data, the Schools follow up with individual students as appropriate, and identify ways in which to better engage students.

The University’s Retention Subcommittee of the Senior Leadership Team is a cross-functional committee that routinely meets and works collaboratively to analyze persistence and retention data and trends. In an effort to increase student persistence, the committee makes recommendations for improvements to the student experience. Additionally, Deans, faculty, and PACS engage in the Academic Program Review (APR) process, reviewing therein and elsewhere retention and persistence data on an ongoing basis.

Student progress data are available to Academic Advisors through a variety of reports. Academic Advisors have access to “student portfolio reports” which identify at-risk students. Based on these reports, Advisors engage with students to promote persistence.

The University’s current data reflect the retention (Table 4-8) and completion (Table 4-9) results below. Retention methodology and definitions are provided in criterion 4.C.4.
## Retention Rates

### University Rates Aggregated Across All Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School And Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>One-Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree-Seeking Students</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree-Seeking Students</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,506</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree-Seeking Students</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,493</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,581</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rates by Program

#### Business and Technology Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>One-Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Business Administration (MBA)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (PhD)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>One-Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education (BEd)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Education (MEd)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Education (EdD)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Marriage and Family Sciences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>One-Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MAMFT)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy (PhD)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>One-Year Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (BAPsy)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Arts in Psychology (MAPsy)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (PhD)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4-8. Northcentral University Retention Rates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Program</th>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th>Cohort Size</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>Number of Degree Completers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor's Degree-Seeking Students</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master's Degree-Seeking Students</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctoral Degree-Seeking Students</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates by Program</th>
<th>Business and Technology Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master of Business Administration (MBA)</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (PhD)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Education</strong></th>
<th>Bachelor of Education (BEd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master of Education (MEd)</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Education (EdD)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marriage and Family Sciences</strong></th>
<th>Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MAMFT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy (PhD)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Psychology</strong></th>
<th>Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (BAPsy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master of Arts in Psychology (MAPsy)</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (PhD)</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4-9. Northcentral University Completion Rates.*
4.C.3. Northcentral University uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

Based on the collection and analysis of retention, persistence, and completion data, the University has made the following improvements:

- Made curriculum changes:
  - Specific assignments were enhanced to improve student learning and early program success
  - Restructured the MBA and the sequencing of the MBA courses
  - Identified and revised problematic courses and have since revised the courses (ED5040, ED5022, SKS)
  - Created the direct and evaluation tracks for the MBA
- Increased visibility to data that informs interventions;
- Implemented student exit interviews;
- Created a University-wide committee focused on retention efforts;
- Enhanced the assistance provided to the MFT students in relation to internship placement;
- Implemented enhanced advising techniques to support student success;
- Quarterly "all University" retention meetings designed to share information to improve retention, persistence, and completion.

4.C.4. Northcentral University’s processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures).

Northcentral University’s model emphasizing a 100 percent online one-to-one educational model coupled with the non-term structure of programs creates distinctive challenges in collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and degree completion. The background and detail behind these definitions along with their respective formulas are provided. Current retention, persistence and completion results are provided in 4.C.2.

Degree Completion Rate
In calculating completion rates, NCU analyzes those students who demonstrate a reasonable level of commitment to the University. Specifically, a completion rate cohort includes students who successfully complete their first three courses and enroll in a fourth course at the University. A student who enters a degree-completion cohort at Northcentral University and is included in the degree-completion calculation is equivalent to a full-time graduate student at a traditional university who successfully earns 9 credits in the fall semester (i.e., the equivalent of earning 3 credits in 3 courses under Northcentral University’s continuous enrollment academic calendar) and subsequently enrolls in the spring semester at the same university (i.e., the equivalent of enrolling in a fourth course at Northcentral University). The completion rate is calculated as the percentage of students in a cohort who completed their degree within the maximum time to degree completion per Northcentral University’s course Catalog. No distinction is made between first-time students and transfer students in the calculation of the completion rate.
Retention Rate
A retention rate cohort includes students who enroll in a first course. Creating cohorts in this way allows for the comparison of Northcentral University completion and retention rates to those of institutions with traditional semester-based academic calendars that specialize in graduate education. The retention rate is calculated as the percentage of students in a cohort who are still enrolled or who have completed their degree program at Northcentral University one year after the first enrolled course start date.

Persistence Rate
The new student early course persistence rate is conceptually similar to the retention rate in that each measures academic progress relative to an important milestone; the difference is that new student early course persistence is course-centric while the retention rate is calendar-based. The timeline for what is considered successful persistence from one course to the next is based on the number of days it takes to progress through a 12-week course while taking the maximum allowable break between courses. As outlined in NCU’s course Catalog, the maximum allowable break between courses is 28 days. Though students often progress through their degree program at a quicker pace than this, this conservative timeline ensures the results are as valid as possible while maintaining a reasonable reporting timeline. Additional operational metrics such as course completion rates would likely be used to in conjunction with the new student early course persistence metric.

Student Early Course Persistence is a cohort-based metric that tracks students’ persistence over their first four courses with the University. The new student early course persistence rate consists of three measures:

- Student conversion rate from a 1st to a 2nd course;
- Student conversion rate from a 2nd to 3rd course;
- Student conversion rate from a 3rd to a 4th course;
- Overall student persistence rate from a 1st to a 4th course; 17 weeks from the start date of the student’s third vested course;
- Overall student persistence from a 1st to a 4th course: 49 weeks from the start date of the student’s first vested course. Refer to the calculation and notes section of this report for additional details on the new student early course persistence rate calculation.
CRITERION 5 Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

Northcentral University’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its Mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A. Northcentral University’s resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Northcentral University is committed to allocating sufficient resources and has sufficient structures and processes to fulfill its Mission.

