



TOWSON UNIVERSITY
RE-ACCREDITATION SELF-STUDY 2021
FOR THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION





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Glossary Of Acronyms

AAUP: American Association of University Professions

ACT: Academic Committee for Technology

ADS: Accessibility and Disability Services

ALEKS: Mathematics Placement Testing

A-LIST: Albert S. Cooke Library Leadership Institute for students

AMA: American Marketing Association

AMP: Access Maryland Program

APA: American Psychological Association

ART: Appointment, Rank and Tenure

ASL: American Sign Language

BTU: Partnerships for Greater Baltimore

BUSX460: Professional experience course

CARC: Core Approval and Review Committee

CBE: College of Business and Economics

CCLT: Classroom and Computer Lab Technology

CCRC: Core Curriculum Reporting Committee

CFO: Chief Financial Officer

CIO: Chief Information Officer

CIP: Capital Improvement Program

CLR: Comprehensive Learner Record

CLEP: College Level Examination Program

COFAC: College of Fine Arts and Communication

CSD: Center for Student Diversity

DCP: Degree Completion Plan

DFST: Deaf Studies

DIFF: Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Fellows Program

EMF: Department of Electronic Media and Film

FACET: Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson University

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid

FCOSA: Faculty Committee on Study Abroad

FCSM: Fisher College of Science and Mathematics

FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FMST: Family Science

FORL: Foreign Languages Department

GSA: Graduate Student Association

GSC: Graduate Studies Committee

HEOA: Higher Education Opportunity Act

HRL: Housing and Residence Life

IGD: Intergroup Dialogue program

IITC: Information and Instructional Technology Committee

ILO: Institutional Learning Outcomes

ISSO: International Students and Scholars Office

LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

MHEC: Maryland Higher Education Commission

MSCHE: Middle States Commission on Higher Education

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association

NSSE: National Survey of the Student Experience

OFM: Office of Financial Management

OGC: Office of General Counsel

OIIE: Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity

OIR: Office of Institutional Research

OSH: Occupational Safety and Health Program

OSPR: Office of Sponsored Programs and Research

OTS: Office of Technological Services

PBO: Provost's Budget Office

PMP: Performance Management Program

PRSA: Public Relations Society of America

PTRM: Promotion, Tenure, Reappointment and Merit Committee

RPAC: Resource Planning and Advisory Committee

QM Standard: Quality Matters

SAGE: Student Achieve Goals through Education

SC: Space Committee

SFCP: The Institutional USM Funded Construction Program

SGA: Student Government Association

SGAP: Space Guideline Application Process

SIE: Sub-committee on Institutional Effectiveness

SLC: Service Learning Component

SLO: Student Learning Outcomes

SPAN: Spanish

SPAR: Strategic Partnership and Applied Research Division

SPPA: Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

SSAA: Sub-committee on Student Affairs Assessment

SSLA: Sub-committee on Student Learning Assessment

STRATUS: Cloud Assessment and Oracle Cloud Financial System

TALEO: Online Applicant Tracking System

TIGER Way: The Transfer, International, Graduate Enrollment Resource Initiative

TIGER L.E.A.P.: TIGER Learn Experience, Apply, Practice Internship

TOPS: Towson Opportunities

TSC: Transfer Student Center

TSEM: Towson Seminar

TTK: Tenured/tenure track

TU4U: Admitted Student Events

TUNE: Towson University in Northeastern Maryland

TUREP: TU Research Enhancement Program

TUSS: Towson University Staff Senate

UAC: University Assessment Council

UBC: University Budget Committee

UCC: University Curriculum Committee

UMC: University Marketing and Communications

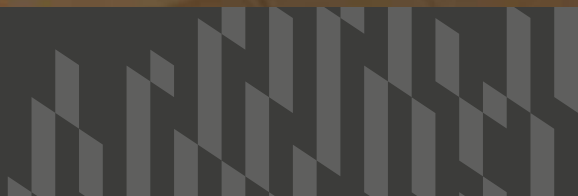
URCI: Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry

USM B.E.S.T. Digital Badging Initiative

VPASA: Vice President of Student Affairs



Executive Summary



Institutional Overview

One of the nation's top 100 public universities, Towson University offers a welcoming environment for living and learning, close to many educational, cultural and community resources in the greater Baltimore region. It offers baccalaureate, master, doctoral degrees, post-baccalaureate certificates, and post-master certificates through six colleges and enrolls almost 22,000 students. Of these students, roughly 19,000 are undergraduates and 3,200 are graduate and professional students. The university's student population represents 47 U.S. states and 77 different countries. The university has placed within the top 100 of nationally ranked public universities in each of the last two years. In 2018, the Carnegie Classification of institutions declared the university a Doctoral/Professional University in recognition of its growing number of doctoral programs and increasing national presence.

Towson University is a national leader in student-centered education, where students will develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become ethical leaders in a global society. TU's faculty model the highest values of the scholar-educator, with a steadfast devotion to intellectual rigor and the pursuit of innovative scholarly and creative activities. We embrace our role and responsibilities as an anchor institution for the greater Baltimore region and the State of Maryland, providing leadership for the public good.

Self-Study Process

The self-study process took place over a period of two and a half years. The university created eight working groups, one for each of the seven Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards and one to verify compliance with regulations. Two individuals led each of the standards-based working groups, at least one of whom was a faculty member. The co-chairs of the working groups comprised the steering committee's core. The vice-provost, director of accreditation and compliance, and the associate dean of the College of Health Professions augmented this core and were the self-study co-chairs. The campus community received regular updates in the shared governance bodies and through a [public website](#). As the reaccreditation effort was underway in earnest, the COVID-19 pandemic put the university into a remote environment in March 2020. The self-study team continued its work on a revised timeline approved by MSCHE.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

The current university's mission statement was revised in 2018, in accordance with a state requirement to assess and reprise the mission every seven years. The mission statement functions as the cornerstone of the recently completed strategic plan, *Leadership for the Public Good: TU 2020-2030*, adopted in spring 2021.

The university's academic excellence, innovative research, and creative activities happen in a community where all students achieve inclusively. Our student body's diversity is a strength that enriches the learning environment and prepares our students to better lead in a global society. TU's ongoing success is dependent on a capacity to shift perspectives and approaches and strategically place diversity, equity and inclusion at the mission's core. Our mission and goals, supported by the new strategic plan, offer a transformative student experience that creates a foundation for social and economic mobility grounded in a profound respect for civic responsibility.

Recommendations

1. Enhance infrastructure for research, scholarship, and creative activity in alignment with TU's new Carnegie Doctoral/Professional University Classification and in concert with the new *TU Strategic Plan for 2020-2030: Leadership for the Public Good*.
2. Use dashboards and infographics to articulate the alignment between the mission, institutional objectives, and the new TU strategic plan to all constituents.
3. Review and revise divisional and college strategic plans to be in alignment with the TU strategic plan to ensure planning and resource allocation reflect institutional goals and inform assessment.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

A commitment to ethics and integrity is the foundation for all university actions. A latticework of policies, procedures, programs, and offices are aligned to support and enhance an atmosphere of ethics and integrity in research, education, and service. With a steadfast commitment to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights, the university continues to serve as an engine for innovation and creative work free from external interference. Towson University embraces a highly diverse community, and creating a climate that fosters respect among all community members is a core value. Our commitment is

evident throughout campus, in our classrooms, and in our policies and procedures designed to support equitable treatment of all TU students, staff, and faculty. Our inaugural diversity strategic plan *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity (2020–25)*, provides a roadmap for the university to continue its progress in making the university a national model for equity and inclusion.

Recommendations

1. Implement the inaugural diversity strategic plan, *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity (2020–25)*, providing annual updates on its progress.
2. Revise the *Responsibilities and Procedures of the Faculty Grievance and Mediation Committee and the Faculty Hearing Committee Policy* to clarify and simplify, to decrease the time to complete the process, and to remove discrepancies between policy documents.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Ultimately, all TU objectives and goals center on a singular mission: to provide an outstanding learning experience for our students. Our faculty are dedicated to teaching, research, and creative activities that inspire students not only to embrace existing knowledge, but also to create new knowledge and new creative works. The university’s location near Baltimore and the nation’s capital offers our students opportunities for experiential education and civic engagement that prepares them to be global leaders.

The undergraduate educational experience at TU is one where students and faculty come to know each other due to the small class sizes. The deep commitment to student success is evident in the absence of an “achievement gap” that exists on most university campuses today. The university also offers a full range of graduate and professional programs, including applied doctoral degrees. Our highly qualified faculty regularly win awards for teaching, service, and scholarship at the state and national levels.

Recommendations

1. Assess and revise the evaluation of teaching, including peer and student evaluations.
2. Establish the Academic One-Stop Shop in Cook Library.

3. Review the structure and relevancy of the Core curriculum and its impact on time to degree to inform modifications.
4. Develop the “degree plus” concept and expand number of credentials and professional certifications in academic departments to enhance students’ experience and readiness for the evolving workplace.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Towson University is committed to offering its students an outstanding experience inside and outside the classroom. Our student support services help students thrive academically and socially, while maintaining their health and wellness. We offer comprehensive academic support services to assist all students, and the professional staff at the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services offer specialized support for eligible students.

In recent years, the university has sought to streamline student support services to provide as seamless an experience for students as possible. Recent initiatives include the development of [Degree Completion Plans](#) for every major to provide students with a transparent pathway to success, individualized to their needs; the establishment of the [Transfer Student Center](#), a collaboration between [University Admissions](#) and the [Academic Advising Center](#), that serves as a “central hub” for transfer students; and the Career Center’s adoption of a revised mission to focus on lifelong engagement with alumni in achieving their evolving goals and associated initiatives to achieve that objective.

Additionally, we offer a vibrant campus life for residential and commuter students, with a variety of cultural events, activities, and student clubs reflecting a wide array of interests. Whether they live in the residence halls or commute to campus, all students have the opportunity to engage in activities that enhance their educational experience.

Recommendations

1. Implement a strategic enrollment master plan.
2. Develop a single web presence that provides comprehensive information and an appointment scheduling feature for student academic and other support services.

**Standard V:
Educational Effectiveness Assessment**

Our commitment to providing an outstanding educational experience requires continual assessment of educational objectives. With assessments at the course, program, and university-wide levels, we continually seek to assure student learning goals are met. Our rigorous curriculum approval process requires attention to assessment from the moment a course or program is first proposed, and continues into regular annual reviews and comprehensive programs reviews every seven years, in addition to any program-level accreditation requirements. All new and revised course and program proposals must clearly articulate learning goals and outcomes, without which the course or program will not receive approval.

The university also has annual assessment days, one for core curriculum courses and one for programs, at which core curriculum areas and programs receive peer review of their assessment practices and use of assessment.

Recommendations

1. Clarify roles, responsibility, and relationships between the various shared governance entities charged with academic assessment.
2. Develop informatics and training that communicates the outcomes of the above recommendation.

**Standard VI:
Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**

Towson University is an efficient steward of resources, with a sustained record of fiscal responsibility that has served the institution, its students, and its employees well during the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Careful and transparent planning processes have positioned the university to weather the challenges of the current situation without disruption to key operations, and to thrive once again when the country experiences a return to normalcy. Indeed, some of the lessons learned during the pandemic will undoubtedly continue to shape campus operations going forward, providing efficiencies and flexibility in key areas.

During this reaccreditation review, the university concluded its previous strategic plan and launched a new one, with ambitious goals to guide the university for the next decade. With a strong fiscal position and a clear guideline for the future, Towson University is prepared to continue to be a leader for the public good.

Recommendations

1. Improve unit-level assessment processes and reporting across campus through a systematic approach, including training and accountability measures.

**Standard VII:
Governance, Leadership, and Administration**

Towson University’s leadership structure, grounded in the principles of shared governance and led by an experienced administration, serves to advance the educational mission with transparency and a commitment to the institution’s values. The USM Board of Regents oversees the university with objectivity and independence, and the Board of Visitors provides important guidance to the president. Shared governance bodies represent the interests of faculty, staff, and students on all matters affecting the campus community. Recent changes to the structure of the shared governance bodies were designed to increase the voice of students and staff, who reported feeling outnumbered in the previous University Senate model.

The development of a new university strategic plan provides an opportunity to better align performance evaluations with strategic goals. Unit-level assessments as well as individual performance plans should reflect how the unit and staff contribute to achievement of strategic goals relevant to their area.

Recommendations

1. Assess the structure, processes, supports, and effectiveness of the new Academic Senate and Towson University Staff Senate (TUSS) and its communication and working relationship with SGA and GSA.
2. Implement the system of campus-wide evaluation of senior leadership.



Introduction



Towson University History

Established in 1866 as the Maryland State Normal School, Towson University began as a modest institution located in downtown Baltimore, designed primarily to educate teachers. It moved to its current campus in 1916. In 1935, the institution began offering four-year degrees and changed its name to the Maryland State Teachers College. Then in 1963, the college underwent another name change to reflect the broadening scope of its academic offerings, becoming Towson State College. In recognition of its growing graduate programs, the institution took its penultimate name, as it became Towson State University in 1976. The final name change occurred in 1997, when the institution became Towson University.

Institutional Overview

A member of the twelve institution University System of Maryland (USM), Towson University offers nationally recognized undergraduate and graduate programs in business, education, the fine arts, liberal arts, mathematics and sciences, and health professions. It is Maryland’s largest public comprehensive university and a major contributor to Maryland’s workforce. Its students work with faculty to explore significant issues and generate knowledge to mitigate societal problems. President Kim Schatzel leads Towson University, and she and her designees are responsible for daily university governance.

TU has seven administrative divisions each with a vice president reporting to the president. Those divisions

are the Executive Division, which includes the Office of the President, Athletics, Office of Human Resources, Inclusion and Institutional Equity, and Legal Affairs and General Counsel; Academic Affairs; Administration & Finance; Strategic Partnerships & Applied Research; Student Affairs; University Advancement; and University Marketing & Communications. The Vice President for Inclusion and Institutional Equity, the Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel, and the Director of Athletics all report directly to the president.

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Melanie Perreault leads the Academic Affairs Division. The division includes the College of Business and Economics (six departments); the College of Education (six departments); College of Fine Arts & Communication (seven departments); College of Health Professions (five departments); College of Liberal Arts (ten departments), and the Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (five departments). The Honors College, Graduate Studies, and Albert S. Cook Library also report to the Provost and Executive Vice-President.

The university’s outstanding faculty are essential to its success and that of its students. As detailed in table 1, faculty total 1,696, of whom 620 are tenured or tenure track, complemented by 318 other full-time faculty, they support the success of almost 22,000 students through 138 academic programs. The university has a highly experienced [senior administration](#), led by President Kim Schatzel (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Senior Administration

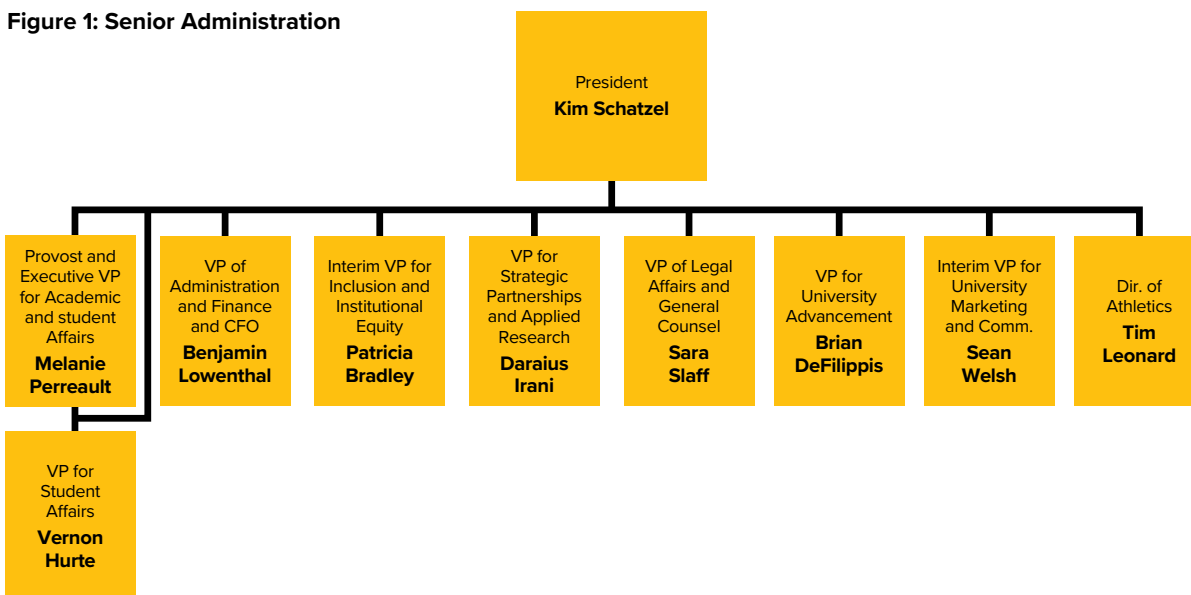




Table 1: Student and Faculty Headcounts, Credit Hours, and Programs

Academic College	Tenured/Track Faculty Headcount	Other Full-Time Faculty Headcount	Adjunct Faculty Headcount	Undergraduate Majors Headcount	Graduate Students Headcount	Undergraduate Credit Hours	Graduate Credit Hours	Bachelor's Programs	Master's Programs	Doctoral Programs
College of Business & Economics	71	31	44	3,012	93	34,931	834	4	4	0
College of Education	57	69	65	1,149	1,379	19,012	6,069	6	9	1
College of Fine Arts & Communication	103	31	191	2,533	190	32,433	1,054	11	6	0
College of Health Professions	70	61	141	3,891	526	30,120	5,093	11	9	4
College of Liberal Arts	184	58	144	3,859	350	75,370	2,738	20	12	0
Jess & Mildred Fisher College of Science & Mathematics	135	68	171	3,804	612	62,616	3,903	13	9	1
Other Units	0	0	2	482	37	1,003	0	0	0	0
University Total	620	318	758	18,730	3,187	255,485	19,691	65	49	6

Table 2: Degrees and Certificates

TYPE	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bachelors	4,428	4,628	4,609	4,619	4,701
Masters	974	920	906	887	829
Doctorate	30	36	28	23	28
DEGREE TOTAL	5,432	5,584	5,543	5,529	5,558
Certificates	207	245	189	183	219
TOTAL	5,639	5,829	5,732	5,712	5,777

University Environs

The main campus is located eight miles north of downtown Baltimore, about an hour north of Washington, D.C., two hours south of Philadelphia and four hours south of New York City. The university's beautifully landscaped, 329-acre campus is a blend of traditional and modern architecture, open space, woods and streams. Within walking distance is the college town of Towson, with its tree-lined residential streets, restaurants, bookstores, a branch of the county library, movies, and shopping. As described in more detail below, the campus infrastructure has experienced significant capital improvements in recent years, including major building renovations, acquisition of new facilities, and the construction of the largest academic building on campus, the new Science Complex.

In addition to the main campus, Towson University offers academic programs at its own facility called [Towson University in Northeastern Maryland \(TUNE\)](#) in Bel Air, MD, and at the USM Regional Higher Education Centers, the [Universities at Shady Grove, Hagerstown](#), and [Southern Maryland](#).

Recent Developments and Initiatives

The university, in accordance with a range of institutional objectives and in pursuit of its mission, has embarked on a number of recent initiatives, including the construction of new campus facilities. The major facilities projects and campus-wide initiatives include:

New Science Complex

TU's [new home of scientific research and discovery](#) will welcome its first students in fall 2021, making classes more accessible and putting STEM on display along the York Road corridor. The building will also help connect campus, creating a verdant pathway between the 7800 York Road building and Stephens Hall. In addition to fifty teaching laboratories and fifty classrooms, the new complex includes thirty dedicated research laboratories and an outdoor classroom that leads to the Glen Arboretum.

The StarTUp at the Armory

TU is [revitalizing the historic Armory building](#) in uptown Towson. When it opens in fall 2021, the StarTUp at The Armory, a mixed-use space, will be a vibrant center for business engagement and outreach. Combined with TU's newly purchased office space at 401 Washington Street, the university's presence in uptown Towson will grow in 2021.

A Brand New U

The first phase of a remodeled [University Union](#) is coming in fall 2021. The Brand New U is being transformed into a more spacious and bright building, with additional room for student groups and a new home for the university's world-class, lifelong career center. The transformed union will provide much needed meeting and social space for students, including meeting rooms, a theater, and a ballroom in addition to new dining facilities.

Recent Initiatives

BTU-Partnerships for Greater Baltimore

President Kim Schatzel created the [BTU \(Baltimore-Towson University\)](#) presidential priority in 2017 to align, scale, institutionalize, and sustain community engagement and partnership work at Towson University. Over the last four years, BTU supported dozens of faculty, staff, and student community engagement projects with direct funding and a variety of other support mechanisms. Thus far the community engagement and partnership priority for the campus supports 293 active engagements between TU and community collaborators, 93% of whom reported that this work created a “positive impact” in their communities. Towson University was the first campus in the USM to earn the Carnegie Community Engagement classification. Community engagement work not only positively affects the greater Baltimore communities but also enriches the curriculum and service work of TU faculty, staff, and students.

TIGER Way

The university developed the [Transfer, International, Graduate Enrollment Resource Initiative](#) (TIGER Way) to focus enrollment attention on three areas: develop and implement additional programs, services, educational pathways, and support services for transfer students, increasing retention and graduation rates and shortening the average time to degree; increase the number of diverse and qualified international graduate and undergraduate students studying on campus, to integrate them into the TU community, and offer support through graduation; and increase the enrollment and support the retention of talented graduate students to meet the growing workforce needs for people with advance degrees who are prepared to be ethically and globally minded professionals and leaders in their fields.

A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity

In 2020, the university issued its inaugural diversity strategic plan recognizing that the university’s success is dependent upon on its capacity to shift perspectives and approaches and strategically place diversity, equity, and inclusion at the mission’s core. This plan is designed to meet TU’s aspiration to become a more inclusive and equitable institution of distinction.

TU 2020-2030 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good

Launched in early 2021, *Leadership for the Public Good* reflects the institution’s mission and provides a chart for the campus’s efforts and initiatives centered on serving as an anchor institution for greater Baltimore and Maryland, committed to making a difference and transforming lives throughout the region.

The Self-Study Process

The university adopted a standards based approach to the self-study and focused on the following institutional priorities: academic excellence; student success; institutional equity and diversity. These priorities reflect the TU Strategic Plan (*TU2020: A Focused Vision*) and President Kim Schatzel’s Eight Presidential Priorities, developed after an extensive listening tour, and are those that fundamentally inform *TU 2020-2030 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good*.

The self-study process took place over a period of two and half years. The university created eight working groups, one for each of the seven Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards and one to verify compliance with regulations. Two individuals led each of the standards based working groups, at least one of whom was a faculty member. The co-chairs of the working groups comprise the steering committee’s core. The vice-provost, director of accreditation and compliance, and the associate dean of the College of Health Professions augmented this core and were self-study co-chairs. The steering committee identified chairs for each working group, and then built the group collaboratively with each chair. Typically, the working groups ended up with seven to nine members. In total, there were more than sixty people involved in creating the self-study, with representation from all six colleges and all major administrative units, and the student body. The campus community received regular updates in the shared governance bodies and through a public website. Although the work of the steering committee was somewhat challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent move to a remote environment, the committee quickly adjusted and continued its efforts on a revised timeline approved by MSCHE (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Self-study Timeline





**Standard I:
Missions and Goals**



The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Requirements of Affiliation (RoA) addressed in Standard I:

- **Requirement 7:** The institution has a statement of mission and related goals approved by its governing board that defines its purpose within the context of higher education.
- **Requirement 10:** Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.

Towson University fully adheres to Standard I and all associated criterion as well as Requirements of Affiliation 7 and 10. The university's Mission Statement clearly articulates its purpose as an institution of higher education. Specifically, it states:

Towson University fosters intellectual inquiry and critical thinking preparing graduates who will serve as effective, ethical leaders and engaged citizens. Through a foundation in the liberal arts, an emphasis on rigorous academic standards, and the creation of small learning environments, we are committed to providing a collaborative, interdisciplinary and inter-professional atmosphere, excellence in teaching, leadership development, civic engagement, and applied and sponsored research opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Our graduates leave Towson University with the vision, creativity and adaptability to craft solutions that enrich the culture, society, economy, and environment of Maryland, the region, and beyond (S1.001).

This statement clearly identifies the particular mission of Towson University within the larger context of undergraduate and graduate education, emphasizing the university's focus on combining outstanding teaching in close-knit environments, alongside a commitment to research and civic engagement.

The Mission Statement section on institutional capabilities reflects the university's change in Carnegie Classification since the last reaccreditation. The increase in number of doctoral programs and the university's growing national reputation led to reclassification in 2019:

By Carnegie Classification, Towson University's category is Doctoral/Professional Universities. It has achieved national prominence as a premier university by offering a wide range of excellent graduate and undergraduate degree programs. Towson University has increased its regional and national reputation through its focus on student learning, innovative programs and pedagogies, faculty creativity and scholarship, applied and sponsored research, community service, and outreach to business, education, non-profit, and health care organizations.