5.A.1. Northcentral University has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

Fiscal Resources
NCU has operated with an operational surplus since 2008 (as demonstrated in Figure 5-2 below). University leadership reviews institutional financial health monthly through forecast meetings, annually through the budgeting process, and over multiple years as part of the long-range planning process. As demonstrated in financial reports to the Board of Trustees, the administration also ensures that the University has the appropriate threshold of cash flow to support capital investments to achieve NCU strategies.

Through budgeting and strategic planning processes, the University makes organizational decisions to support its strategic goals. The University makes resource (fiscal, technological, and human) decisions that support the strategic plan and the operational plans of the Schools. The University supports diversification of its revenue sources by enrolling students from corporations, military partnerships, or other sources and by providing various financing options.

The University’s 90:10 ratio as of 12/31/2013 was 73.53%. The University’s bad debt expense for 2013 was 2.86% of tuition revenue.

NCU reviews and plans on an annual basis the budgets of all functional departments. Throughout each budget year, the finance leadership in conjunction with University leadership reviews the University’s budget versus actual expenses on a monthly basis to plan for and respond to changes in how funds are being used or not used.
Northcentral University maintains a steady revenue stream through tuition and fees. Cash payment is a substantial source of tuition, averaging around 20% of the course starts, and military tuition assistance averages around 4% of course starts. Military tuition scholarships allow active service members and veterans to subsidize published tuition rates, lowering the costs to the students. Special accommodations are made in leave of absence policies to give active duty military maximum flexibility in their schedules with no financial penalties for sudden or extended absences from courses due to active duty assignments.

The use of private loans by students contributes less than 1% annually toward the overall amount of tuition as a source of revenue. These revenue sources demonstrate the University’s ability to support its operations fiscally.

![Course Starts by Payment Type](image)

**Figure 5-1.** Course Starts by Payment Type.

Achieving financial objectives is important to Northcentral University to ensure appropriate resources are available for investing in University goals. Alignment between the strategic plan and the financial plan is crucial to achieving improvements in each of the areas detailed in the strategic plan. This alignment is demonstrated in the strategic planning process and resource allocation cycle detailed in Criterion 4.

Further, Northcentral University has continued to ensure sufficient cash flow is available for the necessary capital investments in technology and curriculum required to ensure the University continues to execute its strategies, accomplish its strategic goals, and achieve its Mission. As depicted below, the University’s net revenue, operating income, and cash flow from operations have increased year over year.
Northcentral University reviews internal and external statistical and financial information in order to assess its performance. Historical University data is used in benchmarking performance as well as comparing to industry data. The Finance department gathers public information on other similar education institutions in order to benchmark performance metrics such as revenues, earnings, expenses, and student population statistics. Performance is measured by number of years in operation, current year, and prior year results (see fiscal performance benchmarks used in the 2014 budgeting process below).

**Figure 5-2.** Net Revenues, Operating Income, and Cash Flow.

**Figure 5-3.** Performance benchmarks used in 2014 Budgeting process.
Northcentral University publishes performance results related to student enrollment statistics and financial data each month and distributes this information to members of the Board of Trustees. This information is then reviewed at Board Finance Committee meetings and, subsequently, at meetings of the full Board of Trustees in order to assess how the University’s performance is trending and how future performance projections may change. Education industry environmental factors and outside economic factors are discussed to assess how they have affected and may affect the University’s ability to deliver quality education to its students.

**Budgeting**

The budget process combines Northcentral University’s strategic plan, goals, and objectives with its operational needs to create an executable plan. Each School leader and department head is involved in the process. This collaborative approach, depicted in the strategic planning process and resource allocation cycle (detailed in Criterion 4 and in the *Institutional Assessment Handbook*) ensures strategic and resource alignment within the University’s functional and academic areas.

Each School and functional area is responsible for proposing the initial level of resources necessary for achieving its goals. The School and functional budget submissions are reviewed against University goals and funding availability to determine what items can be funded. Processes for creating the 2014 and 2015 University budgets are detailed in Criterion 5.A.5 below.

**Human Resources**

It is through the Human Resources department that team members are recruited, initially qualified, and hired to fulfill various job functions required to support the delivery of education. Each administrative unit is responsible for the hiring decision once candidates have gone through the initial vetting process in Human Resources. Adjunct and full-time faculty are recruited through the Schools with the support of the Human Resources department and Faculty Resource Center. While Human Resources is responsible for the facilitation of hiring, respective University departments identify budgetary and staffing needs and the qualifications necessary for filling those needs.

The following is the composition of faculty, academic administration, operations, and other staff at Northcentral University as of 12/31/2014.
The faculty hiring, onboarding, and evaluation processes at NCU are guided by the NCU Faculty Handbook. This handbook articulates the policies and procedures for hiring, performance evaluation, and benefits available to faculty.

**Physical Resources**
Northcentral University has adequate physical resources to meet its Mission. The University has a primary facility in Scottsdale, AZ, a smaller center in Prescott Valley in Northern Arizona, and, most recently with the approval of a Substantive Change by the Higher Learning Commission, an Academic Support Services site in San Diego, CA. As the Higher Learning Commission is aware, pending accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission, the transfer of accreditation from HLC and the approval of the DOE, the San Diego site will become NCU’s Administrative and Academic headquarters. The facilities at all locations have sufficient space and resources to provide adequate workspaces, tools, technology set-up, and functional capacities for all University departments.

**Technological Resources**
The technological infrastructure is sufficient to support Northcentral University’s Mission. As an online university, technology is a critical component in the ability to deliver its education model and support the functions that help deliver the model. The Information Technology (IT) department is responsible for the strategy, support services, and delivery of technology to students, faculty, administration, and staff. Each team member, including all virtual team members, is equipped with the technology required to fulfill his or her role in supporting the Mission. The University’s IT department also provides the following services:

- Software application development and support;
- Infrastructure and information security;
- Help desk services for faculty, staff, and students;
- Technology solution and analysis services;
- Quality assurance and software testing;
- Desktop services.
The Senior Leadership Team’s IT Steering Subcommittee meets biweekly. This committee is responsible for evaluating and prioritizing needs, resources and existing human and technological capacity. The Board of Trustees Subcommittee on IT meets quarterly to review the progress of IT’s implementation of key initiatives.

Core infrastructure systems, including network, servers, data centers, and telephony further support the Mission of Northcentral University. Together, these systems provide the backbone for voice and data communications. The University’s network infrastructure is comprised of redundant components and connections providing reliable data and voice communications.

Northcentral University’s primary data center is in a certified tier III facility in Phoenix, Arizona. Tier III data centers are composed of redundant power and cooling distribution paths. Each path is fully redundant, but only one path is active. While the requirement for tier III is 99.982% availability, IO data centers provide 100% availability. In addition to being a tier III facility, IO’s data center is also SSAE-16 SOC 1 Type 2 compliant, which means the facility and internal controls are properly documented and working as designed. Internal controls audited include:

- Human Resources – Data center operations, IT, and customer support departments are staffed with appropriately skilled and experienced team members and all team members receive appropriate training as necessary;
- Physical Security – The physical access to IO facilities is limited to properly authorized individuals;
- Facility and Environmental Protection – IO facilities housing customer equipment and support operations are engineered and monitored to reduce the risk of environmental threats;
- Client Account Management – New installations and changes to customer equipment at IO are fulfilled according to the customer’s specifications per the contractual agreement;
- Logical Security – Network devices and critical systems are configured with appropriate security;
- Operations – All critical network systems are backed up where appropriate and are recoverable.

Providing information security is a major concern at Northcentral University, and security components are strategically placed throughout the University’s network to protect the organization, including: firewalls, intrusion prevention, encryption, anti-virus, anti-spam, and managed critical and security operating system updates. The organization’s wireless network includes standard security features such as AES encryption and RADIUS authentication. Recent updates expand these security capabilities by adding, two-factor authentication, rogue detection, external vulnerability detection, and intrusion prevention. Physical security is managed by the use of magnetic door locks with proximity card readers at each access point as well as cameras at each egress point.

5.A.2. Northcentral University’s resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.

Northcentral University is overseen by an independent Board of Trustees that operates pursuant to clearly articulated Board Bylaws, which are aligned with the Association of Governing Boards’ best practices. Eight independent and five ownership Trustees make up the Board. All Board members understand that their legal obligation is to make every decision “for the benefit of the
University and public good" The Chairman of the Board and all Officers are independent members of the Board. The Chair of each subcommittee of the Board is an independent member of the Board. Independent members of the Board make up a majority of each committee. Pursuant to the Bylaws, the ownership Trustees have no additional rights.

The Board is self-perpetuating and has full responsibility for selection of new Trustees. Further, when the Board contemplates transactions, Trustees with a financial interest in the transaction must abstain from voting, and only non-conflicted Trustees vote. Board minutes reflect the vote for all formal Board actions. This Board governance structure and its bylaws ensure that resource allocation is appropriately apportioned to the educational purposes of the University.

Additionally, Northcentral University management activities and structured annual budgeting process ensure the appropriate allocation of resources to the University’s purposes. The annual budgeting process is rigorous in nature and requires all departmental leaders to research departmental needs and clearly articulate those needs. The budget process also includes a robust capital plan. Additionally, School-based plans delineate School strategies and identify resources needed to support the strategies.

5.A.3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of Northcentral University’s organization, resources, and opportunities.

The strategic planning and budgeting processes are closely aligned to support the Northcentral University’s Mission. Evidence of this alignment is indicated in consecutive budget surpluses, implementation of key strategic initiatives, and continued investment in the quality of academic programs.

NCU’s strategic planning and budgeting process guides the University’s resource management efforts. Through budgeting and strategic planning processes, the University makes organizational decisions to support its strategic goals. The University makes resource (fiscal, technological, and human) decisions that support the strategic plan and the operational plans of the Schools.

NCU reviews and plans on an annual basis the budgets of all functional departments. Throughout each budget year, functional department leaders regularly review their budgets versus actual expenses to plan for and respond to changes in how funds are being used or not used.

The strategic planning process exemplifies Northcentral University’s organizational and resource allocation. Academic leadership is included in the decision-making process throughout.

Department Reviews (DRs) are completed on an annual basis with quarterly snapshot updates, but may be updated at any time. The DRs cover a number of areas that help to give a clear picture of the status of each department and to aid in assessing and managing departments on a routine basis. Departments develop and annually review their departmental mission, vision, objectives, and goals. They conduct a SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunity and threat) for their specific area. Like Academic Program Reviews, DRs are informed by information from many sources, including assessment of student learning data, survey results, and other metrics of student success. These data sources are now being maintained in the Taskstream AMS, APR, and Strategic Planning Workspaces and used for continuous improvement, strategic planning and budgeting.
Northcentral University’s staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

Northcentral University employs appropriately qualified faculty and staff in support of its Mission. Qualifications vary by job description, and ongoing training and professional development are provided.

**Faculty**

NCU is proud of its 100% Doctoral faculty that includes approximately 125 full-time (Core) faculty. In 2012, NCU’s Board of Trustees approved a plan to substantially increase the ranks of full-time faculty. Pursuant to this plan, NCU Core faculty ranks increased from 9 (2009) to 25 (2011) to 72 (2012) to approximately 125 Core faculty (2015). Additionally, NCU has a faculty-staffing model that ensures the availability of a sufficient number of faculty.

All NCU faculty members are hired based on their qualification to teach within a specific discipline. These specific qualifications are outlined in the NCU Faculty Handbook. Northcentral University has consistently followed Higher Learning Commission (HLC) “Guidance on Determining Qualified Faculty” in recruiting, hiring, and developing faculty. School Deans also ensure that faculty meet any additional criteria established by programmatic accrediting bodies for programs particular to their Schools (such as ACBSP, COAMFTE, and TEAC). Additionally, each School completes a course-by-course audit to verify faculty qualifications for each course they are assigned to teach.