Additionally, and in congruence with the mission, Towson University has been classified as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution since 2008, with its most recent renewal in 2015. In 2018, the Campus Compact recognized the university for its dedication to civic engagement with numerous [Campus Compact Awards](#) (S1.002). Our students, faculty, and staff are engaged members of the community, lending their knowledge, energy, and talents to have a positive impact on the greater Baltimore region and the State of Maryland.

Mission and Objectives (Criteria 1, 2, 3, RoA 7, 10)

The [Mission and Institutional Objectives](#) (S1.001) reflect a commitment to students, faculty, and community, and emphasize rigorous undergraduate and graduate education, expanded interdisciplinary and co-curricular experiences, innovative community outreach to meet societal needs, the Cook Library as a center for intellectual inquiry, and quality faculty and staff professional development. These commitments help ensure that the university achieves its declared student learning outcomes: information literacy and technological competency, effective communication, critical analysis and reasoning, specialized knowledge in defined fields, ability to work in multifaceted work environments, and local and global citizenship and leadership.

Collaborative Development

Towson University (TU) has a clearly defined mission statement required by [§11.302 Annotated Code of Maryland](#) (S1.003). As noted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), "Mission statements guide decisions concerning new academic program development and budgets. Mission statements build

on each institution's unique strengths and help avoid unnecessary program duplication." The university developed institutional objectives and outcomes in alignment with the revised [2020 Focused Vision, the University System of Maryland Strategic Plan](#) (S1.004), and the [2017-2021 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education: Student Success with Less Debt](#) (S1.005).

The Division of Academic Affairs and the Office of the President coordinated the recent (2018) review and revision of the [Mission and Institutional Objectives](#) (S1.001). The university tasked specific divisions with revising relevant elements of the mission, ultimately involving students, staff, and faculty from across campus in developing the new statement. The President's Council, Provost and Dean's Council, co-chairs of the Council of Chairs, and the University Senate reviewed and responded to draft revisions. The university's new strategic plan *Leadership for the Public Good: TU 2020-2030*, adopted in January 2021, builds upon this mission, as discussed in Standard VII.

Governing Board

Upon institutional review and approval, the university remitted the new mission statement and concomitant objectives and outcomes to the University System of Maryland (USM) for review, using USM's response to refine the final version in advance of submission to the USM Board of Regents, which includes two student members, and to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). The Board of Regents oversee the system's academic, administrative, and financial operations; formulate policy; and appoint the USM chancellor and the presidents of the system's twelve institutions.

External and Internal Constituencies and Institutional Planning

The [TU2020 Strategic Plan](#) (S1.006) and the [Presidential Priorities](#) (S1.007) reflect the operational commitment to the mission and institutional objectives, while addressing both internal and external constituencies. The focus on academic excellence, student success, community engagement, diversity and equity, applied research, workforce development, entrepreneurship, experiential learning opportunities, and leadership development evidence this commitment. Table I.1 provides a sampling of institutional objectives and associated initiatives:

Curricular Planning

In addition to guiding planning and resource allocation, the mission and institutional objectives also drive program and curricular development. [New program proposals](#) (S1.008) must demonstrate an alignment to the institutional mission. The faculty led [University Curriculum Committee](#) (S1.009), a committee of the [Academic Senate](#) (S1.010), and the Academic Senate review academic program proposals for consistency with mission. Chapters three and six detail curricular and other initiatives that support the mission in more detail.

Support of Research, Scholarly Inquiry, and Creative Activity

The mission statement identifies applied undergraduate and graduate research as central to the university's identity; the [Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry](#) (S1.011) offers support for undergraduates, and the TIGER Way initiative dedicated increased funds to support graduate students. The institutional objectives emphasize the importance of supporting outstanding faculty in their research, scholarly inquiry, and creative activity to promote academic excellence and student success. Chapter 3 provides details about the support for faculty research and creative inquiry.

Mission and Goals Awareness

Towson University has widely publicized its mission and goals through multiple formats. The mission statement and strategic plan appear prominently on the university's website. The [Presidential Priorities](#) (S1.007) are also found on the university website and reflect the Mission Statement and Institutional Objectives; [news stories](#) (S1.012) that are aligned to one or more of the priorities are shared with the campus community through various media. The president delivers an annual address to the university community and [Board of Visitors](#) (S1.013), sharing updates on the Priorities' progress. A [recording of the president's address](#) (S1.014) is subsequently available online.

Periodic Evaluation

Annually, the university engages in assessment of divisions' objectives aligned to the Mission Statement and institutional goals. The [University Assessment Council](#) (UAC) (S1.015), via the Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE), Subcommittee on Student Affairs Assessment (SSAA), and Subcommittee on Student Learning Assessment (SSLA), reviews annual reports via divisional assessment days where academic,

Table I.1 Institutional Objectives and Associated Initiatives

Institutional objective	Examples of corresponding initiatives
Academic excellence and student success	Establishment of Faculty Academic Center of Excellence Establishment of Academic Advising Center Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE) Removal of the “Achievement Gap”
A model in higher education through innovation in teacher and leader preparation, STEM workforce development and a national and international reputation for Arts and Arts Education	Teacher Preparation Innovation Summit M.Ed. in Transformational Educational Leadership launch in 2019. Towson Learning Network facilitates and administers the availability and recruitment of teachers to educational leadership programs both online and throughout the state. Oscar winning alumnus. Music major participates in “American Idol”. Towson University designated a National Security Agency Center of Academic Excellence.
Innovation, entrepreneurship, and applied research	Entrepreneurship Minor Upper Division Certificate in Entrepreneurship <u>Division of Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research</u> provides the community with a suite of leadership development offerings.
Internships and experiential learning opportunities	All Business Administration majors engage in a capstone internship in their senior year via BUSX460. <u>Cross-Campus Internship Coordinating Committee</u> 240 required and elective internship or applied learning experiences courses are offered each year Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program
A model for leadership development	Tiger Lead Student Leadership Program, Tier One and Tier Two Black Student Leadership Conference Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEaD) Tiger Program for Student-Athletes Student Organization Leadership Summit Clifton Strengths Assessment Women’s Leadership Collective President’s Inclusive Leadership Institute Professional Leadership Program for Women Women, Leadership and Social Change concentration within the M.S. in Women’s and Gender Studies
A model for campus diversity	<u>Center for Student Diversity</u> Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Fellows Program Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity established in 2016. Courageous Conversations initiative Affinity Reading Groups Dialogue@TU TU Athletes for Inclusion, Diversity, & Equity (TU AIDE)
A model of outstanding stewardship – people and natural resources	<u>Faculty/staff pay study</u> <u>Green building policy</u> <u>Energy dashboard</u> Signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment <u>Single stream recycling</u> <u>EduCycle computer reconditioning</u>
Excellence in Athletics	2015 highest graduation rate for black student-athletes among all Public Division I institutions 2020 90% student-athlete graduation rate highest in USM Division I institutions

administrative, and student service divisions share and discuss approaches to unit assessment and unit outcomes achievement. Subsequent chapters discuss these assessments in detail.

The SIE serves as the primary advisory body to the strategic planning process, helping to draft strategic plan goals and objectives. The SIE includes representation from each university division and major administrative unit, representatives from the Student Government Association, the Towson University Staff Senate, Academic Senate, the Middle States Accreditation Liaison Officer, the Director of Accreditation and Compliance, and the Director of Academic Assessment. An outline and [overview of the strategic planning process](#) (S1.016) is available online and accessible to the entire community. As noted above, periodic assessment of the university's mission and goals has resulted in significant campus-wide initiatives to address specific challenges and opportunities.

While there has been strong collaboration across multiple units in both creating and reviewing the strategic plan, to this point there has not been a formalized and consistent process for individual units to write plans in support of the university's goals and objectives. The result was that while some units had detailed strategic plans, others did not. The most recent iteration of the strategic planning process rectifies this situation, and provides a standardized template and instructions for unit-level planning with annual review. To achieve complete transparency, units will submit unit-level plans to the SIE, updated annually.

Institutional Goals (Criteria 2 and 3; RoA 10)

Relevance and Importance

The [Mission and Institutional Objectives](#) (S1.001) represent a commitment to five institutional objectives that are consistent with our mission, are achievable, and are appropriate to the goals of higher education: rigorous undergraduate and graduate education; expanded interdisciplinary and co-curricular experiences; innovative community engagement to meet societal needs; the university library as a center for intellectual inquiry; and quality faculty and staff professional development. These objectives support the university's six institutional student learning outcomes: information literacy and technological competency; effective communication; critical analysis and reasoning; specialized knowledge in defined fields; ability to work in multifac-

eted work environments; and local and global citizenship and leadership.

[TU 2020's](#) (S1.004) eight institutional priorities represent the specific commitments to fulfilling the mission and objectives. Those priorities are: (1) academic excellence and student success; (2) a model in higher education through innovation in teacher and leader preparation, STEM workforce development, and a national and international reputation for arts and arts education; (3) innovation, entrepreneurship, and applied research; (4) internships and experiential learning opportunities; (5) a model for leadership development; (6) a model for campus diversity; (7) a model of outstanding stewardship – people and natural resources; and, (8) excellence in athletics.

Three of the five institutional objectives directly address student learning: rigorous undergraduate and graduate education (see chapter 3); expanded interdisciplinary and co-curricular experiences (see chapter 4); and the university library as a center for intellectual inquiry. The first institutional priority, *Academic Excellence and Student Success* reflects these objectives.

The new Science Complex opens in fall 2021 to support the university's priority of Academic Excellence and Student Success and the concomitant institutional priority of STEM Workforce Development. The complex will provide advanced instructional and research infrastructure and will support the university's growing enrollment in STEM fields that has increased 130% in the last twenty years to approximately 5,000 enrollments.

The university's commitment to growing the STEM workforce includes a concentrated focus on improving the diversity of STEM graduates. To do so, TU has established several programs to enhance equity and diversity in STEM, including the [Bridges Programs](#) (S1.017), funded by the National Institutes of Health, which promotes underrepresented students' participation in biomedical research. In fall 2013, the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (FCSM) established a STEM Residential Learning Community (S1.018) to provide a residential environment that fosters both academic and social success for a diverse group of FCSM majors interested in science and mathematics (Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

In 2017, a \$1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute allowed FCSM to establish the [TU Research Enhancement Program \(TU REP\)](#) (S1.019) to develop a research-focused curriculum for STEM

Table I.2: STEM Residential Learning Communities

STEM RLC Retention and Graduation Rate Comparison	One-Year Retention Rate	Four-Year Graduation Rate	Five-Year Graduation Rate	Six-Year Graduation Rate
STEM Resident Learning Communities	90%	49%	73%	78%
Comparison Cohort	85%	41%	66%	72%

Table I.3: STEM Residential Communities Demographics

STEM RLC Students Served (Fall 13-Fall 20)	N	%
Female	261	52%
Male	237	48%
Black	226	45%
American Indian	2	0%
Asian	37	7%
Hispanic	33	7%
White	159	32%
Unknown	10	2%
Multi-Race	28	6%
Foreign	3	1%
Total STEM RLC Students Served	498	100%

majors and introduces student to scientific disciplines early in their academic career through authentic research projects.

Two units within the Office of the Provost directly support Academic Excellence and Student Success and institutional objectives. The Undergraduate Research & Creative Inquiry (URCI) unit, led by a faculty committee, oversees university-level programs that provide opportunities for students to engage in and showcase research with a TU faculty mentor. These close collaborations between faculty and students provide a forum for faculty to teach and mentor undergraduates on an individual basis outside the classroom. During the 2019-2020 academic year, fifty-five UCRI students were accepted to give individual presentations at national conferences. In April 2020, 100 students participated in the Student Research Forum and fifty students participated in research during the summer 2020, funded at least in part by TU. Fourteen students received a Research Impact Award, and twenty-four students worked as research assistants on BTU-Partnerships for Greater Baltimore related projects over the summer.

In January 2020, to increase the recognition of stellar TU students and facilitate their continued achievements, the provost created the [Office of Competitive Fellowships and Awards](#) (S1.020). The director is responsible for coordinating efforts to support and promote students obtaining nationally competitive scholarships and awards such as the Fulbright, Rhodes, Truman, Gilman, and Goldwater fellowships. A review of past procedures and practices by the director identified areas for improvement. Examples of modifications that have occurred to date include:

- Providing continual support for students during the application process (e.g., pairing subject and/or regional faculty and staff advisors to serve as mentors to students throughout the application process for Fulbright awards);
- Tapping external experts to serve as reviewers for applications (e.g., facilitating group and one-on-one consultations for TU Truman nominees with Truman alumni and veteran readers to assist students in preparation of application materials);
- Disseminating broadly information about opportunities (e.g., creating a dedicated website for Competitive Fellowships and Awards, increasing the number of informational sessions, and coordinating outreach within targeted units such as the Honors College, undergraduate research, and the student government association).

Also supporting Academic Excellence and Student Success is the Cook Library's enactment of its [Mission & Vision](#) (S1.021) that asserts it "will enhance the academic and scholarly endeavors of students." Its 2019-2021 [Priorities & Goals](#) (S1.022) states that it will "expand support for student-conducted research." An example of this is its [A-LIST](#) (S1.023) program offering participants experiential learning opportunities in leadership, research, writing, teaching, and outreach. A close relationship exists between the library and the academic colleges through librarian liaisons who are assigned by their content expertise to the colleges to facilitate support of student and faculty research.

Periodic Assessment of Mission and Objectives (Criterion 4, RoA 10)

The university engages in periodic review of its Mission and Institutional Objectives every seven years, in compliance with USM policies, or sooner in accordance with the strategic planning process. The latest system-required mission statement review occurred in 2018. The Vice Provost collated suggested edits for review by the Provost's and Deans' Council on March 1, 2018, ahead of the President's Council meeting on April 13, 2018. The University Senate reviewed the mission statement on May 7, 2018. In July, the Provost's and Deans' Council, President's Council, and University Senate Chair considered additional edits informed by USM response to the early draft. The President's Council approved the revisions on August 1, 2018. In October 2018, USM forwarded the revised statement to MHEC for its review and approval.

In fall 2019, the university began to develop its [2020-2030 mission and strategic plan](#) (S1.024) that began with a Leadership Retreat in September, which elicited eight "Emerging Themes." The colleges used these "Emerging Themes" to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges analysis in November 2019. Each college conducted its analysis with various groups (chairs, college council, faculty/staff retreats). The colleges forwarded these analyses to the Office of the Provost for synthesis, concluding phase one. Chapter VI provides a detailed discussion of the process and resulting strategic plan.

Assessment Exemplar – TIGER Way

Preceding the current strategic plan, *TU 2020-30 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good*, TIGER Way represents the institution's most recent assessment of its mission and objectives. After her appointment in January 2016, President Kim Schatzel initiated a review of TU's strategic plan and goals to further the alignment of the mission and priorities to planning and resource allocation outcomes and objectives. One significant outcome of this review was the development of a focused strategy to increase rapidly the university's

commitment to student excellence. The president convened three task forces to assess the operations in critical educational support areas and to make suggestions for improvement and resource allocation. One task force focused its attention on transfer, international, and graduate student experiences; a second task force was charged with examining career readiness and experiential learning; the third task force was asked to provide recommendations on the development of a faculty development center to enhance support of faculty.

The president assigned the [TIGER Way Task Force](#) (S1.025) to identify supports for transfer, international, and graduate students. Accordingly, it divided into three subcommittees, each of which produced a report that identified challenges and opportunities and provided concomitant recommendations. This initiative, led by the Office of the Provost and the Division of Student Affairs, included faculty representation from each college, each Dean's Office, the Academic Advising Center, the Office of University Enrollment and Marketing, University Admissions, and the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Registrar.

In May 2017, the President's Cabinet endorsed its findings and based on the task force's [findings and recommendations](#) (S1.026), the university developed the Transfer Student Center, improved admission and support processes for international students, and increased graduate assistantship stipends.

Another task force, the [TU Career-Readiness Task Force](#) (S1.027), focused on establishing a world-class lifelong Career Center to support students, alumni, and the greater community, consistent with the university goals in experiential learning and internships. Task force [recommendations](#) (S1.028) included the development and implementation of the [Career Roadmaps](#) (S1.029) resource, expansion of the [Tiger L.E.A.P.](#) (S1.030), job shadowing program, and participation in the [USM B.E.S.T Digital Badging Initiative](#) (S1.031), focused on developing career readiness skills. The Career Readiness Taskforce worked throughout the 2016-17 academic year and included focus groups

with constituents, an assessment survey, and concluded with a presentation to the president. The taskforce included representation from each academic college, each administrative division, the Alumni Association Board, and employers including Stanley Black and Decker and T. Rowe Price. It also included governance representation from the University Senate, the Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Association.

The third task force resulted in the development of the [Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson \(FACET\)](#) (S1.032).¹ Launched in 2019, FACET specifically focuses on supporting faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity, teaching, mentoring, and advising. The Faculty Development Center Advisory Board, comprised of faculty from various ranks, provides vision and guidance to the center.

Conclusion

Towson University meets Standard I and Requirements of Affiliation # 7 and #10, demonstrated by its regular, coherent, rigorous, and effective refinement and reinforcement of mission and institutional goals and strategic planning. The university also demonstrates a comprehensive and earnest approach to developing initiatives, services, programs, and governance structures to facilitate its mission and objectives. The institution engages in periodic evaluation and assessment and focuses upon academic excellence, student success, and institutional inclusion, equity and diversity.

Recommendations

1. Enhance infrastructure for research, scholarship, and creative activity in alignment with TU's new Carnegie Doctoral/Professional University Classification and in concert with the new [TU Strategic Plan for 2020-2030: Leadership for the Public Good](#).
2. Use dashboards and infographics to articulate the alignment between the mission, institutional objectives, and the new TU strategic plan to all constituents.
3. Review and revise divisional and college strategic plans to be in alignment with the new TU strategic plan to ensure planning and resource allocation that reflect institutional goals and inform assessment.

Sources

- (S1.001) Mission and Institutional Objectives
- (S1.002) Campus Compact Awards
- (S1.003) §11.302 Annotated Code of Maryland
- (S1.004) *2020 Focused Vision, the University System of Maryland Strategic Plan*
- (S1.005) *2017-2021 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education: Student Success with Less Debt*
- (S1.006) *TU2020: A Focused Vision for Towson University*
- (S1.007) Presidential Priorities
- (S1.008) Academic Program Development - new programs and changes to existing programs
- (S1.009) University Curriculum Committee
- (S1.010) Academic Senate
- (S1.011) Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry
- (S1.012) News stories
- (S1.013) Board of Visitors
- (S1.014) President's address
- (S1.015) University Assessment Council
- (S1.016) Strategic planning process
- (S1.017) Bridges Program
- (S1.018) STEM Residential Learning Community
- (S1.019) TU Research Enhancement Program
- (S1.020) Office of Competitive Fellowships and Awards
- (S1.021) Cook Library Mission and Vision
- (S1.022) Cook Library Priorities and Goals
- (S1.023) A-LIST
- (S1.024) *TU 2020-30: Leadership for the Public Good*
- (S1.025) TIGER Way Task Force
- (S1.026) TIGER Way Final Report
- (S1.027) Lifelong Career Center
- (S1.028) Lifelong TU Career Readiness Strategic Plan
- (S1.029) Career Roadmaps
- (S1.030) Tiger L.E.A.P.
- (S1.031) USM – B.E.S.T. Digital Badge Initiative
- (S1.032) Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson

¹ See also 'Towson University Faculty Development Center Task Force Report', retrieved on March 8, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/provost/initiatives/faculty-center/documents/about/fdc-task-force-report.pdf>



Standard II: Ethics and Integrity



Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

Requirements of Affiliation addressed in Standard II

- **Requirement 5:** The institution complies with all applicable government (usually federal and state) policies, regulations, and requirements.
- **Requirement 6:** The institution complies with applicable Commission, interregional, and inter-institutional policies.
- **Requirement 13:** A majority of the institution's governing body's members have no employment, family ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The governing body adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. The institution's district/system or other chief executive office shall not serve as the chair of the governing body.

Towson University fully adheres to Standard II and all associated criterion and Requirements of Affiliation 5, 6, and 13. Its strategic objectives and institutional identity reflect a fundamental commitment to acting ethically and with integrity, and in concert with university priorities: academic excellence, student success, and diversity and equity. TU maintains a high standard of transparency in all internal and external communications, fostering an atmosphere of trust and respect throughout the community.

Academic Freedom, Intellectual Freedom, Freedom of Expression, and Respect for Intellectual Property Rights (Criterion 1)

Academic, Intellectual Freedom, and Freedom of Expression

Towson University fully embraces the principle of academic freedom that is central to the identity of public higher education. The University System of Maryland bylaws require that "institutional policies shall be consistent with the preservation of academic freedom." (S2.001) The [faculty handbook](#) (S2.002) includes a comprehensive statement of rights and responsibilities in Chapter 10 that declares "among the basic rights are freedom of speech; freedom of press; freedom of peaceful assembly and association; freedom of political

beliefs; and freedom from personal force and violence, threats of violence, and personal abuse."

It also asserts that faculty hold the "freedom to teach, learn, and to conduct research and publish findings in the spirit of free inquiry" and that "institutional censorship and individual or group censorship of the expression of opinions of others are inconsistent with this freedom." The Faculty Handbook also provides a direct link to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) statement on academic freedom. Section III of Chapter 10 asserts TU's commitment to the AAUP's "Statement of Professional Ethics" that articulates professors' responsibility to ensure the academic freedom of students. (S2.003)

The [university policy on time, place, and manner](#) (S2.004) also communicates and supports the right of students, faculty, and staff to engage in protected speech and assembly including demonstrations, marches, picketing, leafleting, and protesting ('Expressive Activity') in public spaces.

Intellectual Property Rights

The [university's policy](#) (S2.005) on intellectual property sets forth the terms, conditions, and procedures whereby the university, faculty, staff, and students establish and maintain their interests in intellectual property created by or used at Towson University. The policy reflects intellectual property laws governing patents, copyrights, trademarks, and other forms of intellectual property. The policy is consistent with the USM policy; it addresses the purpose, scope of application, protecting university interests, acquisition, administration of intellectual property not university owned, implementation authority, ownership by the creator, right to use, personnel and students' responsibilities, university administration responsibility for intellectual property that is university owned, and sponsored research.

As this area is rapidly evolving, the university is currently reviewing the intellectual property policy to ensure it remains in compliance with current laws and standard practice. In fall 2019, the university convened an Intellectual Property Policy Review Committee comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff to revise the current intellectual property policy and related procedures to bring into conformance with the updated USM

policies. The committee members solicited preliminary feedback from colleagues within their respective colleges or campus units to inform the draft updates. This committee produced policy update recommendations that the group’s representative from the Office of the General Counsel incorporated into a draft document and is currently under review following the university’s “policy process” (S2.006) , which will culminate with review and approval by the USM chancellor.

Campus Climate and Diversity (Criterion 2)

Towson University is committed to maintaining an open and respectful climate, reflected in the institutional strategic plan, Presidential Priorities, and Diversity Strategic Plan; reflecting upon our diversity and inclusion initiatives was one of the key themes of this self-study. A climate of inclusion and respect accords with the university’s 2020-30 strategic plan, *Leadership for the Public Good*, (S2.007) which identifies inclusion as one of its six overarching goals. In this document, the university asserts, “We will build an even more inclusive, equitable, and collaborative community where people from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.” With a highly diverse student body and an increasingly diverse faculty and staff, TU is committed to ensuring that principles of inclusion and equity permeate all aspects of campus life.

In the last decade, TU’s student body has become increasingly diverse, reflective of the larger changes in the State of Maryland and in the country. In fall 2020, the university welcomed its most diverse and academically prepared undergraduate class in the institution’s history, despite the enrollment challenges brought on by the global pandemic (Tables II.1, II.2, and Figure II.1).

Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity (OIIE)

Under President Kim Schatzel’s leadership, the university has emphasized the importance of inclusion and institutional equity; for example, the president created an inaugural Vice President of Inclusion and Institutional Equity position as part of her senior leadership team in her first year. The university became the first USM institution to hire a Chief Diversity Officer at the Vice-President level and include in the President’s Cabinet. In the same year, the president established the **Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity (OIIE)** (S2.008) led by the Vice President of Inclusion and Institutional Equity. This office also includes the **Center for Student Diversity** (S2.009), **Accessibility and Disability Services** (S2.010), and oversees Title IX education and enforcement. Recently, the OIIE provided oversight for the development of the TU inaugural diversity strategic plan, *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity (2020-25)* (S2.011).