Faculty members complete initial (onboarding) training prior to teaching NCU courses. The training is designed to ensure that new faculty members are comfortable using NCU’s technology, understand NCU’s teaching policies, and can demonstrate the ability to provide effective feedback to ensure student learning.

Faculty evaluation processes for all faculty are consistent with the HR process for all team members, which involves feedback from multiple sources. In the four disciplinary Schools, this includes peer feedback through the Quantifying Teacher Quality (QTQ) process (as outlined in the Faculty Handbook) and ongoing feedback from the Associate Director of Faculty Support and Development, the Assistant Dean, and the Dean of each School. The QTQ process includes rubric-driven feedback provided to each faculty member via Taskstream. During the annual evaluation process, goals are established to ensure continual faculty development to improve teaching and learning. Currently, Graduate School faculty are evaluated annually pursuant to the NCU Team Member Handbook.

**Staff**

As discussed in Criterion 3, staff members providing student support services are appropriately qualified and trained. Staff members in non-student support service roles are also appropriately qualified based on the responsibilities, qualifications, and experience of individual job descriptions. Job descriptions outline the knowledge, skills, abilities, and education required for appropriate candidates. Job descriptions are reviewed and approved by the Human Resources department and the hiring manager. Candidates are screened during the hiring process for minimum qualifications and experience. All new staff members attend new hire orientations within the first month of employment. All staff members are required to complete annual performance self-evaluations that are reviewed and discussed during their annual reviews. Each staff member’s reporting manager also delivers an evaluation of the member’s performance, setting goals for the next annual review cycle.
Learning and Development Team
Northcentral University employs a training, or “Learning and Development” team, which is dedicated to the training of non-faculty team members across the University, and which also assists other training efforts for faculty and students on an as-needed basis. The Learning and Development team is made of two full-time training specialists, two coaches to support enrollment and academic advising, an initial trainer to support the enrollment team, and a Quality Assurance sub-team made up of QA Specialists and a QA Associate Director.

The Learning and Development team also manages and issues training through a system called WeComply, providing standardized, tracked, recorded training to all University team members and full-time faculty on topics from diversity, to FERPA regulations, to sexual harassment.

Professional Development
The University has budgeted designated dollar amounts for professional development of all Core faculty and team members. Each team member or faculty member has a budgeted amount of money to use specifically toward outside professional development.

5.A.5. Northcentral University has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Northcentral University uses a well-defined process for budgeting and monitoring institutional expenses. The 2015 strategic planning process is connected to the budgeting process through the Strategic Planning Resource and Allocation Cycle articulated in the Institutional Assessment Handbook (and included in Figure 5-5 below). The institution engages in strategic planning with a detailed focus on the current year and upcoming fiscal year.

The budget process is overseen by the CFO with participation from the Deans and department leaders. The Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility to approve the final budget based on recommendations provided by the Provost, CFO, and President. University stakeholders provide input into the budget process.

For the 2014 budget process, departments presented draft budget to the Provost and COO/CFO. After the Provost’s and COO/CFO’s review and approval, a consolidated budget was presented to the President. The President, Provost, and COO/CFO ensured the proper resource allocations were made to support the institution’s strategic plan. After Presidential approval, the budget was presented to the Audit and Finance committee of the Board of Trustees and ultimately to the full Board of Trustees for approval.

In the 2015 budgeting process, departmental leaders presented draft budgets to the appropriate senior leaders. The senior leaders reviewed departmental drafts and made revisions based upon their review. These revised drafts were presented to the President and CFO who, in conjunction with discussions with senior leaders for the respective area, made additional revisions. After Presidential approval, the budget was presented to the Finance committee of the Board of Trustees and ultimately to the full Board of Trustees for approval. The 2015 budget process was closely linked to the strategic plan pursuant to the Northcentral University Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation Cycle (see Figure 5-5 below).
Figure 5-5. Northcentral University Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation Cycle.

The Finance team prepares and analyzes financial data on a monthly basis and provides these analyses to the Board of Trustees, President, and academic and administrative leaders. Comparisons to prior year data, approved budgets, and current forecasts are performed. Variances are scrutinized to ensure the institution is meeting its financial goals and to ascertain whether there are indicators of opportunities or challenges that may need to be addressed.
5.B. **Northcentral University governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its Mission.**

Northcentral University’s governance structure is designed to promote collaboration among its stakeholders in support of the University Mission.

5.B.1. **Northcentral University’s governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices, and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.**

The University is overseen by an independent Board of Trustees that operates pursuant to clearly articulated Board Bylaws, which are aligned with the Association of Governing Boards’ best practices. These Bylaws articulate the duties, responsibilities, and accountabilities of board members and the President.

Eight independent and five ownership Trustees make up the Board. All Board members understand that their legal obligation is to make every decision “for the benefit of the University and public good.” The Chairman of the Board and all Officers are independent members of the Board. The Chair of each subcommittee of the Board is an independent member of the Board. Independent members of the Board make up a majority of each committee. Pursuant to the Bylaws, the ownership Trustees have no additional rights.

The Board is self-perpetuating and has full responsibility for selection of new Trustees. Further, when the Board contemplates transactions, Trustees with a financial interest in the transaction must abstain from voting, and only non-conflicted Trustees vote. Board minutes reflect the vote for all formal Board actions. As a result of this Board governance structure, interactions with ownership and University governance are free from interests that could compromise the institution’s Mission, integrity, or autonomy.

Northcentral University’s Bylaws specifically state that the Board provides appropriate oversight for financial and academic policies, and meets the University’s legal and fiduciary responsibilities. The preamble to the bylaws states:

> Northcentral University is governed by a Board of Trustees responsible for the establishment of broad institutional policies for the operation of the University, with oversight responsibility for academics and academic policies; compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and accreditation standards; ensuring the financial resources are adequate to support the University’s goals; promoting shared governance; and providing continuity to the University.

The Board has a robust committee structure to support the appropriate oversight. The following committees help to support oversight for financial and academic policies and to meet legal and fiduciary responsibilities: Academic Affairs; Audit; Finance; Legal Affairs; Information Technology; CEO Selection; Performance and Compensation; and Executive. The scope and charter of the committees are:

(a) **Chief Executive Officer Selection, Performance and Compensation Committee:** The
Committee will recommend for a vote of the Board of Trustees, the appointment and removal of the President/Chief Executive Officer. The Committee is also responsible for providing a comprehensive annual evaluation of the President/Chief Executive Officer; make recommendations on the President/Chief Executive Officer’s compensation; and provide the Board of Trustees with recommendations on the duration of the President/Chief Executive Officer’s contract.

(b) Audit Committee: The Committee is charged with providing oversight of the institution’s financial practices, internal controls, and standards of conduct.

(c) Finance Committee: The Committee is charged with providing oversight of the institution’s financial management.

(d) Governance Committee: The Committee is charged with developing a framework for identifying and recruiting independent members of the Board of Trustees. The Governance Committee is responsible for presenting recommendations for independent members of the Board of Trustees for nomination by the Board of Trustees. The Governance Committee is responsible for administering and reviewing Annual Disclosures of members of the Board of Trustees to determine “material” conflicts. The Governance Committee is responsible for conducting the periodic review of Trustee performance. The Governance Committee shall also be responsible for evaluating the performance of the Trustees at the end of a Trustee’s term for purposes of recommending whether that Trustee should be considered for reappointment.

(e) Academic Affairs Committee: The Committee is charged with ensuring that the academic program is consistent with the institution’s Mission and strategies; that the academic budget reflects the institution’s academic priorities; that faculty personnel policies and procedures complement academic priorities; that the institution’s academic programs are appropriate for its students; and that the institution assesses the effectiveness of its academic programs.

(f) Legal Affairs Committee: The Committee is charged with reviewing legal and compliance strategy, legal expenses and reports relating to legal services provided to the University, incurred throughout the year on behalf of the University and/or Board of Trustees.

(g) Information Technology Committee: The Committee is charged with ascertaining for the NCU Board whether or not the IT organization is fulfilling its mission, providing advice and counsel and to making recommendations to the Board on important steps that IT might take to perform that mission.

5.B.2. Northcentral University has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.

Northcentral University engages constituencies across the institution in governance activities through a structured governance process that involves key governance bodies. The Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership Team, Academic Affairs Committee, and Faculty Senate are the primary, formal bodies that engage constituents in the governance process. Student Advisory Boards and Program Advisory Councils ensure the involvement of additional constituencies in the governance process. Through these bodies, the University engages Board members, faculty,
administrators, staff and students in institutional governance.

**Board of Trustees**
Northcentral University is governed by a Board of Trustees whose role is to provide appropriate oversight for financial and academic policies, and meet the University’s legal and fiduciary responsibilities. The role is described in more detail in Criterion 5.B.1.

**NCU Administration**
The University is currently led by George Burnett, President and CEO. Reporting to Mr. Burnett and serving on the President’s Cabinet, are Dr. Scott Burrus, Provost and Chief Academic Officer; Dr. John LaNer, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Karen Whitney, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. David Harpool, General Counsel, and Chief Human Resource and Compliance Officer; Patrick Pendleton, Chief Information Officer; Russ Natoce, Interim Chief Marketing Officer, and Eric Stoddard, Chief of Staff. The President is hired and evaluated by the Board of Trustees.

**Senior Leadership Team**
The purpose of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is to promote communication and collaboration, and to ensure the implementation of Northcentral University’s strategic and administrative plans. Additionally, the Senior Leadership Team approves all policies and ensures they are evaluated for administrative impacts and receive necessary support for implementation. The SLT reviews, develops and implements short- and long-range strategic and administrative plans for the University, and disseminates an understanding of the goals, purposes and plans of the University to the faculty and team members for their input and support. The SLT is co-chaired by the President/CEO and the Provost/CAO. Voting members of the SLT include the Chair of the Faculty Senate, Deans, and other administrative leaders (the full membership of the SLT is outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual). The SLT has the following standing subcommittees: Retention, Diversity, Information Technology Steering, and Strategic Plan Steering.

**Academic Affairs Committee**
The purpose of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) is to provide advice, counsel, direction, and approval of decision for all academic matters at Northcentral University. All AAC-approved policies and procedures are forwarded to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for final consideration. The AAC is required to meet a minimum of six times per year. Minutes of all meetings are maintained by the Office of the Provost.

The AAC reviews and recommends policies and procedures that relate to the following:

- University faculty, their qualifications, professional development and work life;
- University curriculum, its content and its quality;
- Academic technology and its use in the teaching and learning activities of the University;
- The review, assessment, and on-going improvement of academic programs and student learning.

The AAC has the following standing subcommittees: Assessment Subcommittee and Curriculum Subcommittee.

The AAC is chaired by the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. Voting members include Core and adjunct faculty members of the Faculty Senate, as well as Academic Program Chairs.
and other academic administrators. Other faculty or team members may also participate in committee discussions on a case-by-case basis.

**Faculty Senate**
The Faculty Senate is a deliberative body composed of democratically elected faculty representatives. The Senate provides the voice of the collective faculty in matters of concern to them. Faculty Senators meet with their respective Deans monthly to discuss relevant School and University issues. The Senate Chair and Secretary of the Senate represent faculty at quarterly Board of Trustee meetings. The Faculty Senate meets at least quarterly, apart from its participation in Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) meetings.

The Faculty Senate consists of elected representatives from each of the Schools. Senators are elected annually each summer, and all elected terms are one year in length. The elected members of the Faculty Senate receive a stipend or teaching load reduction for their service.

Each School elects two Core faculty representatives to represent their respective School in the Faculty Senate. The Chairs of the respective School Adjunct Councils (one from each School) are voting members of the Senate (see below for description of School Adjunct Councils). The elected members of the Faculty Senate elect a Chair of the Senate and a Secretary of the Senate annually. Elected faculty Senate members also serve as voting members of the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC).