Figure II.1: Student Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2010-Fall 2020

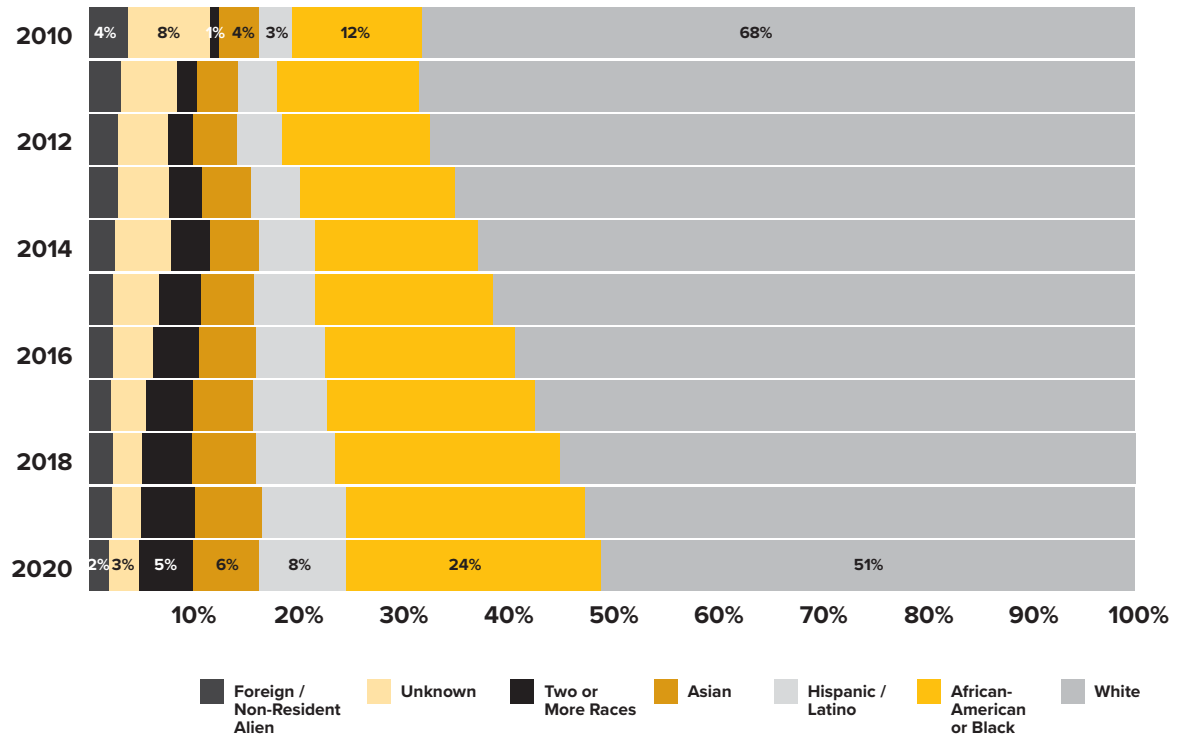


Table II.1: Student Diversity by Headcount

Race / Ethnicity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
African-American or Black	2,720	2,883	3,096	3,319	3,456	3,746	4,047	4,480	4,926	5,170	5,311
American Indian or Alaska Native	91	63	53	49	33	28	33	37	30	20	24
Asian	830	842	927	1,033	1,049	1,119	1,227	1,282	1,381	1,457	1,366
Hispanic / Latino	683	812	934	1,062	1,196	1,303	1,448	1,610	1,727	1,807	1,829
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	10	13	18	20	26	22	21	19	21	16	15
White	14,807	14,658	14,767	14,593	13,974	13,541	13,234	13,021	12,586	11,953	11,197
Two or More Races	186	389	515	706	813	887	981	1,034	1,105	1,162	1,148
Unknown	1,709	1,158	1,047	1,102	1,194	950	855	759	643	633	628
Foreign / Non-Resident Alien	804	646	603	615	544	505	497	463	504	491	399
Total	21,840	21,464	21,960	22,499	22,285	22,101	22,343	22,705	22,923	22,709	21,917

*2015 fall enrollment data were revised in September 2016
Source: Office of Institutional Research, February 2021

Table II.2: Student Diversity Percentage Headcount

Race / Ethnicity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
African-American or Black	12.5%	13.4%	14.1%	14.8%	15.5%	16.9%	18.1%	19.7%	21.5%	22.8%	24.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	3.8%	3.9%	4.2%	4.6%	4.7%	5.1%	5.5%	5.6%	6.0%	6.4%	6.2%
Hispanic / Latino	3.1%	3.8%	4.3%	4.7%	5.4%	5.9%	6.5%	7.1%	7.5%	8.0%	8.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
White	67.8%	68.3%	67.2%	64.9%	62.7%	61.3%	59.2%	57.3%	54.9%	52.6%	51.1%
Two or More Races	0.9%	1.8%	2.3%	3.1%	3.6%	4.0%	4.4%	4.6%	4.8%	5.1%	5.2%
Unknown	7.8%	5.4%	4.8%	4.9%	5.4%	4.3%	3.8%	3.3%	2.8%	2.8%	2.9%
Foreign / Non-Resident Alien	3.7%	3.0%	2.7%	2.7%	2.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	2.2%	2.2%	1.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*2015 fall enrollment data were revised in September 2016

The OIIE provides leadership and support to ensure an inclusive, respectful, and civil community that acknowledges the shared responsibility for others' well-being. Additional policies on hate/bias prevention, nondiscrimination, resolution of Title IX sexual harassment and other sexual misconduct complaints, and other policies enforce these values. OIIE offers trainings, in-person and online in unconscious bias, hate/bias prevention, discrimination and harassment, and mandatory Title IX sexual harassment and sexual misconduct prevention and resolution for all students, faculty, and staff.

Towson University continues to take a strong stance against what it defines as "hate speech" with the "#NotatTU" communication campaign. The Office of Inclusion and Equity declares that: "Acts of destruction or violence which are motivated by animosity against a person or group because of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or homelessness, or which infringe on the rights and freedom of others will not be tolerated at Towson University. The university will investigate and respond to all reports of hate crimes and bias incidents" (S2.012).

This office also provides the community with the ability to report incidents via an [incident reporting form](#) (S2013). To buttress this effort the university hired a dedicated Hate Bias Coordinator and Case Manager who works in the OIIE as part of a wider diversity and inclusion initiative that President Schatzel announced in December 2019 (S2.014).

In 2017, the OIIE engaged the university community in a campus climate survey, developed in collaboration with the [Maryland Higher Education Commission \(MHEC\)](#) (S2.015), to provide a comprehensive assessment of the campus. The OIIE leadership reviewed survey results, complaints, and emerging trends. Survey results were generally positive, but the data informed OIIE recommendations that the university implemented, including additional attention to Title IX training and training on diversity and inclusion in the classroom setting. During 2020, the university revised the Title IX policy, [06-01.60- Policy on Sexual Harassment and other Sexual Misconduct](#), and accompanying procedures in response to the survey results and federal regulation changes (S2.016).

Another result of this assessment was the creation of additional staff positions to support students' needs, a Title IX case manager to improve efficiency, case tracking, and communications, and the previously mentioned hate/bias prevention coordinator/investigator. Enforcement of Title IX has occurred via the judicial proceedings conducted by the Office of Student Conduct until the recent changes in policy, 06-01.60. The OIIE is developing a report that will track data, monitor trends, and include information regarding all campus' prevention efforts.

In response to the nation's continued challenge in addressing racism and social justice, the OIIE has developed, made available, and promoted a series of anti-racism resources. This includes the establishment of [Affinity Group Spaces](#) (S2.017) providing frameworks for understanding how individuals function in the community, family, and organizational settings. These spaces promote dialogue and community by engendering deeper understanding of current events and establishing a shared understanding of anti-racism. By fall 2020, 260 faculty and staff had joined six of these spaces. The Center for Student Diversity created separate Affinity Spaces for students only. The OIIE has also established reading groups to aid individuals' anti-racism efforts and to further understanding and effective action (S2.017). By fall 2020, 150 individuals including students, staff, faculty, and administrators had participated in eight reading groups.

To further support these initiatives' achievements and to provide greater strategic direction the OIIE released in November 2020 the university's inaugural diversity strategic plan, [A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity](#) (S2.011). The development of the diversity strategic plan followed an institution-wide planning process that sought input from the entire campus community, including shared governance, students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni. The yearlong process employed a social justice framework and solicited feedback from across the campus as well as intentionally seeking voices who are often overshadowed—ultimately striving for the representation of all entities who are integral to the work of providing a world-class education through a holistic experience.

The plan commits the university to the next phase in its pursuit of recognition as a distinguished public university that advances equitable access, inclusive learning, and engagement in a diverse community. The plan complements and informs the university's

strategic plan, committing the university to a range of specific, measurable initiatives that will involve each division and assigned responsibilities thereto. This plan intentionally assumes a broad perspective on diversity, including but not limited to age, ancestry, education, gender identity, gender expression, language origin, and sexual identity.

Crucially, the plan also includes measures for self-accountability and includes the establishment of an assessment working group that will support campus-wide assessment and reporting. The plan focuses on four broad areas: education and scholarship; recruitment, retention, and success; campus climate; and evaluation and assessment.

Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs has developed and expanded initiatives to promote ethical interactions and work that promotes the values of equity and inclusion. Working with university partners, academic affairs has employed efforts to address the effect of institutional racism and implicit bias, specifically in the faculty hiring process. A holistic approach informs hiring practices to ensure the recruitment, hiring, and retention of staff and faculty continue to create an increasingly diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus community. While significant work remains, particularly in diversifying the faculty, TU is committed to doing the work. Criterion 5 below, discusses these efforts in detail.

In late 2018, the Office of the Provost hired an Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion to advance previous work started by the office. This newly created position supports a [range of initiatives](#) (S2.018) aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion within the Division of Academic Affairs, focusing on faculty recruitment and retention, cultural sensitivity and competency, faculty development, and difficult dialogues. This position is responsible for supporting the [Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Fellows program](#) (DIFF) (S2.019). Faculty of all ranks are invited to apply for a fellowship that supports faculty in a variety of projects including developing curricular practices to support inclusive and diverse classroom environments; creating or expanding research, teaching, and mentoring projects; initiating scholar-practitioners collaborations; and establishing collaborations to enhance diversity and inclusion. By fall 2020, fifty-eight faculty had participated in the Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Fellows program, which had started in 2015. Also by fall 2020, sixty-five

faculty participated in another initiative, "[Dialogue@TU](#)" (S2.020), formerly known as Inter-Group Dialogue.

Another example of Academic Affairs' focus on campus climate and diversity is Cook Library's selection as the only USM library to pilot the American Library Association's [Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation \(TRHT\) Great Stories Club](#) (S2.021). Reflecting the American Library Association's high regard for TU's work, it is deploying it as a model for the program's future implementation.

Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs fulfills a leading role in fostering a climate of integrity and respect. For example, the [Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education](#) (S2.022) engages with students to foster student development, encouraging and challenging them to think beyond themselves so that they will engage as civil and ethical members of the university. The office facilitates student development through awareness campaigns, workshops, and facilitated conversations. Over 200 students have completed the civility education workshop during the last five years, both upon request from faculty and student groups, and those required to complete the workshop because of code of student conduct violations.

The [Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility](#) (S2.023) offers programming and learning opportunities that include community service, political engagement, and environmental initiatives. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility relies on assessment to make programming decisions that support the diverse TU community. One such example is [Project Serve](#) (S2.024), a three-day community service experience for 100 first year and transfer students volunteering in Baltimore city and county before "Welcome to TU" orientation begins.

In recent years, the Office of Civic Engagement has surveyed the students and discovered that they wanted the opportunity to meet more students from diverse backgrounds when participating in Project Serve. Students reported feeling unprepared to serve in an unfamiliar environment and did not understand the connections between service and social justice. Consequently, rather than random assignment of students to small groups, demographic information collected at sign up ensured placement of students to facilitate intragroup diversity. Additionally, this assessment of the student experience prompted the Office of Civic Engagement

and Social Responsibility to collaborate with the Center for Student Diversity to include a history of Baltimore, providing historical context to aid students' understanding of social injustice issues that the partner organizations are addressing.

Grievance Policies (Criterion 3)

The university supports fundamental fairness and ensures that there is a process for faculty, staff, and students to file complaints, grievances, and/or appeal findings. Faculty have extensive grievance rights under the [Towson University Procedures 02-04.00](#) (S2.025) and the [University System of Maryland policy II-4.00](#) (S2.026). The Faculty Handbook directs individuals who have concerns to the Faculty Grievance & Mediation Committee. The [Faculty Grievance & Mediation Committee](#) (S2.027) is an elected committee of faculty established to review faculty grievances. Grievances include, but are not limited to, disputes involving academic freedom, merit, teaching load, discipline and other administrative actions.

While the Faculty Grievance Policy is in place to provide fair and impartial response to faculty issues that cannot be resolved in a less formal process, concern has been raised by faculty, Academic Senate leadership, and academic administration about the complexity of this policy, which often takes months to resolve faculty concerns. With multiple levels of appeals to different bodies, the current grievance process is convoluted. In addition, there are discrepancies between the Academic Senate Constitution and the policy as it currently exists. The policy needs to indicate more clearly whether the committee is the responsibility of AAUP, the Academic Senate, or both.

The [Employee Handbook](#) (S2.028) details staff grievance processes addressing alleged unfair treatment in work assignments, promotion, transfer, discipline, or termination. Additional protections offered by TU Policy 06-01.00 (Prohibiting Discrimination), and TU Policy 06.01.05 (Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity or Expression) are in place to protect employees from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or other grounds prohibited by law.

Staff have access to both an informal and a formal grievance process. The informal process resolves problems in their early stages. If a grievance is not resolved informally, a grievant may request that a grievance

hearing committee review their request for a formal hearing. In a formal hearing, the committee listens to the grievant and respondent together with witnesses called by either party. Regardless of the complaint outcome, [the policy](#) (S2.029) protects grievants, their witnesses, and their advisers from retaliation. There are also [policies and procedures for non-exempt employees](#) (S2.030) consistent with [USM bylaws](#) (S2.031).

The university's student grievance procedures enable students to bring complaints against faculty, staff, or registered student organizations if they believe they have been subjected to discrimination on a protected class basis. Students can submit such complaints to the OIIE via an [online complaint form](#) (S2.032). Students receive information about the procedures for filing an equal opportunities complaint at orientation. The residence halls' resident advisors (RAs) can also guide students through the process. Students are also encouraged to contact Student Affairs for other complaints/grievances that do not involve discrimination, hate/bias, Title IX, or other protected activity.

Students also have a separate grievance process for academic issues. The [Academic Standards Committee](#) (S2.033), a subcommittee of Academic Senate, considers student appeals for late drops or withdrawals, reconsideration of placement on academic warning, suspension, or dismissal. It also considers exceptions to the degree requirements because of unusual circumstances. This committee is the body to which students can appeal college decisions. Each college has its own appeals process that the college's respective website detail.

The [Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education](#) (S2.022), within the Division of Student Affairs addresses issues concerning student or student organization conduct and civility. It also coordinates the appeal process for disciplinary action via the [Student Appeals Committee or the Student Conduct Appellate Board](#) (S2.034), depending on the sanction that the student or student organization is appealing.

Students can submit complaints to the MHEC and/or the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Relevant details on doing so are available on the university [Accreditation and Approval webpage](#) (S2.035) and via the annual Higher Education Opportunities Act disclosure.

Additionally, in November 2018 the university established its first ethics and compliance hotline for faculty,

staff, students, and others to report possible ethics violations, fiscal irregularities, or other issues. Individuals can submit reports anonymously [online](#) (S2.036) or by calling 877-SPEAKTU (877-773-2588). The Office of the General Counsel reviews these reports quarterly for trends and consideration of any needed action.

Avoidance of Conflict of Interests (Criterion 4)

The university is committed to identifying and managing both apparent and actual conflicts of interest. As a constituent institution of the University System of Maryland and a public institution of higher education in the State of Maryland, the [Maryland State Ethics Commission](#) (S2.037), under the authority of the Public Ethics Law, provides the basis for the university’s policies and procedures that address conflict of interest.

A variety of university policies and procedures ensure the prevention and investigation of any actual or potential conflicts of interest. These include [research or development](#) (S2.038), [scholarly misconduct](#) (S2.039), [fiscal irregularities](#) (S2.040), [secondary employment](#) (S2.041) and [intellectual property](#) (S2.042). Non-faculty employees are subject to the [Policy on Professional Conduct of Nonexempt and Exempt Staff Employees](#) (S2.043). This policy requires that staff refrain from real or perceived conflicts of interest through abstaining from holding financial interests that conflict with their job responsibilities, accepting gifts, or accepting outside employment that may conflict with their assigned job duties. Procedures that buttress the implementation

of these policies include the [procurement card policies and procedures](#) (S2.044) and the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research [conflict of interest assessment](#) (S2.045).

Fair and Impartial Hiring and Treatment of Employees (Criterion 5)

The university is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer where employees have [the right to work in a professional setting that prohibits discriminatory practices](#) (S2.046). The institution’s mission and goals demonstrate a strong institutional commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, and the Presidential Priority of “[a diverse and inclusive campus](#)” (S2.047) directly informs our emphasis on fairness in hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation of employees.

One of the Diversity Strategic Plan’s primary goals is to assess recruitment and retention needs to ensure diverse recruitment of senior administrators, faculty, and students. This includes having a visually diverse search committee and interviewing a diverse applicant pool. In 2015, the institution committed to [new diversity initiatives](#) (S2.048) that included increasing the recruitment and retention of Black faculty. In 2015, there were twenty-six tenured and tenure-track Black faculty and in fall 2018 there were thirty-four; [that number increased to thirty-seven](#) in 2019 (S2.049). While there is certainly a long way to go to improve faculty diversity, the university is committed to doing so and has made concrete steps in pursuit of a more inclusive faculty (Figures II.2, II.3, II.4).

Figure II.2: Tenured and Tenure Track Faculty

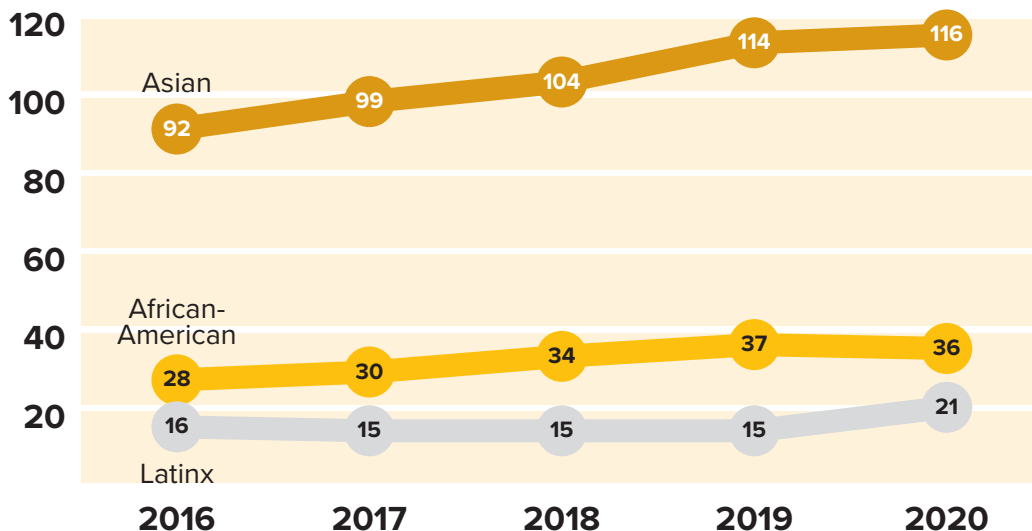


Figure II.3: Percentage of Total Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty 2016

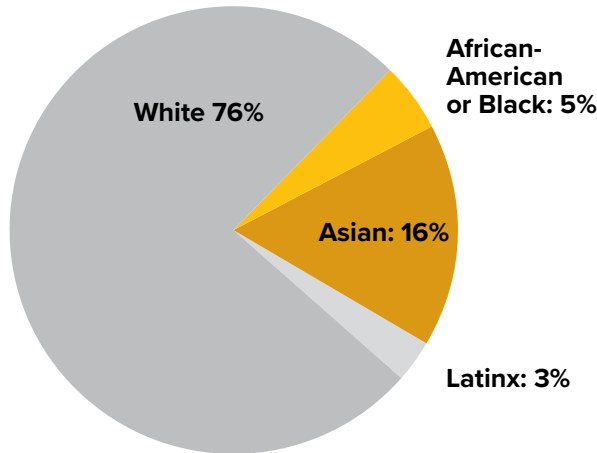
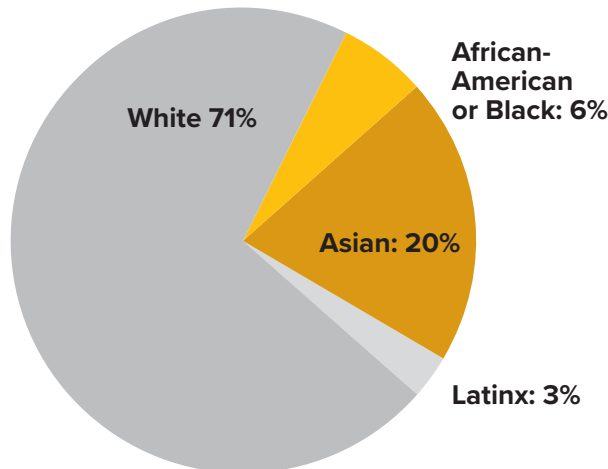


Figure II.4: Percentage of Total Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty 2020



The university made available a number of workshops and initiatives to support this goal. Workshop topics include sessions on implicit bias, stereotypes, and other issues that can affect faculty search fairness. A “[faculty hiring outreach plan](#)” (S2.050) that identifies resources and strategies to ensure a diverse applicant pool and includes outreach to the university’s faculty and [staff affinity groups](#) (S2.051) is an example of another initiative. The Office of the Provost in collaboration with the OIIE instituted *Successful Faculty Searches* training required for all faculty/librarian search committee members which addresses departmental culture, unconscious bias, state and federal hiring requirements, and university hiring policies and procedures; 225 individuals participated in this training by October 2020. Part of the training involves a series of sample interview questions and scenarios for search committees to use as a means to enquire about candidates’ knowledge, skills, and experience related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Search committees ask candidates to discuss how they would support inclusive workplace environments, collegiality, experience working with diverse students, scholarship and creative work that includes diverse perspectives, and situational prompts.

To improve the search process, a faculty committee recently revised the “[Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Permanent Status-Track Librarian Hiring Procedures](#)” (S2.052). One of the new aspects of these procedures was the development of a role for an inclusion advocate (IA) on tenured, tenure-track, and permanent status-track librarian search committees. The role of the IA is to serve on the search committee as a resource to promote inclusive and equitable screening and evaluation of applicants. The Office of the Provost and OIIE collaborated to launch the first cohort of Inclusion Advocates in spring 2021. To date, eighteen faculty have completed training. They will serve as consultant/participants helping faculty search committee members test their thinking, identify and promote practices that advance diversity and social justice, and minimize the impact of cognitive and structural bias.

[TALEO](#) (S2.053), launched in 2016 as the university’s staff recruitment software, allows hiring managers to electronically submit and track requisitions, review applicants, coordinate interviews, and submit offer paperwork. TALEO also stores demographic and pipeline data that aides compliance monitoring and reporting. In spring and summer 2020, a task group

comprised of faculty, HR and IT staff identified that moving to an electronic process for faculty hiring would enhance the applicant experience and improve compliance with university policies. The university selected a combination of technologies, including TALEO, and piloted this new process with tenure-track hires during spring 2021.

As part of TU's effort to ensure fair assessment of employee performance, every staff member regardless of rank receives an annual performance evaluation. The university has a comprehensive performance review [procedural guide](#) (S2.054) to assist managers with completing successful and equitable performance evaluations and establishing goals and training. The Office of Human Resources provides tools, support, and guidance for supervisors addressing induction, discipline, and grievances for regular exempt, non-exempt, and contractual employees. All newly hired, promoted, or transferred regular staff members serve a probationary period. If the employee is not achieving expectations, the university can terminate employment.

Staff who are separating from the university are encouraged to complete an [exit interview and survey](#) (S2.055). The university has provided exit interviews and surveys for at least a decade; however, it has not systemically reviewed the results to effect change. In 2018, the Office of Human Resources introduced a HR Partner Model, in which each division received dedicated support from a designated HR professional. The office introduced this, in part, to better solicit and analyze the results of exit interview data and to inform potential change. The university will develop transparent reporting around the results of exit interviews (while maintaining required confidentiality), identifying any trends that emerge to foster continuous improvement.

[The Appointment, Rank, and Tenure \(ART\) policy and procedures](#) (S2.056) govern faculty personnel actions related to annual review, promotion, and the granting of tenure for faculty and permanent status for librarians. Each of these review processes are faculty driven, with the initial review and recommendation occurring at the department level with the right to appeal decisions available at each level (i.e., department, college, provost). Final authority for the appointment, promotion, granting of tenure of faculty or permanent status of librarians resides with the president of the university. Faculty developed and regularly revise the ART policy, and corresponding college and departmental

documents. Department and college documents are available on the Academic Senate webpage to ensure transparency and communication of the procedures to all faculty. The ART Policy, currently under revision, is posted in the university policy repository and available via a link from the Academic Senate webpage.