**School Adjunct Councils**
The purpose of School Adjunct Councils is to ensure open communication, and to provide a channel for input among adjunct faculty, the Faculty Assembly, Faculty Senate and University administration. School Adjunct Council members serve for one year and receive a stipend for their service.

There are four School Adjunct Councils. The disciplinary Schools each elect three adjunct faculty members for their respective School’s Adjunct Council. Then, each School Adjunct Council elects a Chair from its three members. These chairpersons (one from each School) become members of the Faculty Senate.

Council members are elected for year-long terms following a process outlined and monitored by the Office of Academic Affairs in consultation with School Deans.

Additional bodies contribute to the overall University administration and engage broad University constituencies. These bodies include:

**Academic Leadership Team**
The primary purpose of the Academic Leadership Team (ALT) is to advise the Provost regarding proposed academic initiatives and to ensure the initiatives are executed according to the strategic plan. The ALT is chaired by the Provost. ALT membership includes the School Deans and academic leaders from across the institution.

**Student Advisory Boards/Councils**
The purpose of Student Advisory Boards (SABs) is to provide input and solicit feedback regarding the University’s decisions and activities. Student Advisory Boards exist to provide student input into Schools’ planning and decision-making. The Schools of Education, Business, Psychology, and Marriage and Family Sciences have student advisory boards/councils.
Program Advisory Councils (PACs)
The primary purpose of Program Advisory Councils (PACs) is to provide industry-specific expertise to each School to ensure that students are acquiring relevant discipline knowledge and skills. PAC members are asked to participate in various evaluation activities and provide recommendations for academic improvement and suggestions regarding academic program offerings. These activities provide each School with valuable information to help support the continuous improvement of academic programs.

5.B.3. Northcentral University enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Northcentral University’s governance and administrative structures facilitate a process that ensures appropriate accountability and broad involvement and collaboration in the decision-making process. This process promotes an understanding of decisions and how they are implemented across the University. As noted previously, faculty members participate in formal governance committees such as Faculty Senate, Adjunct Councils (ensuring the unique voice of adjuncts is included), the Academic Affairs Committee and its subcommittees for Assessment and Curriculum. Through participation in these governance structures, faculty members provide oversight and leadership in academic matters including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance and assessment of student learning. Additionally, faculty members have routine involvement in setting academic requirements and establishing policy and processes through participation on these committees and their subcommittees.

The Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) is the key governance body for setting academic policy. The AAC membership includes faculty (as indicated above), administration, and staff. The AAC is chaired by the Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs and voting members include: Academic Program Chairs, Senior Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, Vice President of Student and Financial Services, Director of Instructional Design, Director of Library Services, Registrar, Assistant Deans and members of the Faculty Senate (including both adjunct and Core faculty).
5.C. Northcentral University engages in systematic and integrated planning.

Northcentral University’s Mission and goals provide the framework for broad-stakeholder involvement in planning. The University engages in ongoing planning and assessment of progress towards the University strategic plan.

5.C.1. Northcentral University allocates its resources in alignment with its Mission and priorities.

The Northcentral University Mission along with its Vision, values, and goals and strategic priorities serve as guiding framework to ensure financial, human, technological, and physical resources are allocated to support the University Mission. Resource allocation processes require Senior Leadership Team approvals, which ensure Mission and strategic priority alignment. These processes are articulated in Criterion 5.A.5.

Northcentral University’s current governance and administrative structures have recently been engaged to facilitate a process that ensures appropriate accountability and broad involvement in the decision-making process, ensuring alignment of a new strategic plan with resources and Mission. This process promotes an understanding of decisions and how they are implemented across the University. Specifically, to facilitate a culture of evidence and improvement, Northcentral uses a strategic planning process that is articulated in the NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook. The planning process is mapped to the strategic goals and is responsive to the academic and administrative needs of the University. Ultimately, NCU’s current strategic plan emerged from Academic Program Reviews, Departmental Reviews, and data provided by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research – processes involving constituents from across the University.

Past strategic planning and the resulting goals led to improvements in the ability of the University to fulfill its Mission. Examples of improvement under each of the University’s prior strategic goals include:

Quality: Continuous Improvement of academic quality and outcomes
- Enhanced student learning outcome assessment system development and implementation;
- Faculty Resource Center partners with the Schools to coach faculty support through clearer expectations and increased communications;
- Increase in full-time faculty from 72 in 2012 to approximately 125 full-time faculty in 2015;
- Transition of adjunct faculty from contractor to part-time employee status;
- Development of new faculty onboarding training.

Student Success: Achieving the highest standard of student success through innovation, diversity and excellence
- Improving instructional technologies such as creation of the new Course Room and the Commons that enable student participation around the world;
- Investment in faculty resources, including hiring additional faculty, and providing training and support services through the Faculty Resource Center to better support one-to-one teaching model;
Development and implementation of Doctoral degree completion initiative to provide enhanced support to students having difficulty progressing in the dissertation stage;

Development and implementation of Office of Ombuds, which handles student complaints.

Growth: Achieving efficient growth by meeting demand from professionals throughout the world

• Migration to the Course Room, a Learning Management System using a scalable technology platform;
• Investment in research to identify high demand programs in the U.S. and abroad.

Community: Building and maintaining excellent relationships with students, team members, partners, governance bodies, and other stakeholders

• Implementation of a Program Advisory Council in each School, where council members from outside the University represent the professional community connected to one of more academic programs. PAC members are provided an annual stipend, and, in addition to year-round virtual meetings, meet annually face-to-face;
• In 2014 the University initiated rollout of the Virtual Academic Community (also known as the The NCU Commons) which allows students, faculty and staff to engage in academic dialogue within and across University constituencies;
• Establishment of the NCU Faculty Senate;
• In 2014 the University hosted faculty symposia, increasing the community interaction within each School and within the University;
• Restructure of the Academic Affairs Committee to include the Assessment and Curriculum Subcommittees (containing faculty and School staff).

NCU’s new Strategic Planning process involves broad stakeholder input through the Departmental Review and Academic Program Review Processes (as detailed in Criterion 5.C.3. below) and will help ensure the continued alignment of resources and Mission. The connection between the new Strategic Planning process and the budgeting process is outlined in the Strategic Planning Process and Resource Allocation Cycle (as detailed in Criterion 5.A.5. above).

5.C.2. Northcentral University links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

Northcentral University has defined structures and processes in place to ensure its student learning assessment, operations evaluation, planning, and budgeting processes are systematically linked in ways that result in informed and effective decision-making and continuous improvement. As outlined in Criteria 5.A.5., the budgeting process is designed to create linkages between budget expenditures, strategic planning, and the departmental action plans created to achieve University goals.

The defined structures linking assessment, evaluation, and budgeting include unit- and institution-level leadership teams that meet on a quarterly, monthly, or weekly basis: the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research; multiple governance committees; and the Board of Trustees. The functional objectives of each of these structures are tied by design to the accomplishment of the University’s Mission, goals, and strategies. The following examples provide greater insight into how these structures create and maintain linkages between student learning assessment, operations evaluation, planning, and budgeting.

As part of Northcentral’s planning cycle outlined in the Institutional Assessment Handbook, the
University’s institutional effectiveness is assessed annually through the Academic Program Review and Departmental Review processes. These processes include the review of student learning outcome data, faculty performance metrics, measures of student and alumni satisfaction, data on attrition, graduation rate, time to completion, and departmental effectiveness. Deans and their Schools’ faculty meet twice a year with Program Advisory Councils, who inform program relevancy, provide feedback on current program review data, and offer consultation on School strategies based on their members’ professional expertise. Finally, regular updates on attrition, faculty effectiveness, and student learning outcome achievement are available to the Deans and their faculty.

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research works closely with School Directors of Assessment to obtain School-based assessment information and distributes learning assessment data back to them. To improve the quality and quantity of actionable student learning assessment data, the senior leadership team supports the assessment process.

As a result of the assessment system described above, the University developed a writing rubric (SOE, SMFT, SOP, and SBTM) which was integrated into Taskstream for faculty to evaluate student performance across all Schools. Analysis of student artifact evaluation using the writing rubric showed that the University’s students needed additional support in writing research papers. To address this finding, NCU created the Academic Success Center to provide coaching support.

5.C.3. The planning process encompasses Northcentral University as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

The planning process encompasses Northcentral University as a whole. The Departmental Review and Academic Program Review processes ensure the involvement of a wide variety of internal and external constituent groups. Faculty, team members, academic leadership, and student advisory groups provide internal perspectives.

External perspectives are provided by Program Advisory Councils, consultants, and alumni. For example, in 2013, Dr. Len Bickman participated in the planning process. Dr. Bickman has been a consultant to NCU in the area of assessment. In 2014, the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), engaged faculty, team members, and academic leadership in a strengths and weaknesses analysis to inform the strategic planning process.

NCU leaders and their team members participate in conferences and professional organizations so they are aware of higher education issues, opportunities, and trends.

Internal reports and assessments used to gather additional perspectives include graduate surveys, alumni surveys, academic advising assessments, employee engagement surveys, new student assessments, Library and Writing Center surveys, and ad hoc student and faculty focus groups. Institutional researchers have, on multiple occasions, conducted reviews of the higher education landscape. These reviews (2013, 2014) have informed the planning process.

5.C.4. Northcentral University plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in Northcentral University’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

Through the strategic planning process the University evaluates its current capacity,
institutional plans and analyzes possible fluctuations in revenue, enrollment, the economy and other relevant environmental concerns.

The University, through competitive analysis, market review of demand for current and new programs, review of employment trends, and assessment of current financial stability, prepares for fluctuating economic impacts.

5.C.5. Institutional planning at Northcentral University anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

During institutional planning, Northcentral University anticipates emerging factors. As evidenced by presentations and white papers (PhD Degree Trends, Competency Based Education, MOOC, MOOC Landscape) developed for planning sessions during the 2013 Strategic Refresh the following emerging factors were reviewed:

- There is a need for Doctoral education providers beyond traditional institutions to prepare future faculty;
- Availability of massive open online courses (MOOCs) to students from universities all over the world. Enrollment of these courses shows a digital, globally networked society that desires accessible education;
- Expected growth rates of higher education worldwide;
- Use of competency-based education at the graduate level to prepare students to meet the competencies that are required by the specific needs of today’s industry. Competency-based education also supports more personalized instruction and program plan; students with mastery in some competency will be able to quickly move through those components and work more on competencies that they need to master. Although students and employers might find a mastery approach attractive, the systems and processes to develop and manage that approach within current policies are not simple;
- Employer and student demand for PhD programs;
- Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment;
- Labor projections for jobs that will be available to those with advanced degrees show an increase of 20% increase in jobs requiring a Doctorate or professional degree;
- Decreases in state and federal funding for not-for-profit educational institutions and demands for higher education increases;
- Perceptions of online learning by students, employers, and educational institutions.
- Demographics of online learners;
- U.S. Department of Education discussions regarding online and for-profit education.

During the review of these emerging factors, Northcentral University’s senior leaders discussed the University’s need to adjust and focus strategies. For example, leaders reviewed the direction of MOOCs and competency-based education. The outcome of the review was a decision to invest in additional full-time faculty.

During the Schools’ planning, many emerging factors related to trends and future forecasts within their School’s fields were reviewed. In 2013, the School of Education developed several certificate programs and two new specializations (Corporate Wellness, PK-12 Principal Leadership) that are based on modifications in the field of education, including changes in how
educators are paid and evaluated.

Several Northcentral University departments also monitor students’ technology usage to identify arising trends. For example, based upon an increase of visitors to the public website from mobile devices, the University modified the website to be more accessible to mobile devices.
5.D. Northcentral University works systematically to improve its performance.