A formal exit interview process for faculty has been in place since May 2019. Faculty may choose the option of participating in a brief exit survey, opt-in to a virtual one-on-one interview with the Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, or opt-out of both. As of January 2021, thirty-eight faculty received exit letters, twenty-four faculty selected the one-on-one interview, and thirty-one have completed the exit survey. Several trends have emerged, including challenges with department collegiality, equity and fairness concerning the PTRM process, and specific challenges for LGBT faculty observed by both LGBT-identified faculty and their allies. Academic Affairs will use the results of these surveys to inform the professional development offered in the recently created Community of Practice for department chairs, whose role in alleviating these issues is paramount. The exit interview process has continued for faculty and librarians through COVID-19.

Honesty and Truthfulness in Public Relations and Internal Communications (Criterion 6)

The university shares admissions criteria and requirements with prospective students and family members through a variety of channels, including the university website, email, print pieces, webinars, and social media. The University Admissions web page details the admissions approach shared by [undergraduate](#) (S2.057) and [graduate](#) (S2.058) admissions. The website also addresses specific student cohorts/type to provide each with the most [salient information associated with their admission](#) (S2.059).

Additionally, the university provides a detailed total [cost of attendance](#) (S2.060) for current and prospective students and their families. The website details projected costs, including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation, for both full-time and part-time attendance, undergraduate and graduate and is updated annually.

The Division of University Marketing and Communications (UMC) provides transparent and honest information for internal and external audiences, consulting with subject matter experts to verify information and

sources. In compliance with federal law, UMC works in partnership with other university offices and departments to distribute timely reports and information including the annual Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) [consumer information disclosure](#) (S2.061). UMC adheres to the code of professional ethics as set forth by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the American Marketing Association (AMA).

In fulfilling this responsibility for accurate and timely information, the [Office of Institutional Research](#) (OIR) plays a fundamental role. Among other duties, the OIR works with the Associate Vice President of Communication and Media to maintain accurate university data on students, staff, and faculty that it deploys in a range of marketing, communication, and promotional materials that help communicate the university's mission and objectives to both internal and external constituents.

Recently, this has included materials on construction of the [new science complex](#) (S2.062), university presentations to the USM Board of Regents, the President's Tour Book, and the annually published [Facts and Figures](#) (S2.063).

The OIR also supports the university leadership in interpreting data and using it to guide operations. For example, the university's recent change from regional to national rankings due to its Carnegie Classification change to "Doctoral/Professional" in 2018 has resulted in changes for peer comparison institutions. As the university moves forward in its new classification, understanding the data that informs the new classification will assist in decision-making. The OIR is also a critical source of data regarding enrollment, providing detailed dashboards showing enrollment trends in real time. OIR's ability to analyze enrollments by demographics, by major, and other characteristics, informs departmental decisions, hiring, and budget allocations within Academic Affairs.

The office makes much of this data readily available to anyone on its website, and provides basic evaluation and data comparison tools via its [data visualization gallery](#) (S2.064). When constituents require additional data, the office is available to provide customized support to research efforts that inform university operations (S2.065).

Affordability and Funding (Criterion 7)

Towson University prides itself on its ability to offer an outstanding education while maintaining affordability. In 2020, *U.S. News and World Report* (S2.066) recognized Towson University as a national university for the first time in its history, where it was ranked 186th as a Top Performer on Social Mobility. Additionally, *Money* magazine ranked Towson University 103 in its 2020 "The Best colleges in America, ranked by value" (S2.067). Consistent with mission, affordable tuition and fees, and access to financial aid are key university objectives. It is this commitment that has in part contributed to the university [erasing the "achievement gap" for minority students](#), who achieve the same academic success and graduation rates as the entire campus population (S2.068). The Office of Admissions maintains a [scholarship website](#) (S2.069) that both lists available scholarships and assists students in applying. Additionally, the university is beholden to several relevant Board of Regents policies addressing affordability and accessibility. These include policies concerning [tuition and fees](#) (S2.070), [financial aid](#) (S2.071), and waiver of application fees due to [financial hardship](#) (S2.072).

Towson University's [Office of Financial Aid](#) (S2.073) provides resources addressing aid programs, scholarships, grants, loans, and employment options. It also outlines how the university applies aid disbursements and rebates to students' bills and helps them recognize how changing their enrollment level affects bills and rebates. The website offers loan counseling, promissory notes information, entrance and exit counseling for student borrowers, cost of attendance, loan resources, budgeting, debt, and credit information.

The Office of University Admissions also offers support to students through admissions counselors specializing in first-year students, transfer students, and international students. Admissions professionals and staff in the Financial Aid Office collaborate to manage and review application materials to offer students aid targeted to their specific needs. The [Admissions and Aid website](#) (S2.074) provides information for students and parents regarding tuition, fees, and financial aid.

To ensure financial transparency the university's Resource Planning and Advisory Committee (RPAC), a sub-committee of the Academic Senate, acts as the Senate's representative voice in annual university resource planning and annually reviews the university

budget plan, annual funding priorities plan, annual tuition and fee plan, and amendments to the ten-year capital plan. RPAC members include shared governance representatives, staff, students, and faculty. Early in the spring semester each year, the faculty, RPAC members, and student representatives from the SGA and Graduate Student Association review all broad-based university fee proposals (such as the technology and athletics fees), and make recommendations to the provost and CFO for the following academic year. The Student Government Association (SGA) also provides student advocacy in a wide range of issues, including [scholarships and awards](#) (S2.075).

Compliance with Federal, State, and Commission Policies (Criterion 8)

The university is committed to complying with all federal, state laws, and MSCHE policies and requirements of affiliation. The Verification of Compliance report will detail university actions in this area.

In April 2020, the university hired its first Chief Compliance and Risk Officer (CCRO). The CCRO reports to the university's General Counsel, with a dotted-line report to the president. This position oversees and manages the university's compliance function and compliance risk management, and is an integral part of the University's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program. The CCRO works in a consultative and collaborative manner with other established compliance functions throughout the university, and provides leadership in managing numerous compliance obligations. The CCRO is responsible for establishing policies, standards, and implementing procedures to ensure a culture of integrity, accountability and transparency within university compliance activities.

TU and the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) are dedicated to protecting the rights and welfare of humans and animals participating in research by faculty, staff, and students of the university. The university's policies for the protection of human and animal subjects meet high institutional standards in its ethical principles and regulations. An [institutional website](#) details the university's policies and procedures and provide guidance to investigators proposing research projects. This guidance is applicable to all research.

The use of human participants requires prior approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB, appointed by the provost, follows the principles as outlined in The Belmont Report, adheres to the

federal guidelines as outlined by Title 45 CFR 46, and is subject to all University System of Maryland (USM) policies. TU maintains a Federal wide Assurance through the Department of Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections. The Assurance affirms that TU's human subjects research activities are undertaken according to principles designed to protect the rights and welfare of human participants regardless of funding source.

The use of animal subjects requires approval by the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee \(IACUC\)](#). The provost-appointed IACUC oversees the university's animal program, facilities, and procedures to ensure that the care and use of animals involved in any activities of the university are appropriate, humane, and meet all Federal and local laws and regulations. The IACUC follows all federal laws set forth in the Animal Welfare Act and The Health Research Extension Act of 1985. In addition, TU maintains an active Animal Welfare Assurance with the Public Health Service (PHS). The Assurance documents institutional compliance with PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals as amended in 1985 in response to the Health Research Extension Act. The IRB and IACUC require prospective applicants to complete training prior to accepting an application to conduct research under the auspices of the TU IRB and/or IACUC.

Periodic Assessment of Ethics and Integrity (Criterion 9)

The university most recently engaged in assessment of objectives and policies associated with ethics and integrity when producing its [diversity strategic plan](#) (S2.011), referenced above, which involved the collection and analysis of data between March and September 2020, including focus groups, interviews, and an anonymous online survey. The application of a coding system to this data provided the focus for and identification of the three major themes that inform the plan's objectives: work climate; exclusion/inclusion; and initiatives and programs.

The university regularly assesses its policies, processes, and practices. In accordance with [University Policies and Procedures \(S2.076\)](#), the Office of General Counsel (OGC) is responsible for overseeing policy development and revision, working with appropriate constituencies throughout the university. As such, the OGC takes a lead role in determining policies that require updating and/or development based upon changes in University System of Maryland (USM) policies, changes to state or federal laws or regulation, or institutional needs identified through shared governance. The Intellectual Property Policy Review Committee, referenced previously under criterion 1, represents an example of operations assessment to ensure policy supports good practice and compliance with state and system requirements.

Assessment Exemplar – Policies Review

In 2018, the Office of the General Counsel undertook an audit of the universities policies to ensure accessibility, compliance with USM, and currency. It revealed the benefit of a more comprehensive review to guarantee policies' accuracy, currency, comportment to USM policies, and accessibility. The OGC proposed this to the President's Council where it received unanimous support and assigned resources for the hiring of a legal intern for one semester.

The office used an excel spreadsheet (S2.077) to conduct a gap analysis that identified and cataloged the necessary revisions. This assessment has ensured that the policies website is now updated, accurate, and accessible.

Conclusion

The university demonstrates a comprehensive and iterative commitment to ethics and integrity through its mission and goals. The university regularly reviews policies and procedures that support and ensure accountability. The extensive lattice of external constituents, including the USM, MHEC, Board of Visitors, state law, and accreditor standards provides additional support, guidance, and oversight of these evolving efforts.

Recommendations

1. Implement the inaugural diversity strategic plan, *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity (2020–25)*, providing annual updates on its progress.
2. Revise the “Responsibilities and procedures of the faculty grievance and mediation committee and the faculty hearing committee policy” to clarify and simplify, to decrease the time to complete the process, and to remove discrepancies between policy documents.

Sources

- (S2.001) USM by-laws – academic freedom
- (S2.002) Towson University, Faculty Handbook, 2020-21
- (S2.003) American Association of University Professors, “1940 statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure”
- (S2.004) University policies and procedures, ‘06-04.11 policy on time, place, and manner for expressive activities’
- (S2.005) University policies and procedures, ‘04-03.20 policy on intellectual property’
- (S2.006) Policy process
- (S2.007) *TU 2002-2030, Leadership for the Public Good*
- (S2.008) Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity
- (S2.009) Center for Student Diversity
- (S2.010) Accessibility and Disability Services
- (S2.011) *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity*
- (S2.012) Reporting hate crimes and bias incidents
- (S2.013) Public incident report form
- (S2.014) Hate Bias Coordinator and Case Manager
- (S2.015) Maryland Higher Education Commission, Report on campus climate and sexual violence at Maryland colleges and universities, Vol. 2
- (S2.016) University policies and procedures, 06-01.60-Policy on Sexual Harassment and other Sexual Misconduct
- (S2.017) Affinity Group Spaces
- (S2.018) Diversity Initiatives and Resources
- (S2.019) Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Fellows program
- (S2.020) Dialogue@TU
- (S2.021) Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Great Stories Club
- (S2.022) Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education
- (S2.023) Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

Sources

- (S2.024) Project Serve
- (S2.025) University policy and procedures, '02-04.00 responsibilities and procedures of the faculty grievance and mediation committee and the faculty hearing committee
- (S2.026) University System of Maryland policy II-4.00
- (S2.027) Faculty Grievance and Mediation Committee
- (S2.028) Employee Handbook
- (S2.029) University policy and procedures, "07-08.05 policy on grievances and special action appeals for regular exempt employees"
- (S2.030) University policies and procedures, "07-08.10 special action appeals for regular non-exempt employees"
- (S2.031) USM bylaws, policies, and procedures of the Board of Regents, "VII-8.00 policy on grievances for nonexempt and exempt staff employees"
- (S2.032) Title IX complaint form
- (S2.033) Academic Standards Committee
- (S2.034) Student Appeals Committee
- (S2.035) Accreditation and Approval Webpage
- (S2.036) Ethics and Compliance Hotline
- (S2.037) Maryland State Ethics Commission
- (S2.038) University policies and procedures, "03-01.11 conflict of interest in research or development
- (S2.039) University policies and procedures, "03-01.10 policy regarding allegations of scholarly misconduct by faculty and staff"
- (S2.040) University policies and procedures, "08-07.10 procedures on reporting fiscal irregularities"
- (S2.041) University policies and procedures, "07-01.05 secondary employment for regular non-faculty employees"
- (S2.042) University policies and procedures, "04-03.20 Towson University policy on intellectual property"
- (S2.043) USM bylaws, policies, and procedures of the board of regents, "VII-08.05, policy on professional conduct of non-exempt and exempt staff employees"
- (S2.044) Corporate Procurement Card Policies and Procedures 2021
- (S2.045) Office of Sponsored Programs and Research conflict of interest assessment form
- (S2.046) University policies and procedures, "06-01.00 policy prohibiting discrimination"
- (S2.047) Presidential Priority, "Diverse and Inclusive Campus"
- (S2.048) "New Diversity Initiatives"
- (S2.049) Headcount of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty by College and Race/Ethnicity, fall 2016 to fall 2020
- (S2.050) Faculty Hiring Outreach Plan
- (S2.051) Staff Affinity Groups
- (S2.052) "Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Permanent Track Librarian Hiring Process
- (S2.053) TALEO
- (S2.054) Procedural Guide to Conducting Performance Reviews at Towson University
- (S2.055) Exit interview and survey
- (S2.056) Appointment, Rank, and Tenure (ART) policy and procedures
- (S2.057) Undergraduate Admissions
- (S2.058) Graduate Admissions
- (S2.059) Applicant Type
- (S2.060) Cost of attendance
- (S2.061) Consumer Information Disclosure
- (S2.062) New Science Complex
- (S2.063) *Facts and Figures*
- (S2.064) Data Visualization Gallery
- (S2.065) Institutional Research Data Request
- (S2.066) *U.S. News and World Report*
- (S2.067) *Money*
- (S2.068) Office of Institutional Research, transfer and retention rates
- (S2.069) Financial Aid – Scholarships
- (S2.070) USM by-laws – VII-2.01 policy on tuition
- (S2.071) USM by-laws – VII-2.41 policy on institutional financial aid for undergraduate students
- (S2.072) USM by-laws – VII-2.80 policy on waiver of application fees
- (S2.073) Office of Financial Aid
- (S2.074) Admissions and Aid
- (S2.075) Student Government Association scholarships and awards
- (S2.076) Towson University Policies
- (S2.077) Office of General Counsel policies spreadsheet



Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience



An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

Requirements of Affiliation Addressed in Standard III

- **Requirement 8:** The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- **Requirement 9:** The institution’s student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality.
- **Requirement 15:** The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution’s educational programs.

As an educational institution with a long history of providing students with an outstanding academic experience, Towson University fully meets the requirements of Standard III. Three of the five university’s Institutional Objectives directly address the design and delivery of the student learning experience: namely, a commitment to a rigorous undergraduate and graduate education, expanded interdisciplinary and co-curricular experiences, and the university library as a center for intellectual inquiry. The remaining two, faculty and staff professional development, and innovative community outreach, also contribute to the student learning experience (S3.001). The president’s eight [Presidential Priorities](#), developed after an extensive listening tour, each reflect a commitment to fulfilling these objectives (S3.002). The new university Strategic Plan centers the student learning experience in multiple areas, specifically identifying as its first goal to “achieve national recognition for our innovative student-centered curriculum emphasizing engaged learning, in-demand academic programs, and new approaches to instruction and learning in the liberal arts, business, health professions, STEM, arts and teacher preparation.” Among our strengths are:

- Towson University is one of only nineteen institutions in the nation designated by the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security,

as a National Center of Academic Excellence in [cyber defense education and cyber operations](#) (S.3003).

- The [College of Business and Economics](#) is one of less than 1% of business schools worldwide with AACSB accreditation for both the business and accounting programs.
- The [College of Education](#) is the longest-standing, largest and preeminent producer of teachers in Maryland.
- The [College of Fine Arts and Communication](#) is home to Professor [Jonathan Leshnoff](#), one of the world’s most performed living composers.
- The [College of Health Professions](#) is the largest producer of undergraduate health professions graduates in Maryland.

Range and Quality of Programs (Criterion 1; RoA 8, 9)

Towson University provides a wide range of educational experiences for students at the undergraduate and graduate level. The university offers sixty-five bachelor programs, forty-nine master’s programs, and six doctorates. At the certificate level, the university offers thirty-three post-baccalaureate certificates and three certificates of advanced study.

Both undergraduate and graduate students benefit from TU’s location near major urban areas and the nation’s capital, creating an environment where guest speakers and adjunct faculty regularly include local professionals with high expertise. In addition to low faculty to student ratios in courses, research and scholarship opportunities prioritize one-on-one learning time with faculty for undergraduate research and graduate thesis and dissertation track students.

While the majority of students study on the main campus, the university also has off-campus sites. All programs taught off campus are identical to the equivalent on-campus programs, undergoing the same curriculum development process, taught by faculty with the same credentials, and subject to the same oversight. Most off-campus enrollments occur at Towson University in Northeastern Maryland (TUNE), where the fall 2020 headcount was 798 students in eight undergraduate

programs; the Universities at Shady Grove, with 165 students in two undergraduate and three graduate programs; 144 students in four graduate programs at the University of Maryland Southern Maryland and thirty-six students in the Nursing program at USM-Hagerstown. Additionally, the university has approximately 1,200 graduate students studying off campus through closed-site contracts with Baltimore County, Baltimore city, and several other Maryland county school systems.

Undergraduate students have the opportunity to pursue educational experiences unique to their major such as living-learning experiences in on-campus housing, internships, research projects with faculty, experiential learning, study abroad and study away programs, capstone courses, and for highly motivated, high performing students, the Honors College.

Every TU program affords examples of academic excellence, a list far too long to include in its entirety. The below represent just a few.

Business Administration Track in Financial Planning

The Business Administration track in Financial Planning prepares students for rewarding, in-demand careers in wealth management and advising. The [CFP Board Registered Program](#) was developed based on industry needs in partnership with the CFP board, fulfills the education requirement for [CFP® Certification Examination](#), and is unique to the Baltimore region. Students earn a competitive advantage by completing the Bloomberg Essentials Certification for Equities, which certifies their skills with [Bloomberg terminal technology](#), the global standard for financial data service.

Graduate Programs

Graduate programs are frequently nationally ranked, most recently in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2021 Best Online Programs guide where TU's master's in [applied information technology](#) (AIT) (S3.004) ranked No. 54 in the Best Online Master's in Computer Information Technology Program category. This is the first time the AIT program, which is in the [Fisher College of Science & Mathematics](#), was ranked. Towson University's [College of Education](#) achieved a ranking of No. 91 in the Best Online Master's in Education Programs – eighty places higher than its 2020 ranking, and the highest among any Maryland institution on the list.

Occupational Therapy Education

TU offers Maryland's only M.S. in occupational therapy with licensure. This nationally ranked program has a 100% licensure/certification exam rate. Graduates are active leaders in the profession, including clinical specialists with advanced certifications, rehabilitation directors, and program directors in academic programs. Students engage with faculty scientists who are examining successful aging in place; environmental and technology supports that enable participation in daily life across populations; and family and caregiver support for those with autism, stroke, and other conditions and social factors that affect health and well-being.

Creative Writing Minor

The English Department has a national reputation for its student literary magazine, *Grub Street*. The magazine has won a Columbia Scholastic Literary Press Gold Circle award for the last seventeen years and dozens of its student contributors have won first, second, third, or honorable mention prizes. Award-winning faculty, who are practicing and professional writers in their respective genres, teach courses on writing, poetry, fiction, and the literary essay, complemented by literature courses.

Program Proposal Process

To ensure that curricular experiences provide rigor and appropriately address institutional outcomes, all new program proposals are reviewed by the provost's [Program Concept Review Committee](#) (S3.005) that addresses consistency with mission, prospective enrollment in the program, anticipated benefits for students enrolled, and program sustainability. If the

proposal receives positive review, the university remits a letter of intent (LOI) to develop the program to the University System of Maryland (USM), which circulates the LOI to USM institutions for three weeks. Following circulation, the proposal receives consideration by TU's college and university curriculum committees, respectively, then the Academic Senate, and ultimately the president. Following institutional approval the Maryland Higher Education Commission and USM Board of Regents consider a detailed program proposal that addresses the requirements of Title 13B of the Code of Maryland Regulations.

A proposal cannot move towards [University Curriculum Committee \(UCC\)](#) (S3.006) consideration until the college curriculum committee reviews and approves a student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program. Where necessary or requested, the Office of Academic Assessment provides guidance on the plan's development. The UCC's responsibilities include approving all undergraduate programs of study, establishing guidelines for defining particular degrees, approving new proposals and revisions to degree programs, and determining disciplines and courses that may fulfill general university requirements. The UCC also requires each program to submit a Degree-Completion Plan demonstrating to students a pathway to graduation. Graduate programs undergo an identical process but via the [Graduate Studies Committee](#) (S3.007) rather than the UCC.

At both the course and program level, faculty submit new courses and revisions to existing courses via [Courseleaf](#) (S3.008) to ensure proper consideration by the relevant department curriculum committee, the appropriate college curriculum committee, and the university's [Course Approval and Review Committee \(CARC\)](#) (S3.009). This ensures that proposals for new courses, or revisions to existing courses, include syllabi, grading procedures consistent with university policy, and other required elements. The use of Courseleaf also ensures the successful incorporation of approved courses into university catalogs. The process is the same whether the proposed course is online or face-to-face.

Assessment of Rigor and Effectiveness in Teaching (Criterion 2a)

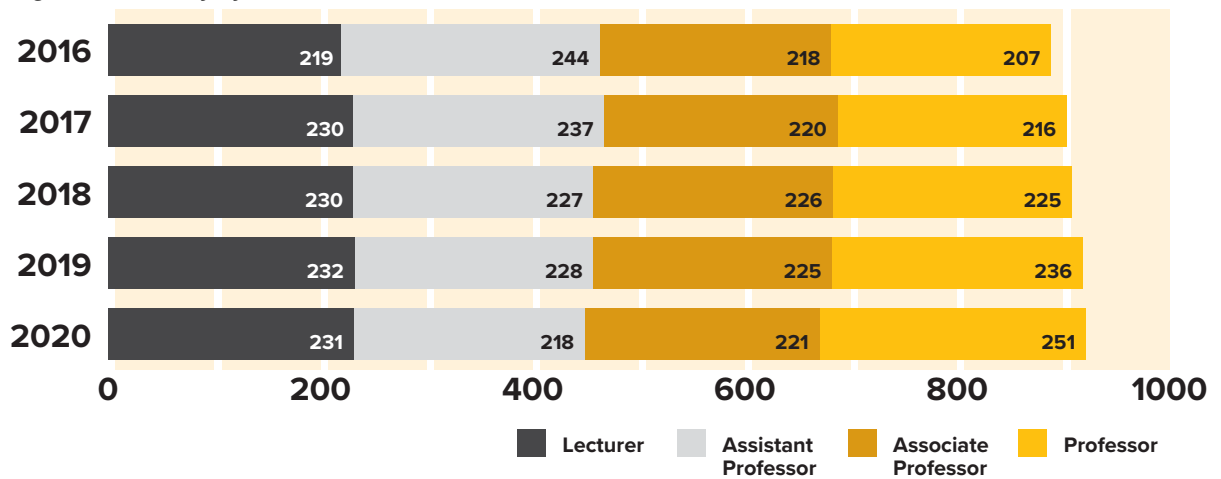
The university is committed to ensuring the same high-quality instruction for all students regardless of course modality or course level. A [common evaluation instrument](#) (S3.010) presents students with the opportunity to provide feedback on their courses, materials, instruction, environment, and other aspects of their class experience. The [Office of Institutional Research](#) provides data from these surveys to faculty, department chairs, and deans. Faculty use feedback from these evaluations to improve their courses, while departments use these data in annual evaluations and promotion reviews. University policy also requires annual peer evaluations of teaching for tenure-track faculty, clinical faculty, and lecturers, and at least for the prior academic year for tenured faculty completing a [Comprehensive Five Year Review](#) (S3.011) or being reviewed for promotion.

Given well-established equity concerns in student evaluations of teaching, at the request of the Academic Senate, the Office of the Provost initiated a review of current practices. In fall 2019, in consultation with the Academic Senate Executive Committee, the university appointed the *Provost's Teaching Evaluation Committee*. This committee was charged with examining the evaluation of teaching at Towson University and providing an executable plan to the Academic Senate for review followed by submission to the president by the end of academic year 2020-2021. The committee presented the plan to the Academic Senate in spring 2021 and will be revised for further consideration in fall 2021.

Faculty Qualifications and Numbers (Criterion 2 b, c; RoA 8, 15)

Towson University faculty are highly qualified, innovative, and dedicated to student learning. With a student to faculty ratio of 17:1, the university offers the benefits of a small class size alongside the advantages of a larger university. The majority (53%) of university faculty are full-time employees, classified as tenured/

Figure III.1: Faculty by Rank



tenure track, lecturers, clinical faculty, visiting faculty (usually one academic year or less), senior lecturers, or research faculty. The [Towson University Policy on Appointment, Rank and Tenure of Faculty \(S3.011\)](#) details the necessary qualifications and appointment conditions. Of the tenure track and tenured faculty, 97% hold terminal degrees. The [undergraduate catalog provides a list of faculty \(S3.012\)](#), their title, department, initial year of employment as a faculty member, and highest earned degree. Figure III.1 provides the number of faculty by rank for each category of faculty.

The Office of Graduate Studies evaluates faculty suitability to teach at the graduate level. The office has established criteria to fulfill this responsibility and requires faculty to apply for [graduate faculty status \(S3.013\)](#). Full and associate graduate faculty must have master’s degrees or higher, five or more years of professional experience, and evidence of scholarly and professional productivity. The Office of Graduate Studies appoints graduate faculty for five-year terms subject to renewal.

Adjunct faculty are part-time faculty who the department approves to teach at that rank and are paid per course. Adjunct faculty with a consistent record of high quality instruction and other contributions to a department’s mission can receive promotion to Adjunct II or Adjunct III by the provost upon the recommendation of the department chair and dean. The university [policy on the employment of adjunct faculty \(S3.014\)](#) details criteria and standards.

Support for Faculty Growth and Innovation (Criterion 2d)

After conducting an extensive listening tour of campus over several months, in 2016 President Schatzel declared that one of her Presidential Priorities was the creation of a world-class faculty development center. Launched in 2019, the [Faculty Academic Center for Excellence at Towson \(FACET\) \(S3.015\)](#) specifically focuses on supporting faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity; teaching; and advising. The [FACET Fellows \(S3.016\)](#) program provides full-time faculty members with opportunities to lead campus-wide initiatives in their respective areas of expertise and help to shape faculty professional development programs throughout TU.

FACET was fundamental to supporting, rapidly developing the COVID-induced move to distance education new processes and policies to ensure high-quality teaching in online and hybrid settings. (S3.017).

FACET sponsored events include an annual [January Teaching Conference \(S3.018\)](#) and seminars and workshops such as “Strategies to Engage Every Student,” “Applying the Quality Matters Rubric,” and “Engaging Students Online.” FACET also provides [consultations and mentoring](#) on research, pedagogy, online teaching, emerging technology, and instructional design, assistance [with instructional video](#) production, and large format [poster](#) printing for scholarly presentations (S3.019).

When in March 2020 the university moved all instruction online in response to the pandemic, FACET assumed a crucial role by preparing and supporting faculty transitioning to online teaching (S3.020). FACET Faculty Fellows and staff collaborated with partners in OTS/Blackboard over the next several months to present 109 pop-up webinars attended by 617 faculty. Topics included online and hybrid teaching, online assessment, student engagement, and technology tools. FACET further delivered one-on-one instructional design consultations for more than 800 faculty, offering over 1200 hours of faculty development support services, including building content in courses within the learning management system. FACET experts conducted five intensive evidence-based online pedagogy workshops, completed by 550 faculty, 46% of whom provided evaluative feedback. Analysis of artifacts from workshops and exit tickets from additional FACET offerings drove revisions in programming and led to construction of a website and a Blackboard community that provides faculty with curated online and hybrid teaching resources. FACET consultants also offered reviews of courses, as requested, providing guidance for enhancement of online teaching design and facilitation. This massive effort to ensure maintenance of the highest academic standards in a remote environment continued into the 2020-21 academic year.

While Towson University faculty take great pride in their teaching excellence, they are also committed scholars. The university's [sabbatical leave policy](#) (S2.021) provides faculty with the opportunity to conduct scholarly or creative work, to engage in activities that may result in the generation and application of intellectual property through technology transfer, to increase their contribution to the institution, and to enhance their standing in the discipline or profession.

The policy details the application procedures, eligibility criteria, and associated conditions. In the last five years, an average 11% of the tenured faculty received a sabbatical annually.

Faculty eligible for a sabbatical must submit a detailed proposal to their department chair for review and approval. Deans provide a secondary level of review before the proposal moves to the provost and president for final approval. Upon their return to campus, faculty present the results of their sabbatical so that the entire campus community may benefit from their work. They also are required to submit a written report to the chair, dean, and vice provost. The vice provost tracks and verifies that the faculty member has presented their project and report, further assuring accountability.

In addition to funds distributed through academic departments and colleges, internal funding is available to support faculty scholarship (see Table III.1), including [BTU Funding](#) (S3.022), School of Emerging Technologies [Seed Funding](#) (S3.023), and [Faculty Development and Research Committee Grants](#) (S3.024). Furthermore, the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) provides resources and support to faculty seeking external funding. In the 2018-2019 academic year, faculty submitted 175 proposals and received [\\$12 million in external funding](#) (S3.025). In 2019-20 the corresponding numbers were 173 proposals and \$6.7 million in secured external funding.

Table III.1: Internal Funding

Initiative	FY 18		FY 19		FY 20	
	No. of awards	Awards total	No. of awards	Awards total	No. of Awards	Awards total
BTU Funding Total	61	\$176,088	71	\$203,999	74	\$192,281
FDRC Funding	16	\$98,704	28	\$148,000	26	\$144,319
SET Funding	9	\$82,479	10	\$125,614	9	\$113,127
External Funding	177	\$14,966,767	133	\$12,069,844	Forthcoming	Forthcoming
TOTAL	263	\$15,324,038	242	\$12,547,457	109	\$449,727

Source, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

COVID-19 has affected grant awards in a range of ways that has resulted in an income decline; these include the termination of existing projects and the slow down for funds disbursements associated with multi-year projects. The OSPR is identifying COVID-19-associated funding opportunities that align with the university's mission and academic expertise. A COVID-19 "think tank" was formed to consider major grant opportunities and how we might organize to take advantage of synergies for these opportunities among various entities on campus.

The FACET and OSPR are collaborating to use the potential COVID-19-induced decline in application submissions to offer faculty professional development that will enhance the chances of grant funding application success. This "Wellspring" initiative (S2.026) brings together representatives from BTU, FACET, Advancement, and OSPR to mentor faculty in the development of project ideas. Additionally, using self-support funding from indirect cost revenue, OSPR announced a small pilot program that will provide faculty with up to \$10,000 to gather pilot data and/or take other steps to better position them to prepare an external grant, within a year of the pilot funds' expiration. OSPR anticipates three or four awards of this kind annually.

Towson University regularly recognizes faculty whose achievements in scholarly activity, teaching, service, and mentoring are especially exemplary. A faculty committee reviews nominations of candidates for annual awards, and both nominees and awardees are recognized. The USM's annual Regents' Faculty Awards also recognizes faculty's achievements across the system. In 2017, six Towson University [faculty received awards](#) (S3.027), more than any other USM institution. In 2018, [five faculty received USM Regents' Faculty Awards](#) (S3.028), with one specific to scholarship. In 2019, USM honored [Professor Vincent Thomas](#) (S3.029) with the award for his creative contributions and innovations in Dance. In 2020, four faculty received USM Regents' Faculty Awards, one in scholarship, one in public service, and two in mentoring.

Faculty Review (Criterion 2e)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Appointment Rank and Tenure (ART) [policy and procedures](#) (S3.030) govern faculty personnel actions related to annual review, promotion, and the granting of tenure for faculty and permanent status for librarians. All full-time faculty are required to submit to their department and college a self-evaluation of their scholarly activity, teaching and advising, and service each year. A departmental faculty committee and chairs review these evaluations independently as part of an annual merit review.

Department chairs, promotion, tenure, reappointment and merit (PTRM) committees, and deans evaluate tenure-track faculty for reappointment. At the end of the fall semester of a tenure track faculty member's third academic year the faculty member participates in a formal Third Year Review. The faculty member submits a comprehensive portfolio that the department chair and department PTRM committee evaluates. The review is developmental in nature, assesses progress toward tenure, and provides advice and mentoring where required. This report is shared with the dean.

Tenure review occurs in the "Mandatory Tenure-Review Year" specified in the faculty member's contract, typically the faculty member's sixth year of continuous, full-time service. The requirements for this review are clearly stated and shared with faculty annually as part of their review. Every five years post-tenure faculty complete a [Comprehensive Five-Year Review](#) (S3.030) for evaluation of their continuing evolution of teaching and advising, service, and scholarship or creative activities. The ART policy outlines procedures for these reviews. This policy is currently under revision by a faculty committee.

The [policy on the employment of lecturers](#) (S3.031) details procedures for the review and evaluation of lecturers. The primary area of evaluation for lecturers is teaching effectiveness, as teaching is typically 80% of a lecturer's workload. Scholarship, defined for lecturers as maintenance of teaching currency, and service comprise the remaining 20% of the workload. The [policy for clinical faculty evaluation, reappointment, promotion and merit](#) (S3.032) details procedures for the review and evaluation of clinical faculty.

Academic Programs' Description (Criterion 3)

The university's [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) catalogs, both easily accessible on the university's website, provide detailed information on academic programs of study, including admissions standards where relevant, credit totals, pre-requisites, matriculation requirements, and graduation requirements. Additionally, the Office of the Registrar maintains the Academic Requirements module in PeopleSoft, which produces a degree audit accessible to undergraduate and graduate students via their Towson Online Services Student Center. The Academic Requirements report is an interactive report that illustrates a student's fulfillment of Towson University degree requirements, units earned toward graduation, and completion of major, minor and/or certificate coursework. It clearly identifies remaining requirements for declared academic program(s) and students, staff, and advisors can use it to track academic progress.

The Academic Advising Center also communicates undergraduate graduation requirements, expectations, and resources via the [New Student and Family Program](#) (S3.033). To ensure that students are aware of academic requirements and their progress towards a degree, the university requires students to complete and update their [Individualized Degree Completion Plan](#) (S3.034). Students who have not completed their Individualized Degree Completion plan in the semester where they complete forty-five credits receive a registration hold until they submit their plan. This important document serves as an academic roadmap for students, identifying not only the courses needed to complete their desired degree, but also the course sequence and recommended or required timing of courses for successful completion.

Academic Support Services (Criterion 4)

Towson University students have access to rich academic resources to support their success. The Albert S. Cook Library's collections, spaces, and services, including its course-integrated library instruction program, are integral components of the academic experience. In addition, the university provides academic support by both faculty and staff through various programs and means, such as the [First Year Experience \(FYE\) Advising Program](#), (S3.035) and the Undergraduate [Academic Advising Center](#) (S3.036). Additionally, the university provides support through the [Tutoring and Learning Center](#) (S3.037) that offers programming to support general academic skills and course-specific skills in students' achievement of academic goals. The Mathematics Department offers [specialized tutoring](#) (S3.038) for students requiring assistance in MATH 231 *Basic Statistics*.

As is becoming increasingly clear, academic advising is a critical component to student retention and graduation, and TU has devoted considerable resources to this effort. The mission of the Academic Advising Center is to ensure that informed, effective, and easily accessible academic advising, which addresses individual needs and interests, is available to every undergraduate student at TU. The Academic Advising Center's professional advisors all fulfill the goal of providing guidance and support for new and continuing students. Upon declaration of a major, the major department assigns a departmental academic advisor. Students who have not yet declared a major continue to work with the professional advisors in the Academic Advising Center.

The Academic Advising Center coordinates three main programs for students in academic jeopardy:

- The *Transfer Students who are on Academic Warning Program* is available for transfer students after their first semester. Transfer students constitute the largest population on academic warning at TU. Students participating in this program must attend two advising sessions with a professional academic advisor and receive academic coaching from a learning specialist in the Tutoring and Learning Center.

- The *Students on Academic Warning* Program is available for students who have not achieved good academic standing for one or two semesters. Students in this program must participate in at least one of the following intervention events: additional academic advising, academic coaching, or workshop(s) sponsored by the Tutoring and Learning Center related to achieving academic success.
- The *Academic Renewal Program (ARP)* provides an alternative to students who are placed on academic suspension allowing them continued enrollment as they begin their 24-credit period of academic probation. The student signs a contract specifying terms of the program, which includes mandatory advising through the Academic Advising Center each semester while on probation, a limit of 13 credits per semester, and a satisfactory completion of a seven-week, one-credit study course offered by the Tutoring & Learning Center. The program is optional, but approximately two-thirds of the students who are academically suspended choose to be in the program. Over the last nine years, 56% of ARP students achieved good academic standing, 31% continued on academic probation, and only 13% were dismissed or dropped out.

Before COVID-19, the Academic Advising Center launched a new initiative to work with transfer students prior to matriculation by having center representatives visit area Maryland community colleges each semester to meet with potential transfer students. This initiative will resume as health guidelines permit.

The [Tutoring and Learning Center](#) (S3.037) provides study skills workshops and course-specific peer tutoring, assisting students to achieve their academic goals. The university's [Writing Center](#) (S3.039) provides writing guidance to all students, supporting any stage of the writing process. While these supports are critical for student success, information about them is decentralized and not always easy to access, making it difficult for students to see the wide array of academic support services available to them. Providing better communication, including a more centralized webpage that identifies all support programs would provide prospective and current students with better clarity.

Additionally, one of the current challenges for students is that these academic support services are scattered across the physical campus, making it difficult to access multiple supports and further reducing the visibility of these critically important units. In her inaugural address to faculty in August 2019, the provost announced her intent to explore building a one-stop shop for academic support services in Cook Library. The One-Stop Shop will co-locate important academic support services such as the Advising Center, Writing Center, Tutoring, and a Math Center so that students have easy access to multiple sources for assistance. The effort is now in the planning stages, with an architectural firm consulting with stakeholders to prepare a design.

While many student-support initiatives and services are available to any student, the university continues to strive to support first-generation, low-income, and culturally diverse students by fostering their academic achievement, personal development, and campus-wide involvement. This priority has aided the institution in closing the [achievement gap](#) (S3.040) and students from underrepresented groups now graduate at the same or higher rate as all students. Towson University's success in this area is a significant achievement, one unmatched nationally at a university of this size and with our student diversity, and is a source of immense pride. [Student success programs](#) (S3.041) such as Generation One, Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE), and Towson Opportunities in STEM (TOPS) aim to provide first-year students from underrepresented groups with a sense of belonging by supporting their academic progress and campus involvement through peer mentorship networks and co-curricular

offerings. Chapter IV, “Support of the Student Experience” discusses in more detail support services that have aided closure of the achievement gap.

As noted above, the [TIGER Way initiative](#) (S3.042) specifically focuses on assessing and improving the experience of transfer, international, and graduate students. TU’s Transfer Mentor Program, the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO), and the Office of Graduate Studies provide orientation and programming for these student populations. The TIGER Way initiative resulted in the ISSO:

- Developing [Global Student Learning Outcomes](#) (S3.043) to guide all programs and services that the office mission reflects.
- Revising the International Orientation to include multiple BlackBoard learning modules
- Revising the website to include frequent immigration updates.
- Increasing and enhancing immigration education.
- Enhancing co-curricular programming.

As a result of an increase in Graduate Assistant (GA) lines associated with TIGER Way, the [Writing Center](#) employed two new GAs to support graduate students, a third GA line has been assigned to international initiatives, and a fourth GA line was deployed to support recruitment, marketing, and continued development of the [accelerated bachelor’s to graduate programs](#). These resources provide value to both students (i.e., job experience, stipend, and tuition waiver) and the university in meeting graduation and recruitment goals.

The campus features a wide range of learning spaces, from traditional classrooms to small group seminar rooms, to labs, including many that include technology to support teaching and learning. The Classroom and Computer Lab Technology (CCLT) group, within the Office of Technology Services, develops and delivers comprehensive classroom and instructional technology services. COVID-19 brought into sharper relief the benefits that the university accrued from a current directory of technology-equipped campus classrooms. This directory provides documentation about and images of each classroom and its devices, with contact information to whom users should direct technology support requests. When the university moved to remote education in March 2020, the CCLT group immediately began upgrading technology in dozens of classrooms

to allow simultaneous delivery of instruction in both a face-to-face and an online environment. While a crisis prompted this upgrade, its lasting impact will allow greater flexibility in instructional modality.

General Education (Criterion 5; RoA 8, 9, 10)

Towson University launched its current Core Curriculum general education program in fall 2011. The General Education Review Committee, comprised of deans, student representatives, Student Affairs representatives, and faculty of each college designed the curriculum after significant consultation with the broader TU community. The Core focuses on five areas: essential skills required of a college graduate; use of inquiry and critical judgement to make decisions; exploration and integration of knowledge; interpretation and evaluation of human values; and diversity and global awareness. These learning areas align with the university’s mission to prepare graduates to be effective service-minded ethical leaders, engaged citizens in a diverse society, and support the university’s three institutional priorities of academic excellence, student success, and institutional equity and diversity. Students successfully completing the Core curriculum are fully prepared to succeed in their chosen academic field.

The Core Curriculum requires completion of fourteen courses (or thirteen for transfer students) with forty to forty-six credits in four thematic areas. The university has certified over 400 courses for the Core. Table III.2 provides more details on structure and expected outcomes. The certification process includes review and approval by department curriculum committees, college curriculum committees, and the [Core Curriculum Reporting Committee](#) (a subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee) (S3.044).

The large number of credits in the Core can affect students’ ability to complete minors or certificate programs, particularly in highly prescribed majors. In some extreme cases, students may only have one or two electives during their entire undergraduate career.

Table III.2: Core Curriculum General Education Requirements

Theme	Area	Learning Outcomes
Fundamentals	Towson Seminar	<p>Prepare and present a compelling substantive interpretation, argument, and/or analysis of a problem or issue in a research paper</p> <p>Gather and use academic resources effectively and according to the standards and rules of academic integrity in formulating and presenting a substantive interpretation, argument, and/or analysis of a problem or issue</p> <p>Understand and evaluate the nature and possible causes and implications of events, behavior, problems and issues from an informed and intellectually balanced perspective</p> <p>Connect concepts and empirical evidence in logically coherent, valid and compelling ways</p> <p>Understand and appreciate social and cultural differences among individuals, groups and societies, and to engage and learn from others with different backgrounds and perspectives in constructive ways, when appropriate to the topic</p> <p>Participate responsibly and effectively in group efforts to address and solve problems, where appropriate within the course format</p>
	English Composition	<p>Write academic essays that effectively and appropriately respond to specific rhetorical situations</p> <p>Improve literacy skills, including the ability to read and analyze a variety of texts</p> <p>Organize an essay around a sound central idea supported by relevant material</p> <p>Organize supporting material with a discernible and logical plan</p> <p>Present ideas in complex and effective sentences relatively free from mechanical errors</p> <p>Support and share ideas and opinions with confidence</p>
	Mathematics	<p>Construct and evaluate logical arguments</p> <p>Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve mathematical problems</p> <p>Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics</p> <p>Organize and consolidate mathematical thinking through written and oral communication</p>
	Creativity and Creative Development	<p>Apply in practice a range of expression within a specific art while exhibiting rigorous standards of technique</p> <p>Demonstrate content knowledge through an analysis and synthesis of representative examples, ideas and skills</p> <p>Articulate by means appropriate to the discipline the ways in which theory and practice meet in the creation of the specific art form. These means may include verbal, written and observable products and/or presentations.</p> <p>Show how history, aesthetics, form and composition, techniques and/or pedagogy contribute to the process of creative development</p>
Ways of knowing	Arts and Humanities	<p>Discuss the context and structures of cultural traditions [in terms] of literature, art, music, culture or society</p> <p>Describe important movements and processes that have affected the cultural heritage of a particular group</p> <p>Use methodologies associated with the study of cultural traditions in the arts and humanities to reflect on the experiences of a particular society</p> <p>Engage in a critical assessment of how the student's own experience has been affected by particular cultural traditions in the arts and humanities</p>
	Social and Behavioral Sciences	<p>Articulate relevant basic assumptions, concepts, theoretical constructs and factual information of the social and behavior sciences</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of relevant social and behavioral science methodologies</p> <p>Apply appropriate problem-solving skills in discipline-specific contexts</p> <p>Apply disciplinary knowledge from the social and behavioral sciences to contemporary ethical or social issues</p>
	Biological and Physical Sciences	<p>Utilize scientific vocabulary and examples to describe major ideas appropriate to a specific scientific discipline</p> <p>Use quantitative reasoning to analyze and/or support scientific information</p> <p>Identify, describe critique, respond to, and construct the various components of the scientific process such as observations, inferences, operational definitions, aspects of scientific design, conclusions, control of variables, etc.</p> <p>Explain scientific issues of current importance to society within scientific, technological, historical, societal and ethical contexts.</p>

Table III.2: Core Curriculum General Education Requirements

Theme	Area	Learning Outcomes
Writing	Writing Seminar	<p>Recognize and employ models and practices of written communication specific to a particular discipline or profession</p> <p>Recognize and employ techniques of formatting and documentation appropriate to a particular discipline or profession</p> <p>Integrate material effectively from outside sources into their own prose</p> <p>Analyze and evaluate complex discipline-based claims and current research questions</p> <p>Demonstrate a developed ability to compose clear, effective prose, including through the practice of revision</p> <p>Produce professional prose that follows accepted conventions of grammar, punctuation and style</p>
Perspectives	Metropolitan Perspectives	<p>Explain characteristic features of a metropolis and explore how persistent problems, institutional transformations, and creative expression may emerge from this environment</p> <p>Demonstrate their ability to interpret, evaluate, compare and critique the views and experiences of particular social, economic and cultural groups in the metropolis</p> <p>Articulate how an individual or a group may have access to influencing public decisions in the metropolis, how they may pursue collective ends, or how they may contribute to community well-being</p> <p>Apply critical analysis to a specific topic or question in order to delineate constituent elements of the situation, to define challenges that are faced, and to examine the potential for constructive resolution or development</p> <p>Recognize the different methods and standards of inquiry that lie behind the evidence they use to develop an argument and be able to relate that understanding to differences of opinion among informed commentators or across different fields of study</p>
	The United States as a Nation	<p>Speak to what characterizes the United States as a nation, whether through consideration of American culture and society primarily as a distinctive tradition or through comparison and contrast with other societies and cultures</p> <p>Define one or more major issues involving American experience past or present and to discuss more than one perspective on those issues</p> <p>Demonstrate a reasonable command of specific knowledge pertinent to the central issues of the course and should demonstrate an ability to use that knowledge in a substantive analysis applying their own judgments and expressing their own understanding</p>
	Global Perspectives	<p>Learn how to examine the influence of major forces of global change such as social, cultural, religious, economic, political and technological processes and patterns in the world</p> <p>Acquire an understanding of the global or world context and of the major processes and patterns in the world that are transforming relations among different nations and/or cultural groups</p> <p>Develop a better understanding of how their own society relates to the global context and become better prepared to make decisions that reflect this understanding</p>
	Diversity and Difference	<p>Discuss some of the ways in which group distinctiveness is defined in social contexts</p> <p>Demonstrate understanding of a perspective other than their own (even if they are members of a group whose experience is emphasized in the course)</p> <p>Present and respond to a position with which they differ in a fair and balanced argument</p> <p>Define at a general level some of the challenges and opportunities presented by the existence of diversity and difference</p> <p>Articulate their own outlook in relation to the topics discussed and to make explicit their associated beliefs and assumptions</p>
	Ethical Issues and Perspectives	<p>Gather and analyze evidence from a variety of sources pertinent to the issue under study, including materials that might support opposing points of view</p> <p>Evaluate the logic of persuasive rhetoric in arguments for all major positions on a topic and formulate cogent counter-arguments to each one</p> <p>Articulate an understanding of the ethical dimensions of significant issues or dilemmas under study</p> <p>Construct and assess possible solutions to problems or dilemmas within an informed ethical and societal context</p> <p>Communicate arguments and conclusions effectively and clearly</p>

With a growing interest in adding professional certificate programs to enhance student learning outcomes and workforce readiness, begun preliminary discussions of ensuring that graduates have a “degree plus,” an undergraduate degree “plus” a professional certificate, badge or an alternative credential at a retreat. This developing idea, and the desire to increase TU’s four-year graduation rate, prompts a planned assessment of both the Core curriculum and high-credit majors.

Graduate Education (Criterion 6)

The [Office of Graduate Studies](#) oversees graduate education. The office’s mission is to provide resources, services, and leadership that support and guide the university’s graduate programs. The Graduate Studies Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Senate, supports these efforts by overseeing and maintaining standards for program rigor. To ensure this rigor the [Graduate Studies Committee](#) requires that new courses receive approval from the committee (S3.045).

Each graduate program has a [Graduate Program Director](#) (S3.046), responsible for admissions, planning and marketing, administration, course development, graduation clearances, and program evaluation. Graduate Program Directors also oversee advising and orientation. As of fall 2020, these program directors support 3,187 students in eighty-nine graduate programs, and support and leverage more than 435 faculty member’s skills and knowledge.

Towson University provides appropriate on-campus resources designed to support graduate student research and scholarship. [The Albert S. Cook library](#) (S3.047) offers graduate students specialized support, including a Graduate Reading Room, extended borrowing loan program, and document delivery options. The library appoints subject librarians to support both graduate programs and students. Graduate-specific funding opportunities also exist to support [student research and scholarship](#) often associated with faculty external grants (S3.048). The Office of Graduate Studies offers [Terminal Degree Fellowships](#) on a competitive basis (S3.049) for graduate students that provide tuition waivers and stipends.

The Office of Graduate Studies and other units across campus offer assistantship opportunities for graduate students that enhance their educational experience. Graduate students may apply for assistantships in the areas of teaching and research. Graduate students can pursue two levels of [research assistantships](#) (S3.050). Graduate Research I assistants work under the direct supervision of a faculty mentor and emphasize supporting faculty-led research. Faculty also supervise Graduate Research II assistants, who typically conduct original research related to a faculty mentor’s research expertise.