The NCU Institutional Assessment Handbook details and guides ongoing assessment activities designed to systematically improve University performance. These assessment activities provide data relating to department and program performance, allowing for continual assessment and improvement on a routine basis.


The University, through monthly reviews of its operational performance, quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees, annual program reviews and departmental reviews, measures its operational performance against Mission and strategic plan. NCU’s operational outputs are measured consistently against an annual plan that is developed as part of the budgeting process for the year. Operational performance is discussed bi-weekly in meetings of the President’s Cabinet. Action items are presented at the SLT meeting for discussion, review and approval.

The Office of Data Analytics and Reporting is responsible for providing operational and performance data. This office supports the demands of the University’s reporting and intelligence needs.

Northcentral University also demonstrates evidence of performance in its operations through routine, task-oriented reports. This layer of reporting feeds the activities that create data around key performance indicators for the University’s senior leadership. Reports co-exist throughout Student Services, Student Financial Services, Office of the Registrar, and Enrollment. These reports include:

- Daily updates provided to senior leaders, indicating operational performance in marketing, enrollment, and call quality;
- Daily updates provided to enrollment leaders on prospective student contact rates, enrollment team member effort, and overall enrollment;
- Daily updates provided by the Student Financial Services team to financial aid and enrollment leaders, indicating operational performance in serving students;
- Weekly and monthly updates created in a joint effort between the Finance team and enrollment leadership, to all enrollment leaders, on enrollment performance;
- Biweekly updates provided to senior leadership on enrollment, attrition, graduation, and student population;
- Monthly updates provided to the Board of Trustees by the leadership team, describing operational performance in all areas of the University.

The University has standing meetings to review operational performance and ensure sustainable and positive change for the institution through research, debate, and decision-making.

5.D.2. Northcentral University learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.
Formal processes and structures that support organizational learning at Northcentral University include research conducted by institutional research specialists. Examples are a study on faculty workload; surveys conducted by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research to determine student satisfaction with support services (such as the Noel-Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL); and student attrition data collection and analysis by faculty and team members.

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (OAIR) conducts and reports on a number of surveys to inform the Northcentral University community and its constituents about matters related to institutional effectiveness. In-depth research projects have been conducted by the OAIR to inform decision-making in areas that impact performance. One such research project focused on faculty productivity and identified the types of activities full-time faculty perform, and how much time is spent on these activities. Another research project focused on faculty and team member job satisfaction. As a product of this research the University reviewed benchmark data from the Phoenix Business Journal “Best Places to Work Survey” to determine its competitiveness in the employment market. This review resulted in changes to the 401k retirement plan and medical plan offered to NCU faculty and team members.

The 2012 graduate satisfaction survey provides another example. In response to survey results, the University revised its faculty training and implemented ongoing faculty coaching.

A School of Business and Technology Management Program Advisory Council (PAC) and faculty discussion provided the impetus to revise the MBA program in response to current trends. A revised MBA is now available to students.

The Information Technology department has used the Service Desk Plus system to record reasons for inbound contact, as well as resolutions to student inquiries. Based upon the IT department’s operational experience, the University invested in the expansion of Service Desk Plus availability. Service Desk Plus was provided to Student Services and other teams and is used to record the reasons for inbound student contact, as well as resolutions to student inquiries, while collecting data on the types of inquiries, and time spent on those inquiries. Expansion of access to Service Desk Plus provides the Student Services team with greater visibility into student data, leading to service improvement opportunities.

Student Services also collects, analyzes, and reports on attrition data. As students withdraw from NCU, Student Services team members from each School review the recorded reasons for each withdrawal. Team members follow up on these reports by contacting students who have left the University and collect additional data as to why the students left and if they have plans to return. This information is reviewed by University leaders, including the Vice President of Retention and Student Success, in order to better understand withdrawal reasons and to thereby inform systematic improvement of processes, policies, and curriculum throughout the University. An outcome of these reviews is a retention plan developed by each School. Specific examples of changes made in response to this learning include faculty reformulating and enhancing the initial Foundations courses that introduces the students to the University and their degree programs, re-sequencing courses in degree programs, and improvement in admissions and enrollment training.

The Enrollment Services team also collects data in order to facilitate improvements. Enrollment satisfaction surveys are issued on a continual basis to students who complete the enrollment process. As students complete the surveys, the results are aggregated and issued weekly to enrollment leaders. The leaders review the aggregate data, both on a weekly and year-to-date basis, to identify opportunities and trends that could improve the enrollment process. Each individual comment is also reviewed in order to ensure immediate follow-up occurs for every
student who has requested such follow-up, and to improve processes or team member issues that require fast remediation. Though the data collected is overwhelmingly positive, each comment is seen as an opportunity to improve, and all positive comments are sent to the enrollment team in celebration of their providing an excellent student experience. An example of the weekly data received by enrollment leadership is included in Figure 5-6 below.

Please rate your overall service provided by your Enrollment Advisor.

![Chart](image)

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Figure 5-6. Example of Weekly Data Report.

The faculty symposium brings all full-time faculty based in the United States together for a face-to-face meeting designed to communicate important University initiatives and provide a forum for faculty to have detailed discussions on current topics of operational importance. Faculty have the opportunity to voice their interests, concerns, questions, and opinions on related matters. Part-time faculty members and those unable to attend the event are invited to participate via webcasting. During the symposium, academic leadership, faculty, and team members engage through lecture-discussions, formalized breakout groups, and informal discussions in an effort to learn from operational experiences. A post-symposium survey was sent to faculty to provide greater insights for next steps in continuing these learning processes.

As a result of the 2014 faculty symposia, the University solidified its Institutional Learning Outcomes, improved its institutional assessment plan, strengthened faculty governance, engaged faculty in strategic planning, provided input to desired improvements in the learning platform, and informed improvements to the course development guidelines.