Students can apply to the [Graduate Student Association](#) (GSA) (S3.051) for monetary support in three categories: professional development, travel to attend or present at a scholarly event (more than seventy awards annually), and materials to support their research. The Graduate Studies Committee also supports and recognizes student research through annual awards for [“outstanding scholarly and creative works”](#) (S3.048).

Third Party Vendors (Criterion 7)

Towson University does not contract with third-party vendors to deliver academic programs, with the exception of some international programs. The Towson University Study Abroad Office maintains a portfolio of approved study abroad options, including opportunities offered in collaboration with institutional partners and third-party affiliate providers. The Study Abroad Office has developed a [formal partner-provider assessment tool](#) (S3.052) to evaluate potential partnerships in consultation with the respective academic departments. The Study Abroad office reviews the information collected using the Forum on Education Standards of Good Practice as a guide to assess each institution/provider. The [Standards of Good Practice](#) (S3.053) provide a framework for program development, management, and assessment.

Students who wish to study abroad in a program not in the approved portfolio must submit a petition through the Study Abroad web-based management system for review by the [Petitions Subcommittee of the Faculty Committee on Study Abroad](#) (FCOSA) (S3.054). If the committee approves an individual petition, this approval does not signify that the program will become university affiliated or that it approves other students to pursue that program.

Program Assessment (Criterion 8)

Since 2014, the university has designed, implemented, and revised a comprehensive system of academic program assessment. Under the direction of the provost, the [Office of Academic Assessment](#) provides guidance for annual assessment of academic programs' student learning outcomes and Core Curriculum learning outcomes. The office has established a wide range of assessment tools and practices that aid faculty to collect and analyze assessment data. These include a detailed guide to the [Planning Module](#) (S3.055), the assessment software that the university deploys, and "911" [assessment workshops](#) (S3.056) that provide faculty with guidance and direction on assessment planning, analysis, and reporting.

Every academic program submits an annual report in November that the university reviews via an annual Assessment Day in January; one day is devoted to programs and another to the Core Curriculum. These days serve as an opportunity to discuss assessment analysis, results, and actions, encouraging and sharing good practice; rubrics provide a foundation for cross-disciplinary conversation at these workshops, with recommendations for improvement and revision. Chapter 5 will address this in detail including recent changes to the rubric and the provision of additional support to faculty engaged in assessment.

The university reviews academic programs every seven years, in accordance with the requirements of USM's [Academic Program Review](#) (S3.057). The university places all academic programs on a [regularly updated schedule](#) (S3.058) and the university has developed [guidelines specific to its requirements of Academic Program Review self-study](#) (S3.059). The program review has three constituent parts: departmental self-study, external review, and the USM report. The departmental self-study serves as impetus for the department to reflect upon its most recent seven years, contextualize its present, and envision a strategic path for its next seven years. The entire process is eighteen months long. It begins with an orientation event involving the Office of the Provost and each department at the beginning of the spring semester in year one. The self-study occurs during the spring and fall of year one, the external review visit and report in spring of year two, concluding with the completion of the report to USM in the fall/winter of year two. The [entire timeline](#) (S3.060)

then concludes with the discussion and approval or amendment of the reports to USM at the January meeting of the USM Board of Regents' Education Policy and Student Life Committee meetings in January of year two.

The external review includes analyses of program currency, identifies program strengths and challenges, describes the relationship of the department and its programs, and provides recommendations for program and department improvements. Having external evaluators review each program allows for an objective perspective on program successes and challenges.

The USM report includes enrollment and graduation data for each of the department's programs, summarizes the internal self-study and external review's major findings and recommendations, and details action plans to address recommendations. The USM Board of Regents reviews the report findings, and can ask questions before it approves the action plan formally, typically during its January meeting.

Assessment Exemplar - Review of Academic Departments – History Department

In 2018, the history department engaged in RAD. The program's self-study and external review (S3.061) identified the following recommendations to respond to challenges and opportunities identified in its self-study and external review.

1. Consideration and development of new thematic offerings.
2. Development of more flexible pathways that allow students, both majors and non-majors, to pursue their individual intellectual interests and career goals.
3. Reform of the department's approach to student advising.
4. Exponentially increasing and diversifying internship opportunities.

In fall 2018 and spring 2019, the department engaged in conversation to consider curricular reform and course development. It led to the development of both a Human Rights and History minor, that has proven a rapid success since its approval in the spring of 2019, and changes to the existing minor.

The Human Rights and History minor has demonstrated that there is a significant demand for history courses from non-major students beyond fulfilment of core curriculum requirements. Additionally, it prompted the department to alter the existing History minor to allow students to avail of a greater array of courses to fulfil the minor's requirements. Now one course is mandatory (HIST 300) and the remaining six courses being electives. Furthermore, this has prompted the nascent development of new courses in military history and the history of medicine, with others under consideration. This focus on student agency, rather than curricular sequencing, has proven successful. Students enrolled in the history minor has increased from twenty-seven in fall 2018 to forty-one in spring 2021, while the Minor in History increased enrollment from six in spring 2019 to nineteen in spring 2021. This approach to assessment has also shifted the department's focus from an arguably too narrow a focus on course content to communicating and facilitating the connections between history and other disciplines that students find compelling.

The self-study also identified challenges in faculty training and support to engage effectively in sustained and consistent student advising. In response, the department has deployed the [Student Success Collaborative \(Navigator\)](#) (S3.062) tool. It has allowed for systematic tracking of students' progress and aided identification of at risk students and the nature of the challenges they are experiencing. It has also identified students who have performed well but choose not to pursue history as either a major or either minor. In a few cases, this has prompted students to complete the requirements for a minor but results are tentative and require continued review.

The department remains committed to increasing and diversifying internship opportunities, but the pandemic hampered progress. The department has worked with the Career Center to develop the foundation of success and it was in part an assessment undertaken by the Career Center that prompted the department's development of the Human Rights and History in which an internship is mandatory (HIST 495)²

Conclusion

Towson University fully meets Standard III and its associated Requirements of Affiliation. The university offers both undergraduates and graduate students a rigorous education, well supported by numerous offices with responsibilities from supporting students with academic challenges to challenging high achieving students to stretch their academic abilities. The faculty are well prepared and are dedicated to student learning.

Recommendations

1. Assess and revise the evaluation of teaching, including peer and student evaluations.
2. Establish the Academic One-Stop Shop in Cook Library.
3. Review the structure and relevancy of the Core curriculum and its impact on time to degree to inform modifications.
4. Develop the "degree plus" concept and expand number of credentials and professional certifications in academic departments to enhance students' experience and readiness for the evolving workplace.

² More detail on the Career Center's assessment activities in this area are found in Chapter IV, p. 158.

Sources

- (S3.001) Mission and Institutional Objectives
- (S3.002) Presidential Priorities
- (S3.003) Cyber Defense Education and Operations
- (S3.004) M.S. Applied Information Technology
- (S3.005) Program Concept Review Group
- (S3.006) University Curriculum Committee
- (S3.007) Graduate Studies Committees
- (S3.008) Courseleaf
- (S3.009) Course Approval Review Committee
- (S3.010) Course Evaluations
- (S3.011) Promotion and Tenure Policies
- (S3.012) Catalog – Faculty
- (S3.013) Graduate Faculty Status
- (S3.014) University policies and procedures, 02-01.07
Policy on the employment of adjunct faculty
- (S3.015) Faculty Academic Center for Excellence at
Towson (FACET)
- (S3.016) FACET Fellows
- (S3.017) Online Faculty and Course
Development Support
- (S3.018) January 2020 Teaching Conference
- (S3.019) FACET services
- (S3.020) Faculty resources for remote teaching
- (S3.021) University Policies and Procedures, 02-02.02
Towson University policy on sabbatical leave
- (S3.022) BTU Funding
- (S3.023) School of Emerging Technologies –
seed funding
- (S3.024) Faculty Development and Research
Committee Grants
- (S3.025) Sponsored program activity, 2018-19
- (S3.026) “Wellspring Initiative”
- (S3.027) 2017 USM Regents Awards
- (S3.028) 2018 USM Regents Awards
- (S3.029) 2019 USM Regents Awards – Vincent Thomas
- (S3.030) University Policies and Procedures, 02-01.00
Towson University policy on appointment,
rank, and tenure of faculty
- (S3.031) University Policies and Procedures, 02-01.05
Towson University policy on employment of
lecturers
- (S3.032) University Policies and Procedures, 02-01.08
Towson University policy on clinical faculty
evaluation, reappointment, promotion,
and merit
- (S3.033) Academic Advising New Student Guide
- (S3.034) Degree Completion Plan
- (S3.035) First Year Experience Advising Program
- (S3.036) Academic Advising Center
- (S3.037) Tutoring and Learning Center
- (S3.038) Mathematics Specialized Tutoring
- (S3.039) Writing Center
- (S3.040) Achievement Gap
- (S3.041) Student success programs
- (S3.042) TIGER Way
- (S3.043) International Students & Scholars Office –
Global Student Learning Outcomes
- (S3.044) Core Curriculum Review Committee
- (S3.045) Graduate Studies Committee
- (S3.046) Graduate Program Directors Job Description
and Appointment
- (S3.047) Albert S. Cook Library – Graduate Students
- (S3.048) Graduate Research Opportunities and Awards
- (S3.049) Graduate Fellowships and Scholarships
- (S3.050) Research Assistantships
- (S3.051) Graduate Student Association funding
- (S3.052) Partner-provider assessment tool
- (S3.053) Standards of Good Practice
- (S3.054) Faculty Committee on Study Abroad
- (S3.055) Planning Module
- (S3.056) “911” Assessment Workshops
- (S3.057) USM Academic Program Review
- (S3.058) Review of Academic Departments Schedule
- (S3.059) Review of Academic Departments Guidebook
- (S3.060) Review of Academic Departments Timeline
- (S3.061) Department of History, Review of
Academic Department 2018
- (S3.062) Student Success Collaborative



**Standard IV:
Support of the Student Experience**



Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Requirements of Affiliation addressed in Standard IV

- **Requirements 8:** The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- **Requirement 10:** Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.

The university meets the requirements of Standard IV and its associated Requirements of Affiliation through its extensive lattice of offices, operations, and programs that promote successful student outcomes consistent with the institutional mission. Towson University is mission-focused on serving students. All institutional energies, resources, and practices directly or indirectly address the student experience. *TU 2020: A Focused Vision for Towson University* (S4.001) identifies student success as the first priority and addresses academic programming, co-curricular activities, wellness, and accessibility. This focus on student success remains in the institution's *TU Strategic Plan for 2020-2030: Leadership for the Public Good* (S4.002), which declares a commitment to "academic excellence providing exceptional, student-centered educational experiences" as its first and foremost goal. Additionally, the 2020-2030 strategic plan asserts

We will recruit, retain and graduate students of the highest caliber, offer outstanding student success services, and provide an engaging campus experience that reflects the educational values of Towson University and produces graduates prepared for careers or advanced education. (S4.002)

An intentional focus on student outcomes throughout university operations is key to meeting institutional mission and values our retention and completion rates reflect this success.

To enhance the university's emphasis on viewing students holistically, in 2019 the Vice President of Student Affairs reporting line was moved under the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. This organizational structure better communicates to the campus community the important alignment of these divisions, and offers an opportunity for increased collaborations in pursuit of student success.

Access and Success (Criterion 1)

Towson University is committed to ethical recruitment of students who will thrive in our classrooms and on our campus. The university continues to invest in programs and supports for student success and in support of its institutional mission, many of which Chapter III addresses. These efforts include encouraging and supporting academic excellence, access, affordability, and inclusion and equity. Towson University strives for a holistic approach to student success; that this approach has been successful is evident in the graduation rates of students. Figures IV.1 and IV.2 reflect the university's success in key performance indicators.

Figure IV.1: First-Time, Full-Time Graduation Rates

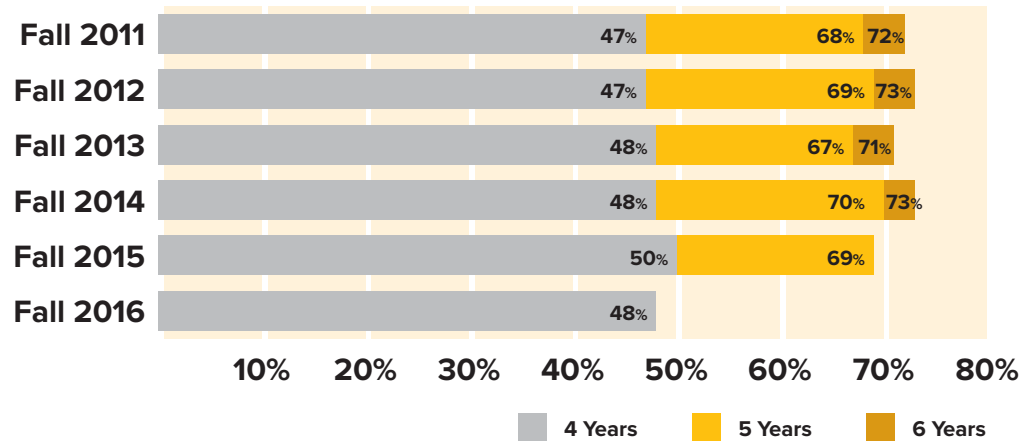


Figure IV.2: Transfer Student Graduation Rates

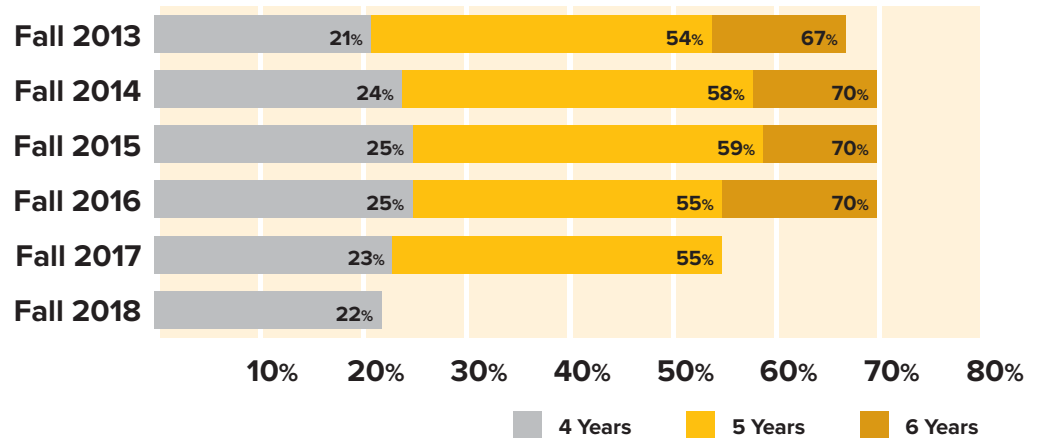


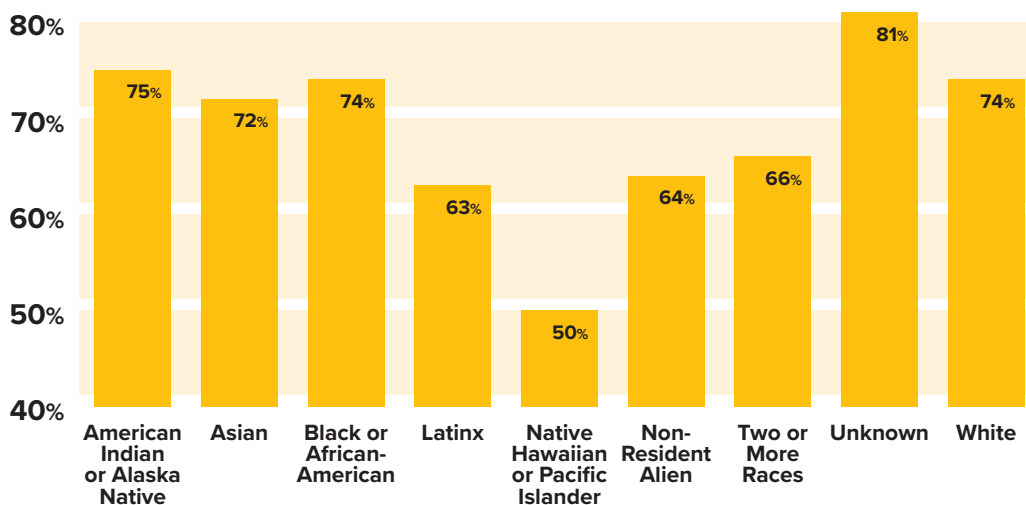
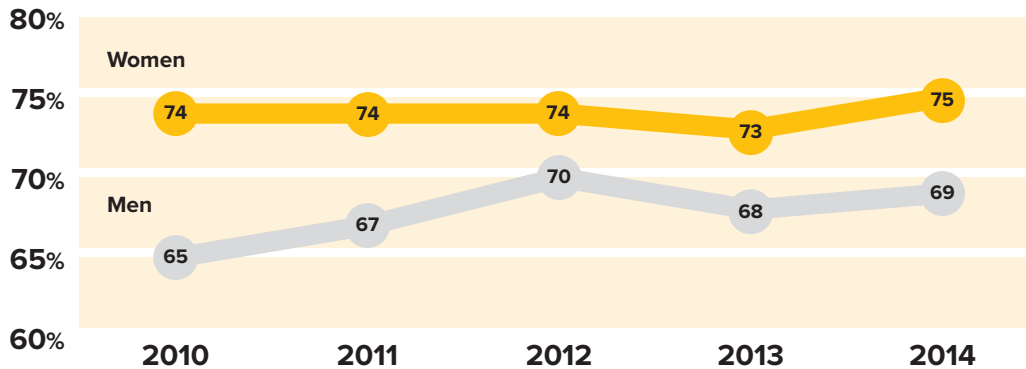
Table IV.1: Foreign/Non-Resident Alien First-Time Full-Time Graduation Rates

Foreign / Nonresident Alien First-Time / Full Time Students	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
cohort size	36	29	27	37	22	45	33	35	38	27	15
enrolled 2nd fall	86%	83%	63%	84%	73%	84%	73%	66%	82%	67%	n/a
enrolled 3rd fall	72%	69%	48%	70%	68%	84%	67%	43%	79%	n/a	n/a
enrolled in or graduated by 4th fall	64%	69%	44%	68%	68%	82%	61%	37%	n/a	n/a	n/a
4-year graduation rate	39%	45%	26%	41%	64%	60%	33%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-year graduation rate	53%	55%	44%	59%	64%	78%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6-year graduation rate	64%	66%	44%	65%	64%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table IV.2: Retention and Graduation Rates of First-Time Full-Time Students

All First-Time / Full-Time Students	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
cohort size	2,428	2,545	2,463	2,747	2,711	2,708	2,750	2,735	2,990	2,789	2,380
enrolled 2nd fall	84%	85%	86%	85%	86%	85%	85%	85%	86%	85%	n/a
enrolled 3rd fall	78%	79%	79%	78%	80%	80%	78%	78%	79%	n/a	n/a
enrolled in or graduated by 4th fall	75%	77%	77%	75%	78%	77%	75%	74%	n/a	n/a	n/a
4-year graduation rate	46%	47%	47%	48%	48%	50%	48%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-year graduation rate	66%	68%	69%	67%	69%	69%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6-year graduation rate	71%	72%	73%	71%	73%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figure IV.3: First-Time, Full-Time Six Year Graduation Rate by Gender and Race/Ethnicity



Towson University has maintained a six-year graduation rate of between 71% and 73% for its four most recent cohorts (fall 2011 through fall 2014) of first-time full-time students. These recent rates continue a trend of improvement from a low of 64% for the fall 2005 cohort of students. The graduation rate of African-American/Black students, TU’s largest group of racial/ethnic minority students, has exceeded the overall graduation rate for each of the four most recent cohorts, providing evidence of Towson University’s commitments and efforts to close the graduation rate achievement gap for first-time students that can be found at many institutions.

However, figure IV.3 illustrates opportunities to enhance these outcomes. Incoming transfer students’ four-year graduation rate has ranged between 67% and 70% for the four most recent cohorts (fall 2013 through fall 2016). The graduation rate of African-American/Black transfer students has averaged approximately eight percentage points below the overall average, showing opportunities

for continued work to close this achievement gap. Graduation rates for international students are also below the overall average.

TU continues to expand on previously initiated programs to facilitate student success, including: tracking at-risk students, enhanced transfer-student advising, enhanced tutoring and study skills workshops, increased resources for low-income and first-generation academic support programs, and analytics software to facilitate student advising and course scheduling. These initiatives have helped eliminate the undergraduate “achievement gap.”

In addition to these programs designed to assist students who may be struggling academically, TU offers an array of high impact educational activities that increase student retention and success. These include the [Honors College \(S4.003\)](#) that features experiential and advanced learning opportunities in interdisciplin-

ary studies, research, and fieldwork. The [Office of Civic Engagement](#) (S4.004) provides support for students and faculty to integrate service learning into academic courses (described in detail in Chapter Two). The [Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry \(URCI\)](#) (S4.005) program offers programs and services to engage students in research and creative activity through mentored scholarship, travel grants, and Research Impact Awards. Additional high impact practices include [residential learning communities](#) (S4.006) and the [Towson Seminar](#) (S4.007), also referred to as TSEM. The TSEM is a required course for first-year undergraduate students that students must take within the first two semesters of matriculation. The seminar focuses on exploration and discovery, introducing students to the academic expectations for college-level work and to the intellectual, communication, and collaborative skills needed for academic success.

Study Abroad and Study Away are also high impact practices that provide experiential learning experiences for students to gain alternative and/or global perspectives beyond the boundaries of the TU campus. In support of the mission, these opportunities foster intellectual inquiry and critical thinking to empower students on their lifelong path to becoming socially responsible, engaged citizens of the world. Each year approximately 400 students participate in a wide variety of study abroad/away programs in over sixty countries and the U.S. while earning credits towards their degree. Financial aid and institutionally funded scholarships are available for Study Abroad and Study Away.

Accurate and Comprehensive Information (Criterion 1a)

Towson University provides transparent, accurate, and comprehensive tuition, fees, and aid information via the [Financial Aid Office](#) (S4.008) and [Bursar's Office](#) (S4.009) websites. The [Financial Aid Office](#) (S4.008) provides information to prospective and current students on a variety of programs (including scholarships, grants, loans, and student employment), application instructions (including instructions on the FAFSA process), and a calendar that outlines month-by-month deadlines in the aid process. Also available are resources for reviewing aid offers, accepting aid, borrowing, and maintaining eligibility to receive aid. Guidance on how aid disbursements and rebates link to billing; instructions on required loan counseling for first-time federal loan borrowers; and a collection of forms, online services, and FAQs are also provided.

The [Bursar's Office](#) (S4.009) manages student billing, payments, and rebates and disseminates comprehensive information on tuition, fees, billing, deadlines, and tax information via its website. The website also hosts a student billing, payment, and deferred payment portal; information on tuition and fees; guidance on off-campus tuition and fees; and comprehensive information about costs to current and prospective students. To promote transparency, a single page provides [Projected Four-Year University Costs](#) (S4.010) for full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students (Maryland and non-Maryland residents). The site also provides comprehensive information on housing costs, meal plan costs, and student health insurance.

To ensure maximum use of available scholarship funds, the Towson University Foundation oversees a program, [Blackbaud Award Management System](#) (S4.011), for the awarding of TU Foundation scholarships. The program emails students once scholarships are open and the system automatically fitting them to scholarships given their enrollment information. University administrators then use this program to select recipients, track awarding progress, and communicate with scholarship stewards. The software helps ensure that private scholarships are awarded to students who match certain criteria and that available scholarship funds are awarded in a manner commensurate with donor intent.

Placement and Educational Goals (Criterion 1b)

The university provides a variety of placement testing and services to place students where they have the best chance at success. Mathematics placement testing is required of nearly all admitted first-year students and many transfer students, depending on the individual student’s major and any incoming college math credit. Results of the [mathematics placement test](#) (S4.012) inform student placement in the most appropriate course in the math [pathway](#) (S4.013) in which the student’s math requirement resides. Pathways are broadly delineated by those that are algebra intensive and those that are non-algebra intensive. First-Year Experience Advisors (see below) and/or major advisors direct students toward one of those pathways and courses.

Foreign language placement testing is required for students who do not have college-level credit for French, German, or Spanish, and wish to register for classes in any of those languages. Results of the foreign-language placement tests identify the appropriate level of instruction. Enrollment in Spanish courses is particularly robust, and placement testing is particularly useful for identifying heritage speakers who possess some Spanish language abilities not documented through college coursework.

The university provides testing and placement of international students whose native language is not English. Administration of English-language competency for non-native speaking international students occurs each semester; a faculty member with the required expertise performs the test and evaluation. Students who demonstrate English competency commensurate with levels required for academic success can register for courses without further interventions. Students who do not demonstrate English competency in testing enroll in classes designed for non-native speakers to improve English language abilities.

The reading placement test evaluates undergraduate students’ ability to read and comprehend written material, informing placement in the appropriate classes; students who score below a threshold on the reading placement test take REED 102, a college-level proficiency course designed to help students become more efficient and effective in reading-intensive courses. Previously, the Reading Placement Test was taken by incoming first-year students who scored below 550 on the Verbal part of the SAT. Mature adult students and veterans will continue to be required to take the reading placement test as part of the admissions process, if they have been out of school for three or more years. In fall 2020 TU waived the Reading Placement Exam

Table IV.3: Freshman Transfer Program Retention/Graduation

Cohort	N	One-Year Retention Rate	Four-Year Graduation Rate	Five-year Graduation Rate	Six-Year Graduation Rate
Fall 2008	39	74%	28%	49%	56%
Fall 2009	151	78%	25%	55%	60%
Fall 2010	183	81%	35%	56%	62%
Fall 2011	201	76%	27%	53%	61%
Fall 2012	272	78%	29%	55%	62%
Fall 2013	193	81%	30%	55%	60%
Fall 2014	165	85%	36%	66%	73%
Fall 2015	184	89%	33%	60%	n/a
Fall 2016	180	83%	29%	n/a	n/a
Fall 2017	191	81%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fall 2018	165	75%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fall 2019	131	82%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fall 2020	144	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

due to COVID-19 as we were unable to offer the exam on campus in spring 2020. Additionally, the inability of many prospective students to take the SAT during the pandemic made it difficult to use those scores as a reliable measure of student preparedness for college-level reading. Given the well-known potential limitations of standardized exams such as the SAT and ACT, TU intends to offer test-optional admission in fall 2021 and will seek USM permission to do so permanently.

Applicants to the university who show promise but fall just short of full admission for undergraduates may receive admission to the [Freshman Transition Program](#) (S4.014), a partnership with the Community College of Baltimore County. Students in this program take courses on TU's campus offered by the community college faculty, but live in our residence halls and have full access to TU's support services. Students who achieve a 2.5 GPA or higher are granted full admission to Towson University in the spring semester. Students in the FTP program are retained and graduate at rates comparable to all other transfer students (Table IV.3).

Orientation, Advisement, and Counseling (Criterion 1c)

Towson University provides both [Freshmen Orientation](#) (S4.015) and [Transfer Student Orientation](#) (S4.016). It has received [national recognition](#) for its orientation programs' quality and efficacy (S4.017). Each spring the university invites anticipated fall first-year students to TU4U, a day of events that acts as a precursor to the orientation program. At [TU4U](#) (S4.018), admitted students learn about academic programs, student life, co-curricular activities, and have many structured and informal opportunities to meet faculty and staff. The formal Freshman Orientation program focuses on introducing first-time, first-year students to academics, campus, and student life, and is held in several sessions in the summer preceding a new student's fall matriculation. Small orientation groups, led in part by current students, prepare new students for their educational journeys. Families follow a concurrent schedule to learn about the institution so that they may support their student.

New Student and Family Programs created a new student leadership/student employee position (First Year Experience Leader) in 2019 to support the implementation of Welcome to TU programming. Individual interviews with 2019 student leaders provided an assessment that informed changes for the 2020 Welcome to TU program, including more small-group, hands-on training for peer leaders. The communication model also changed in 2020 based on feedback that the program over used some communication channels, causing confusion. Finally, the request that FYE leaders have more opportunities to meet with their incoming students prompted the development of an opportunity for them to attend optional meals with their small groups.

COVID-19 required the university's cancellation of face-to-face orientation events from spring 2020 through spring 2021. Consequently, the university invested in an online student orientation program that post-pandemic will enhance the traditional face-to-face program and serve as a resource for students and families who are unable to attend the summer orientation program. This new online program, offered for the first time in summer 2020, was a success with the majority (4,073; 94 %) of the incoming class participating.

In addition to the traditional first-time first-year students, Towson University serves a large population of transfer students, enrolling approximately [2,000 and 1,000 transfer students](#) each fall and spring semester respectively, and offers processes and programming to address transfer students' needs and to support their academic success. The [Transfer Student Center](#) (S4.019), housed within the Admissions Office, provides resources ranging from pre-transfer advising and transfer-credit evaluations for prospective and admitted transfer students to personalized advising and on-going support for enrolled students. To provide a seamless transition for transfer students, the Transfer Student Center partners with Maryland community colleges to create 2+2 degree completion plans and holds transfer recruitment events on site and at area community colleges. Staff from the Transfer Center, along with staff from Academic Advising and New Student and Family Programs, coordinate a [specialized orientation](#) (S4.016) each semester for transfer students. During orientation, transferring students meet faculty advisers in their majors who review their current progress toward a degree and guide them in the creation of their course schedules and registration for their first semester.

Towson University also offers transfer students one-on-one mentoring with a faculty or staff mentor through the [Transfer Mentor Program](#) (S4.020) to broaden students’ professional networks. The program also provides connections with volunteer faculty and staff who offer support and guidance in campus involvement, leadership skills, planning for graduate and professional school, and career planning. The program started in 2012 as an initiative of the President’s Leadership Institute and then moved to the New Student and Family Programs office in 2017. Since 2017, student participation has grown steadily from forty-three students to 116 in fall 2020. Staff and faculty participation was the highest ever in fall 2020 with 187 participants. Modifications in the program since spring 2020 include expanding the program length from the first semester to the first full year and adding a mental health newsletter.

Other Support Programs and Services

The [Students Achieve Goals through Education](#) (SAGE) (S4.021) program is one component of Towson University’s cultural diversity and student retention plan.

SAGE began in fall 1987 with ten students and a few faculty and staff members who served as mentors. In 1990, state budget cuts meant that faculty and staff could no longer receive compensation for mentoring students. However, the students found the program so beneficial they decided to assume peer mentor roles. By 2019, there were eighty peer mentors and with an average 400 freshman and transfer students participating in the program.

The [SAGE Residential Learning Community](#) (S4.022) offers peer mentorship to first-generation, first-year college students through a Housing and Residence Life experience. This learning community was established in fall 2014, in collaboration with the Center for Student Diversity, Housing & Residence Life, College of Liberal Arts, Academic Advising Center, and Tutoring & Learning Center. Forty-six first-year students and ten mentors who support them daily comprise this community. SAGE students’ success (see Tables IV.4 & 5) compare favorably with overall rates for first-time/full-time students (see Table IV.6).

Table IV.4: Retention and Graduation Rates for First-Time Full-Time Students Who Enrolled in SAGE

SAGE Program	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
cohort size (n=)	237	230	236	255	263	307	330	240	170
enrolled 2nd fall	90%	92%	91%	90%	90%	92%	91%	90%	n/a
enrolled 3rd fall	83%	87%	84%	86%	83%	85%	84%	n/a	n/a
enrolled in or graduated by 4th fall	81%	83%	79%	82%	81%	83%	n/a	n/a	n/a
4-year graduation rate	46%	49%	42%	51%	50%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-year graduation rate	71%	70%	72%	71%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6-year graduation rate	75%	76%	76%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table IV.5: Retention and Graduation Rates for First-Time Full-Time Students Who Enrolled in the SAGE Residential Program

SAGE Residential Program	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
cohort size (n=)	n/a	n/a	35	36	40	43	46	50	*
enrolled 2nd fall	n/a	n/a	97%	89%	93%	93%	93%	96%	n/a
enrolled 3rd fall	n/a	n/a	91%	92%	88%	88%	87%	n/a	n/a
enrolled in or graduated by 4th fall	n/a	n/a	89%	89%	85%	88%	n/a	n/a	n/a
4-year graduation rate	n/a	n/a	43%	39%	33%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-year graduation rate	n/a	n/a	74%	75%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6-year graduation rate	n/a	n/a	89%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Fall 2020 cohort was interrupted by the COVID pandemic

Table IV.6: Retention and Graduation Rates for All First-Time/Full-Time Students

	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
cohort size (n=)	2,463	2,747	2,711	2,708	2,750	2,735	2,990	2,789	2,380
enrolled 2nd fall	86%	85%	86%	85%	85%	85%	86%	85%	n/a
enrolled 3rd fall	79%	78%	80%	80%	78%	78%	79%	n/a	n/a
enrolled in or graduated by 4th fall	77%	75%	78%	77%	75%	74%	n/a	n/a	n/a
4-year graduation rate	47%	48%	48%	50%	48%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-year graduation rate	69%	67%	69%	69%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6-year graduation rate	73%	71%	73%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Enrollment status is based upon each student's first term as a degree-seeking student.
 Data Source: Towson University Enrollment Extracts and PeopleSoft
 Prepared by Towson University Office of Institutional Research (January 21, 2021 – TB)

Towson University meets the needs of students with disabilities and some temporary impairments through its Office of [Accessibility & Disability Services \(ADS\)](#) (S4.023), which collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to ensure equal opportunity and create an accessible educational experience for students with disabilities. ADS provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Dedicated professionals work with students individually to provide appropriate assistance, consultation, and advocacy. ADS includes a Testing Services Center that provides testing accommodations to students registered with ADS. The office also works with students and partners across campus to remove educational barriers and promote accessibility.

The ADS remained committed to ensuring that students were cared for during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing services remotely online and by email and phone. During COVID-19, ADS students in fully online courses took their tests online as administered by their instructors. For students receiving extended time, instructors adjusted the testing time in Blackboard. ADS students enrolled in a course with an in-person component have had the option to take their tests in the Testing Center. Additionally, the Testing Center administered tests for ADS students who had special circumstances to ensure that the temporary changes forced by the pandemic do not adversely affect students with disabilities.

The [Towson University Military and Veterans Center \(MVC\)](#) (S4.024) provides a hub for study, camaraderie, support services, and comfort for all student veterans and qualified dependents. The MVC promotes personal growth and career development opportunities, and comprehensive in-school support. The center provides a safe place to read, work, use public computers and other resources, and enjoy the company of like-minded peers. The MVC also provides timely fulfillment of all GI Bill and related claims through its expert staff. During COVID-19, the MVC implemented a special emergency grant for student-veterans uniquely affected by the public health crisis, they created a virtual office staffed daily to continue to provide outstanding support and services, and they conducted high-touch outreach with each of their community members. These efforts have resulted in *G.I Jobs* magazine recognizing Towson University as one of the top military-friendly universities in the United States.

The [Counseling Center](#) (S4.025) provides services that promote students' personal, social, and academic success. Individual and group counseling, substance abuse treatment, meditation, mindfulness training, and emergency and referral services are available to all students. Starting in fall 2020, the center made a major change in its service-delivery model in response to ongoing assessment of accessibility of services. Under the previous model for provision of time-limited therapy, students would often be able to receive only about three of the eight sessions for which they were eligible each year. Additionally, at high-volume times of the semester, there was often a two-week or greater wait for an initial intake; followed by another wait, often up

to three weeks, before the counseling could begin. The new model, called the Flexible Care Model, provides immediate access to care for all students and increases the flexibility and cultural responsiveness of services to meet the wide range of needs (from adjustment support to interventions in high acuity cases). In the Flexible Care Model, students have access to same-day service for the first time in the history of the Counseling Center.

Counseling Center staff are specialists in psychological and psychiatric college student mental health services trained to help students with a variety of counseling needs in a time-sensitive, culturally responsive, and caring fashion. These services come at no additional costs to students. In its mission to promote and support student well-being, the center offers a robust schedule of groups and workshops on topics like family and relationship stress, anxiety management, diversity awareness, eating disorders, grief and loss, body image, time management, sexual abuse, and study skills. The center's web page also includes resources for psychoeducation and self-help and an extensive database for community referrals and local crisis services. The center offers after-hours telephone crisis assistance so that students have access to services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

To continue to strengthen mental health, substance misuse, and suicide prevention programs and systems, TU is collaborating with the JED Foundation in a four-year partnership. This collaboration will include a baseline assessment, scheduled for completion this year (2020-2021), that aims to benchmark the university with peer institutions and compare programs and services to JED benchmarks. The goal is to develop and use this four-year model of growth to equip TU professionals with resources and skills to teach young adults the skills and knowledge needed to navigate changes in their mental health.

When Towson University had to move to distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Counseling Center was one of the first counseling centers in Maryland to pivot to online clinical services. The Center offered its first telehealth intake slot on Monday, March 30, managing in just two weeks to: (1) research all legal and ethical guidelines concerning telehealth therapy provision; (2) develop new communication and service protocols based on these guidelines; (3) determine technical needs and collaborate with the Office of Technology Services to establish

systems; (4) access training for all staff and trainees on basic information necessary to provide effective telehealth services; and (5) contact over 200 pre-pandemic clients to ensure continuity of care. Additionally, the Counseling Center focused intentionally on the types of services that students might find more accessible while living at home, increasing resources on social media.

Consistent with national trends, the demand for traditional counseling services was lower during the fall 2020 semester than is typical due to the pandemic. Being physically away from campus many students were not as connected to campus resources and perhaps less focused on seeking therapy than on managing practical daily pandemic related stressors. Additionally, many students may not have access to private spaces in which to have therapy sessions; however, as predicted, use of Counseling Center social media increased significantly in fall 2020, with increases in the number of followers and the number of people who actively engaged with the Counseling Center Instagram and Twitter accounts. Instagram followers increased by 22% from spring to fall, 2020, and the number of Instagram engagements increased by 217% in that period.

The University [Health Center](#) (S4.026) offers a complete range of medical services, including treatment of common illnesses, allergy shots, contraceptive counseling and services, Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing, immunizations, lab testing, minor office procedures, physical exams, and nicotine cessation. Alternative and holistic care, including massage therapy, is also available. The university offers a group health insurance plan through Aetna Student Health. It is a point-of-service plan with the University Health Center, which serves as the student's primary care provider (PCP). The center also has a comprehensive health education and promotion program that provides health and wellness initiatives on campus focused on topics such as cold and flu prevention, sexual health, sexual assault, healthy relationships, healthy sleep, and food safety.

The University Health Center has used the assessment process to inform changes. For example, data showed that compliance rates for students' immunization requirements was low; consequently, the center added an assessment plan objective to increase the percentage of students who complete immunizations. In the last three years, through hiring a Health Compliance Coordinator, increased marketing and outreach to incoming students and their families, and the immunization upload feature on the web portal through the Electronic Medical Record, immunization compliance was at 83% in 2020, up from 64% in 2019. Additionally, the university levied a registration hold and \$35 fine on all non-compliant students' Bursar accounts.

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the focus of the University Health Center in significant ways. Staff immediately began working on plans for COVID testing and response, setting up a testing tent at the University Health Center for students, faculty, and staff to get tested before returning to campus. The center established a second testing location to accommodate significantly increased testing protocols for the spring 2021 semester. Between both satellite locations, the UHC tested approximately 5,000 students, faculty and staff weekly. Additionally, University Health Center staff work with everyone who tests positive, including ensuring proper quarantine and isolation, and contact tracing.

The work of professional residential life staff also support student success. The [Department of Housing and Residence Life](#) (S4.027) seeks to foster spaces where all residents succeed academically, develop their sense of self, and learn the value of engaging in community. Housing and Residence Life works to transform the residential experience (represented by eighteen co-educational residence halls) by investing in the power of innovation, equity, inclusion, and collaboration. An example of this mission is the use of an Equity Tank

Team Process undertaken in summer 2018. This process prompted Housing and Residence Life to undertake the following actions

- allowing students to elect to live in a triple room offered at a lower price point
- providing training for professional staff members on the needs of less affluent students
- developing outreach strategy to assist students who have an EFC of \$6,500 or lower to get necessary documentation to receive maximum state financial assistance
- Promoting FAFSA completion and priority deadlines within the residence hall environment.

Housing and Residence Life provides students with leadership development through the [University Residence Government](#) (S4.028), an organization that represents all on-campus residents. University Residence Government student leaders plan and host programs and events for residents, advocate for residents, serve as residents' representative body, and work to promote and enhance the resident experience.

COVID-19 required Housing and Residence Life to adjust operations. These include:

- Spring 2020: Packed and shipped student belongings left in residence halls after the university moved to all remote learning to conclude semester following spring break
- Summer 2020: Revised resident guest policy to restrict access to the residence halls to reduce possible COVID-19 exposure events
- Summer 2020: Worked with Facilities to install plexi-glass at all Community Center desks
- Fall 2020: Provided housing for students facing hardships or who had in person classes or athletic commitments
- Fall 2020: Enhanced quarantine and isolation protocol in effort to expand space (doubling capacity) in case of a campus outbreak in spring 2021
- Fall 2020: Further de-densified occupancy for residence halls for spring semester (all students in single bedroom, no more than two students sharing a bathroom)

Table IV.7: Residence Hall Retention and GPA Comparison

Fall 2019		Retained one year later		Spring 2020 Cumulative GPA		Fall 2020 Cumulative GPA	
Incoming Status	Cohort	N	%	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
First-Time Freshmen	559	508	91%	3.26	3.41	3.22	3.37
Incoming Transfer	16	13	81%	3.35	3.59	3.38	3.60
ORIE/REGI students	20	18	90%	2.81	3.31	2.62	2.64
Overall	595	539	91%	3.25	3.41	3.21	3.36

Fall 2018		Retained one year later		Spring 2019 Cumulative GPA		Fall 2019 Cumulative GPA	
Incoming Status	Cohort	N	%	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
First-Time Freshmen	543	496	91%	3.12	3.24	3.21	3.31
Incoming Transfer	6	6	100%	3.78	3.84	3.77	3.79
ORIE/REGI students	24	16	67%	2.05	2.50	2.65	2.82
Overall	573	518	90%	3.09	3.23	3.19	3.30

Fall 2017		Retained one year later		Spring 2018 Cumulative GPA		Fall 2018 Cumulative GPA	
Incoming Status	Cohort	N	%	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
First-Time Freshmen	585	523	89%	3.11	3.25	3.17	3.27
Incoming Transfer	8	8	100%	3.62	3.81	3.65	3.80
ORIE/REGI students	27	26	96%	2.66	2.68	2.72	2.77
Overall	620	557	90%	3.10	3.24	3.16	3.25

Fall 2016		Retained one year later		Spring 2017 Cumulative GPA		Fall 2017 Cumulative GPA	
Incoming Status	Cohort	N	%	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
First-Time Freshmen	584	526	90%	3.12	3.22	3.14	3.21
Incoming Transfer	4	4	100%	-	-	-	-
ORIE/REGI students	18	16	89%	2.30	2.73	2.72	2.78
Overall	606	546	90%	3.09	3.20	3.13	3.20

Fall 2015		Retained one year later		Spring 2016 Cumulative GPA		Fall 2016 Cumulative GPA	
Incoming Status	Cohort	N	%	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
First-Time Freshmen	550	497	90%	3.20	3.29	3.27	3.33
Incoming Transfer	16	15	94%	3.28	3.34	3.30	3.38
ORIE/REGI students	23	22	96%	2.18	2.67	2.73	2.81
Overall	589	534	91%	3.16	3.28	3.25	3.32

GPA data were suppressed for groups with fewer than 5 students

Source: IR Enrollment Extracts, PeopleSoft, RLC Data provided by Housing Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research/KA (1/29/21)

Table IV.8: Residence Hall Participation

Residential Learning Community	2019-2020	Spring 2021 (COVID-19)
Tigers Serving Others	21	5
STEM	143	18
SAGE	84	25
Political Engagement	34	8
Honors	288	63
Global Village	106	17
Education	18	9
ASL	16	2
Alcohol Free	106	18

Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) (S4.029) are intentional communities within the residence halls that enhance a student’s Towson University experience in a variety of ways. The learning and academic activities within the community are structured around an assortment of themes and student interests. There are nine residential learning communities at TU: Tigers Serving Others, STEM, SAGE, Political Engagement, Honors, Global Village, Education, ASL, and Alcohol Free. Participation in RLCs has a positive impact on retention and GPA.

COVID-19 had a temporary impact on the number of students participating in these learning communities during AY 2020-21, as the university has dramatically reduced the number of students living in the residence halls to ensure health and safety as shown in Table IV.8.

Achievement of Student Educational Goals (Criteria 1d)

The university provides students with support to achieve their academic and professional goals. Providing clear, complete, comprehensible, and easy-to-find information articulating degree requirements is fundamental to students’ success. The catalog hosts complete information on academic policies and procedures, international programs, admissions, financial information, course descriptions, and student support services. The university catalogs are the definitive guide and

reflect current and past requirements for both universally applicable requirements and those specific to each certificate or degree program. Figure IV.4 details the undergraduate catalog’s formatting, illustrating the curricular offerings in a particular department.

Each major has the same series of tabs (Figure IV.5) that illustrate general degree requirements, including the Core Curriculum, a four-year completion plan, and expected learning outcomes.

In 2014, the university adopted an online catalog linked to the university’s curriculum review and management system [Courseleaf](#) (S4.030). While the catalog remains available for download as a PDF in a traditional format, its publication online has allowed better information dissemination, increased planning abilities, enhanced uniformity and consistency of communication of critical academic information, and improved the curricular review processes.

Figure IV.4: Catalog Formatting and Information



Figure IV.5: Four-Year Plan of Study



Figure IV.6: Degree Completion Plan

Degree Completion Plan (DCP)

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When adjusting your DCP, reference both the [CBE Prerequisite Checking Guide](#) & [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Name (Last, First): _____		Date: _____
Towson Student ID #: _____	Catalog Year: 2021/22	Admitted as Transfer: No
Major: _____	Concentration/Track(s): _____	
2nd/Non-CBE Major(s): _____	Minor(s): _____	
Academic Advisor: _____		

Total Units Earned: _____	Total Units Planned: 0
Total Enrolled Units: _____	Total Career Units: 0
Free Electives Req: _____	

Note: A minimum of 120 credits is required for graduation.
Credit count may not be accurate if currently repeating a course (D or higher).

ADMISSION GPA CALCULATION *	
PBUA/PEBU GPA	0.00
PACT LL GPA	0.00
PACT UL GPA	0.00
OVERALL TU GPA	

* GPA Calculator is in another tab of this document.

Fall 2021 (1214)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Spring 2022 (1222)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Summer 2022 (1223)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Fall 2022 (1224)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Spring 2023 (1232)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Spring 2023 (1232)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Fall 2023 (1234)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Spring 2024 (1242)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Summer 2024 (1243)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Fall 2024 (1244)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Spring 2025 (1252)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Summer 2025 (1253)		
Course	Units/Grades	Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total	0	

Calendars: [Academic Calendar](#) [Registration Dates](#) [Event Calendar](#)

Code of Conduct: [TU Code of Student Conduct](#) [CBE Code of Conduct](#) [TU Student Academic Integrity Policy](#)

Advisor Notes: Repeat Policy for Screened Majors in CBE is: No more than two lower-level (LL) courses may be repeated, of which no more than one course may be repeated twice. (Third Attempts of courses are not automatically included and require authorization.)

When adjusting your degree completion plan (DCP) use the following references: [CBE Prerequisite Checking Guide](#) [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

Need at least X credits of free elective to achieve the minimum 120 credits required for graduation. Free electives are any courses that you have the prerequisite for that you have not already completed, the goal is to gain additional credit towards graduation. If you have more than 12 credits, you may want to direct them towards a minor.

* This course requires admission to the major (Major standing, ACCT, BUAD, or EBUS). With your current admission standing (enrolled/completed all required courses, admission gpa and TU gpa), you are conditionally allowed to register for this course. If you do not meet the requirements for admission to your major at the end of this term, you will be disenrolled from any course that requires major standing.

→ If your DCP is for a major/minor not currently listed in PeopleSoft, you need to complete a [Change of Major/Minor Form](#)

Transfer Notes: → If you plan to take courses outside of Towson, make sure to follow the instructions on the page for submitting the petition, researching course equivalencies via the [Transfer Evaluation System \(TES\)](#) and where to send transcripts (after completing the course).

→ If taking a lower-level course outside of Towson, you may have to provide proof of registration and/or grade for the course if you are attempting to register for a course that requires it as a prerequisite

→ The last 30 credits of your degree must be completed at Towson.

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The [Degree Completion Plan \(S4.031\)](#) is a state mandated requirement for public universities that undergraduate students who have completed at least forty-five credits meet advisors to create a plan that delineates their progress each semester toward completion of degree requirements. Students cannot register for additional classes until the Degree Completion Plan's submission. The plan evidences (student and advisor sign and date it) that TU has informed students of coursework requirements, each semester, to graduate in four years for a native student (or otherwise, how long it will take to complete program requirements when a student has transferred to the university and/or changes major, potentially delaying time to degree completion). Figure IV.6 illustrates the plan's structure and requirements.

The [Career Center](#) cultivates meaningful career connections, experiences, and learning through a network of communities that engage students and alumni for a lifetime of professional development and success. Associated initiatives include the two-credit *Personal Life & Career Planning Course* (EDUC 121) that helps students identify and pursue career goals; individual and group career coaching; job shadowing; the Employer Mock Interview program, in which the Career Center invites external organizations' recruiters to conduct mock interviews with students; and Career Center fairs. Contributing to the institutional goal of Diversity and Equity is the Diversity Works Networking Reception. This small-scale event of about twenty employers and 100 students provides an environment in which students from various identity-based groups engage with employers interested in hiring university students for full-time and internship opportunities. The Career Center also collects, analyzes, and shares [Graduating Student Outcomes](#) data for each graduating class (S4.032). The assessment criterion of this chapter discusses initiatives that this data prompted.

Credit Transfer Policies (Criterion 2)

The university's undergraduate transfer policy is consistent with the University System of Maryland (USM) transfer and admissions policies and adheres to [Code of Maryland Regulations \(S4.033\)](#). Towson University accepts undergraduate transfer of credit from regionally accredited institutions and institutions that are candidates for regional accreditation. Upon request for review, it will consider credits completed at international institutions or institutions not regionally accredited. If students request such a review, they may be asked to supply supporting documentation, including course descriptions or course syllabi. The university completes credit evaluations for each enrolled transfer student before their first term and the university's [Transfer Evaluation System \(S4.034\)](#) provides transparent guidance on what transferring students can expect. Students may transfer a maximum of sixty-four credits from community colleges or other two-year institutions, and the university will accept a maximum of ninety credits from another four-year institution or combination of two and four-year institutions. Students must complete the final thirty credits at Towson University.

After students matriculate at Towson University, they can complete and transfer additional coursework if they are in good academic standing, providing they have not reached the ninety-credit maximum. Students are required to complete a [Transfer Petition form \(S4.035\)](#) before enrollment in the course they wish to transfer. The academic department and the Office of the Registrar review and approve this form.

To communicate and implement transfer credit policies, the Admissions Office [Transfer Student Center \(S4.012\)](#) provides guidance on credit transfer thresholds, evaluation practice, core curriculum policies, and anticipated evaluation and award timelines. This recently established service represents a collaborative effort between University Admissions and the Academic Advising Center as part of the Presidential Priority TIGER Way.

The transfer policy for graduate programs allows the transfer of up to 50% of the credits required for the graduate certificate or degree program, subject to the program director's approval. University policy requires master's and doctoral candidates to complete their programs within seven years and ten years of initial enrollment, respectively. Courses completed prior

to admission must have been taken at a regionally accredited college or university, must be applicable to a graduate degree at the offering institution, and cannot be used if part of an already conferred bachelor's, master's, or terminal/doctoral degree, unless a variance is specified by an approved and/or accredited program of study. At the program director's discretion, terminal or doctoral degree candidates may transfer courses that students completed as part of a conferred master's degree.

The university has an explicit and formal policy on "credit for competency-based education and prior learning" (S4.036) that the Office of the Registrar communicates, including the required application materials and evaluation fees. The university evaluates alternative learning approaches for the award of credit, including credit for [prior learning and/or experience](#) (S4.037) and accepts credit from the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) Tests. The university accepts up to a maximum of forty-five credits from non-traditional learning, as outlined in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) (S4.038). The catalog also provides information on [Advanced Placement credit](#), including required test scores and university course equivalencies (S4.039). Additionally, the catalog provides information on [International Baccalaureate scores and university course equivalencies](#) (S4.040).

Maintenance and Release of Student Information and Records (Criterion 3)

Towson University ensures best practices management of student information and records with explicit policy prescriptions and processes for maintenance and release. The [Information Technology Security Policy](#) (S4.041) provides the institution's general *modus operandi*. The [Office of the Registrar is responsible for student registration and records](#), in cooperation with the Office of Technology Services (S4.042). Towson University does not normally disclose directory information. However, at its discretion, it may provide directory information in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The online student directory requires login access with a valid TUID username and password and only provides students' names, phone numbers of record, and university email addresses.

Under FERPA provisions, students have the right to withhold the disclosure of directory information. The Registrar's Office is the recipient of non-disclosure directives and acts upon those directives. In compliance with FERPA provisions, it is university policy to permit students to inspect their education records; limit disclosure of personally identifiable information to others without students' prior written consent; and provide students with the opportunity to seek correction of their education records where appropriate. The university [Policy and Procedures on the Disclosure of Student Records](#) (S4.043) is an explicit and comprehensive statement of the university's approach. The Undergraduate and Graduate [Catalogs](#) (S4.044) also provide information on compliance with the protection of student educational records under FERPA.

The Office of Information Security manages security policies and compliance, protects information assets, facilitates security awareness through training, and investigates university cybersecurity incidents. Basic user access to university computing resources requires a valid TUID username, a password certified in the last ninety days, and multi-factor authentication. The university [Data Stewardship Policy](#) (S4.045) provides additional detail on operational practice.

Extracurricular Activities (Criterion 4)

Athletics

The university manages all extracurricular activities on campus using the same principles and procedures that govern all university programs and services. The Director of Athletics manages the intercollegiate athletic program and is a member of the President's Cabinet. The [Intercollegiate Athletics Committee](#) (S4.046), a body of the Academic Senate, consists of five elected faculty members and three students appointed by the Student Government Association (SGA) President, with ex-officio representation from OIIE, the University Budget Office, Academic Affairs, and campus recreation. The Committee's responsibilities include advising, oversight, and establishment of athletics administration; ensuring the athletics program's consistency with university goals; and ensuring that athletes conform to university, NCAA, and affiliated conference standards. In accordance with NCAA regulations, a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) is appointed to promote academic integrity and foster a spirit of cooperation between the athletics department and the academic units.

Table IV.9: Student Athlete Success

	Federal Grad Rate Student Body	Federal Grad Rate Student-Athletes	NCAA GSR
2019-20	71%	68%	90%
2018-19	71%	66%	88%
2017-18	70%	69%	87%
2016-17	69%	68%	84%
2015-16	67%	71%	84%

Table IV.10: Student-Athlete Retention Rates

	Student Body Retention	Student-Athlete Retention
2019-20	85%	89%
2018-19	86%	89%
2017-18	85%	82%
2016-17	85%	84%
2015-16	85%	89%

Table IV.11: Student-Athlete GPA and Credits Completion

	Student Body GPA	Student-Athlete GPA	Student Body Credits Completed	Student-Athletes Credits Completed
2019-20	3.00	3.15	13.10	13.90
2018-19	3.01	3.17	13.30	13.50
2017-18	3.00	3.19	12.34	13.80
2016-17	3.02	3.13	13.30	14.18
2015-16	3.030	3.116	13.40	14.00

The [Academic Services \(S4.047\)](#) Office of the Athletic Department provides advising, counseling, supervision, monitoring, and tutoring for student-athletes consistent with university policies. Individually assigned advisors assist student-athletes in the adoption and development of knowledge and skills that buttress academic success; these include note-taking, test-taking, time management, and learning strategies. The study hall program seeks to support the development of first-year student athletes' academic skills and requires at least six hours of participation per week in the first semester of enrollment. While in March 2020, COVID-19 required the suspension of the in-person study hall program, the academic achievement staff shifted to online study time.

The tutor program provides student athletes with academic support to promote academic excellence. Academic Services can assign an individual tutor to the student-athlete upon the student-athlete's request, or the student-athlete may be required to attend group-tutoring sessions. Tutoring is also coordinated with the campus Tutoring & Learning Center to ensure consistency in learning support and training for tutors. This collaboration has only increased since the COVID-19 pandemic when all tutoring became virtual. The Athletics Academic Achievement unit also dually reports to both the Athletic Department and Office of the Provost.

In 2015, the Athletics Academic Achievement unit received the University Diversity & Inclusion Award for having the highest graduation rate for black student-athletes among all Public Division I institutions and for their work in improving NCAA Academic Progress Rates. In October 2020, Towson University announced its highest NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) at 90%, which led all Division I USM institutions. Student-athlete retention continues to be strong and contributes to sustaining enrollment through the COVID-19 pandemic, exceeding the university rate by 4%. Through the assessment process, the Athletics Department has focused on improving NCAA Academic Progress Rates for each team, which is a measure of retention/graduation and eligibility and is a predictor of graduation rates (see tables below).

The [Student-Athlete Handbook](#) (S4.048) is a comprehensive guide to academic policies, financial aid, and progress-to-degree requirements. The information in the Student-Athlete Handbook aligns with the university's policies on academic standards and procedures. This handbook is publicly available on the Athletics website so that prospective student-athletes can review expectations and responsibilities before committing to attend Towson University.

The [Total Tiger Program](#) (S4.049) combines academic success, community engagement, and leadership development for student-athletes. The Total Tiger Program also provides mentoring support for student-athletes who are first generation college students in support of our retention efforts. The Total Tiger Program received the University award for Diversity & Inclusion in 2014 in recognition of work in this area. Additionally, Antwaine Smith received the 2020 USM Board of Regents Award for Public Service in recognition of his work with the Total Tiger Program and Towson University received recognition as the 2021 NCAA/MOAA Diversity & Inclusion Award recipient in large part due to the work of the Total Tiger Program.

Student Affairs and Student Life

The Division of Student Affairs is largely responsible for Student Life at the university. Reflecting the centrality of the academic mission and goals, the Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) reports to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and is a member of the President's Cabinet. Student life encompasses campus events, engagement and service opportunities (including volunteering), intramural and club sports and recreation, student groups and organizations, student leadership, and student services and resources. Individual activities and programs are assessed annually and adjustments to programs and program delivery methods are applied.

Office of Student Activities-Student Organizations

Student organizations play an integral role in the vibrancy of the campus community, and provide leadership opportunities for students. There are currently greater than [250 student organizations](#) housed under the auspices of the Student Government Association and the Office of Student Activities (S4.050). The following categories reflect registered student organizations on campus: Academic & Professional, Arts, Cultural, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Graduate, Honor & Recognition, Media & Publication, Political, Religious/Spiritual, Service, Special Interest, and Sport Clubs.

The [Office of Student Activities](#) (OSA) (S4.051) serves an important role in preparing students to become well-rounded and actively engaged graduates of Towson University. The office offers an array of experiences within Campus Programming, Leadership Development, and Student Organizations. The Director is the primary advisor to the Student Government Association and the Coordinator for Leadership oversees the operations of all of the student organizations. Collaboratively both entities (OSA and the SGA) orientate, recognize, and manage all student organization operations. [Student Organization Policies](#) (S4.052) are available on the university's website and reflect compliance with and support for the academic mission. The [Tiger Stripes Program](#) (S4.053) is an innovative program for student groups that offers four different incentive-based programs designed to increase student compliance with requirements for registered student organizations.

Greek Life – Fraternities and Sororities

The [Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life](#) (S4.054) supports and assists fraternities and sororities by ensuring accountability in individual and organizational advising, educational programs, and leadership-development opportunities while collaborating with university and fraternal partners. There are currently forty-four individual chapters within the [five governing councils](#) (S4.055): Panhellenic Council, Multicultural Greek Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inter-fraternity Council, and the Independent Greek Council.

Fraternity and Sorority Life has introduced the [Chapter Assessment Program](#) (S4.056), an assessment tool that the fraternity and sorority community deploy. The assessment examines each organization’s involvement and performance in four areas: academics, chapter management, member development, and community involvement. The chapters that perform well receive incentives at the end of each semester. Those who do not meet requirements face disincentives, including but not limited to lack of recognition.

Office of Campus Recreation- Sport Clubs

Sport Clubs foster engagement and well-being by providing students with the opportunity to meet friends, learn a new sport, be active, compete against other universities, and develop valuable leadership skills. The Sport Clubs Organization (SCO) includes more than thirty recognized [Sport Clubs at Towson University](#) (S4.057). The Sport Club Council (SCC), the elected governing body of the Sport Clubs Organization (SCO), reviews updates to program requirements, guidelines, and procedures as well as allocates club budgets, approves new clubs, and handles most disciplinary charges against individual clubs within the SCO. Campus Recreation regularly collaborates with departments such as the Counseling Center, Health Center, Career Center, Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity, and the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education to create and implement programs and expectations designed to enhance the co-curricular experience.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many changes occurred to student organizations’ operations; these included room occupancy restriction, the number of people allowed at social events, and out-of-state travel bans. Student Affairs designed new COVID-19 operating procedures applicable to student organizations, and the majority of activities moved online.

Third Party Student Support Services (Criterion 5)

The only third-party contracted student support service at TU is ProtoCall Services, Inc. This entity is the nation’s leading provider for specialty telephonic behavioral health services. They are a HITRUST Certified and HIPAA-compliant platform. The Dean of Students and the Interim Director of the Counseling Center sought the procurement of telephonic behavioral health services in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel, according to the [Contract Execution Policy](#) (S4.058), and the Procurement Department’s application of “best value” practices within the university’s [Consultant Policy](#) (S4.059). This service ensures students have access to counseling at all hours, even when the university is closed.

Assessment (Criterion 6; RoA 8, 10)

The university assesses its programs that support the student experience annually and through a variety of means. The Office of the Provost hosts a divisional assessment day, in which each unit presents its annual report that includes a discussion of assessment results and anticipated actions it will undertake based on results analysis. At this event, participants apply a rubric, developed by the University Assessment Council Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, to assess the reports’ effectiveness and to provide peer reviewed recommendations on changes to the plans and/or anticipated initiatives that the assessment results and analysis prompt. Chapter Six discusses this process in more detail.

The Division of Student Affairs also has a Student Affairs Assessment Committee, another sub-committee of the University Assessment Council. This committee, chaired by the Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, is responsible for advising, consulting, and monitoring informal and formal assessments across the Division of Student Affairs. Historically the Student Affairs Assessment Committee included a member from ten units

within student affairs: Campus Recreation, Fraternity & Sorority Programs, New Student and Family Programs, Student Activities, Civic Engagement, Housing and Residence Life, Career Center, Counseling Center, Health Center, Student Success Programs, and Student Conduct. In 2020-2021 the committee was expanded to include a staff member from Towson University in Northeastern Maryland (TUNE), Case Management, and Events and Conference Services for a total of thirteen units being represented. This action was in response to a comparison of assessment across the division and the discovery of a dearth of outcomes from these three units.

This past year's assessments evinced programmatic and educational changes for several parts of the division. The changes emanated from survey data, observational interactions from staff, and informal interviews with students and staff. Campus Recreation enhanced their student employee risk management training on responding to emergency situations, and offered training opportunities to student and employees on civility and inclusion. Fraternity and Sorority Life updated and enhanced trainings on interventions concerning alcohol related situations, provided education on diversity and inclusion, and social justice, and all incoming members completed training on the Towson University Hazing Policy. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility (CESR) increased political engagement across campus through in-person and virtual town halls and other events, increased voter engagement through voter registration drives, and participated in the Census Summit. CESR also increased environmental and sustainability education and action with participation in a now annual environmental conference and collaborated with facilities and dining services to offer sustainable low to zero waste events where most of the generated waste goes to composting.

Student Affairs and other units and divisions use multiple strategies to provide assessments of unit and program effectiveness, including focus groups and surveys. For example, the Admissions Office regularly invites students to participate in focus groups to provide information on their orientation experience (S4.060). Complementing this is a comprehensive survey that

the Admissions Office administers, surveying transfer students on their orientation experience (S4.061). The Office of Institutional Research also administers the Graduating Student Survey (S4.062) and the National Survey of the Student Experience (NSSE). These assessment results inform improvements to the student experience. As one example, the institution used the 2017 and 2020 NSSE results (S4.063) to inform its [Diversity Strategic Plan](#) (S4.064).

The Career Center also uses assessment data to help departments identify trends to achieve better student outcomes. The Career Center's Graduating Student Outcomes Data for each class is comprised of responses from the Graduating Student Survey, National Clearinghouse, HEP data, and employer-reported hiring outcomes. Results revealed that upon graduation international students were less likely than their peers to be employed; consequently, the Center now sends a list of "top employers" of international students to the university's International Students and Scholars Office for use in its advising of international students. Additionally, the Career Center invites these employers to its annual "[Diversity Works](#)" event that puts international and under-represented students in touch with employers (S4.065).

The Career Center also uses data to work with academic departments to improve their graduates' employment outcomes. The Graduating Student Outcomes Data results identified, for example, that history majors were more likely to be unemployed than their peers and were also less likely to have engaged in experiential learning. Towson University graduates who participate in experiential learning experiences are 310% more likely to secure employment upon graduation. In response, the Department of History established a [minor in Human Rights](#) in 2019 that has a mandatory field experience (S4.066).

Assessment Exemplar - Review of Academic Departments – Career Center and EDUC 121

In 2019, the Career Center consulted with the Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, seeking guidance on revisions to its unit assessment plan that would allow it to inform change to the services it provides and to create a feedback loop that would allow additional iterative changes to the unit's services and to better support the prosecution of its strategic plan.

This resulted in fundamental changes to its unit assessment plan. Foremost among them was the cessation of class enrollment in *EDUC 121 Personal Life and Career Planning* as an assessment measure and its replacement with a requirement that students receive a score of at least 90% in the development of a cover letter and concomitant resume demonstrating their competitiveness as a candidate for a position. This included this development of a rubric that the unit applied to student artifacts. The inaugural application of this assessment tool revealed that only 73% of students achieved the benchmark. The unit has shared the results with the Associate Director of Career Education and the course instructors. They will apply the same tool in the next iteration to review two years' data in anticipation that the onset of COVID-19 at the deployment of the assessment had a negative impact on students' performance. Regardless, the unit now has a series of outcomes and measures that are complementary and will elicit data that will identify and inform opportunities for exploitation, challenges for amelioration. (S4.067)

Conclusion

Towson University is in full compliance with Standard IV and its associated requirements of affiliation. From recruitment to graduation, the university acts with transparency and a commitment to offering all of academic, social, and wellness supports necessary for a successful educational experience. As the composition of our student body has changed over time, so too have the supports put in place to ensure that all students can succeed inclusively.

Recommendations

1. Implement a strategic enrollment master plan.
2. Develop a single web presence that provides comprehensive information and an appointment scheduling feature for academic and other support services.

Sources

- (S4.001) TU 2020: a focused vision for Towson University
- (S4.002) *TU Strategic Plan 2020-2030: Leadership for the Public Good*
- (S4.003) Honors College
- (S4.004) Office of Civic Engagement
- (S4.005) Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry
- (S4.006) Residential Learning Communities
- (S4.007) Towson Seminar
- (S4.008) Financial Aid Office
- (S4.009) Bursar's Office
- (S4.010) Projected Four-Year University Costs
- (S4.011) Blackbaud Award Management System
- (S4.012) Mathematics placement test
- (S4.013) Mathematics Pathways
- (S4.014) Freshman Transition Program
- (S4.015) Freshman Orientation Program
- (S4.016) Transfer Student Orientation
- (S4.017) "Towson University ready to host new students for award-winning orientation programs"
- (S4.018) TU4U
- (S4.019) Transfer Student Center
- (S4.020) Transfer Mentor Program
- (S4.021) Students Achieve Goals through Education (SAGE)
- (S4.022) SAGE Residential Learning Community
- (S4.023) Accessibility and Disability Services
- (S4.024) Military and Veterans Center
- (S4.025) Counseling Center
- (S4.026) Health Center
- (S4.027) Department of Housing and Residence Life
- (S4.028) University Residence Government
- (S4.029) Residential Learning Communities
- (S4.030) Courseleaf
- (S4.031) Degree Completion Plan
- (S4.032) Graduating Student Outcomes Data

- (S4.033) Code of Maryland Regulations
- (S4.034) Transfer Evaluation System
- (S4.035) Transfer Petition Form
- (S4.036) University Policies and Procedures, “03-01.41
Credit for Competency Based Education and
Prior Learning”
- (S4.037) Office of the Registrar – Credit for Prior
Learning
- (S4.038) Undergraduate Catalog – Credit for
Prior Learning
- (S4.039) Undergraduate Catalog – Advanced
Placement Credit
- (S4.040) Undergraduate Catalog – International
Baccalaureate
- (S4.041) University Policies and Procedures, “10-01.01
Information Technology Security Policy”
- (S4.042) Office of the Registrar and Family Educational
Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- (S4.043) University Policies and Procedures, “03-06.30
Policy and Procedures on the Disclosure of
Student Records”
- (S4.044) Undergraduate Catalog – FERPA
- (S4.045) University Policies and Procedures, “10-04.00
Data Stewardship Policy”
- (S4.046) Intercollegiate Athletics Committee
- (S4.047) Academic Services Office of the Athletic
Department
- (S4.048) Student-Athlete Handbook
- (S4.049) Total Tiger Program
- (S4.050) Student Organizations
- (S4.051) Office of Student Activities
- (S4.052) Student Organization Policies
- (S4.053) Tiger Stripes
- (S4.054) Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life
- (S4.055) Hellenic Governing Councils
- (S4.056) Chapter Assessment Program
- (S4.057) Sport Clubs
- (S4.058) University policies and procedures, “08-03.01
Contract execution policy”
- (S4.059) University policies and procedures, “08-03.30
Consultant policy”
- (S4.060) New Student Family Programs – Instagram
- (S4.061) Summer transfer orientation survey
- (S4.062) Graduating Student Survey
- (S4.063) National Survey of Student Experience
- (S4.064) Diversity Strategic Plan
- (S4.065) Diversity Works
- (S4.066) Minor in Human Rights
- (S4.067) Career Center Unit Assessment Report 2020-21



Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for higher education.

Requirements of Affiliation (RoA) addressed in Standard V

- **Requirement 8:** The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- **Requirement 9:** The institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality.
- **Requirement 10:** Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.

Towson University fully meets Standard V and associated Requirements of Affiliation 8-10 through a comprehensive assessment process at unit, college, and divisional levels, all centered on the continuous evaluation of successful achievement of our students' educational goals. The university's assessment of academic programs and Core Curriculum is sustainable

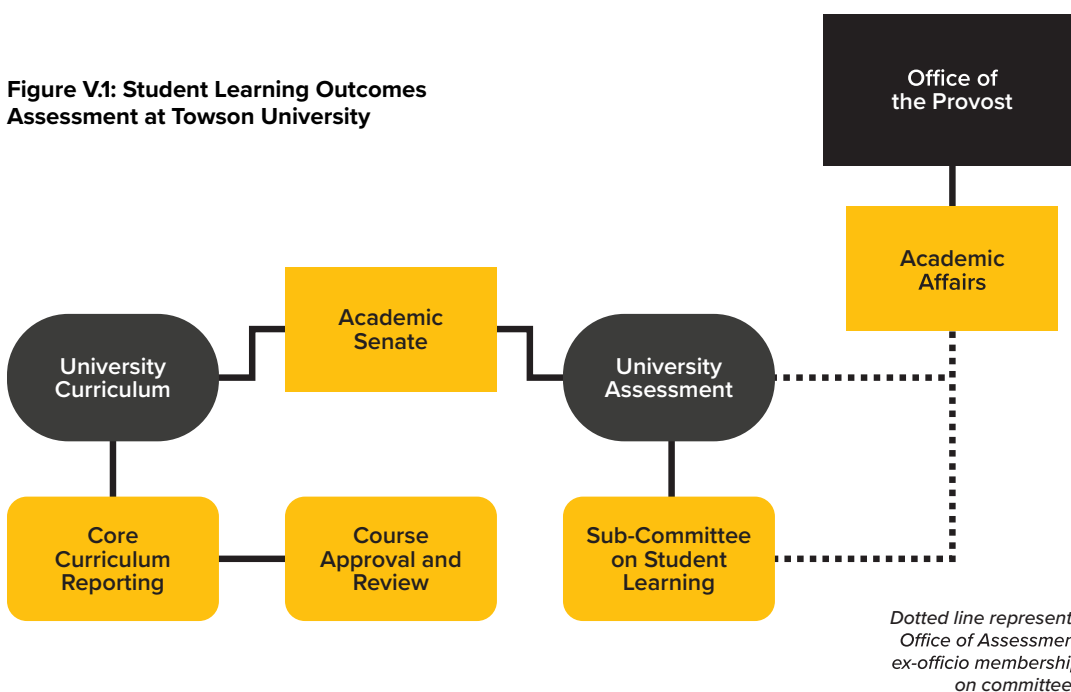
and systemic, with near universal participation via annual report submission and participation in assessment days.

Educational Assessment Structures

At Towson University, the [University Assessment Council](#) (S5.001) is the Academic Senate sub-committee tasked with serving as a consultant to the university on assessment matters. Supporting this endeavor is the Sub-committee on Student Learning Assessment (SSLA). Figure V.1 displays the relationships between those groups that support the assessment of student learning outcomes

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC), an Academic Senate sub-committee, includes among its responsibilities the study of the university's curriculum to identify areas that would benefit from improvement and, if necessary, to commission studies to consider curriculum change. Supporting this role with respect to the Core Curriculum is the Core Curriculum Reporting Committee (CCRC), also a UCC sub-committee. Since June 2015, the colleges are each responsible for the maintenance of college-specific means of development and approval of programs' and courses' assessment plans (S5.002).

Figure V.1: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment at Towson University



Supporting the entire process is the [Office of Academic Assessment](#) (S5.003), led by a director and assistant director, reporting to the vice provost, and staffed by an assessment coordinator. The director and associate director are ex-officio members of the SSLA and the director is an ex-officio member of the UAC. This office provides administrative support for organizing the peer review assessment days and the maintenance of the Campus Labs' Planning Module. This Planning Module is the university's student learning outcomes assessment software that hosts and allows the development of assessment plans and reports, and analyses and dissemination of learning outcomes assessment.

Institutional and Educational Goals Interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences and, and with the institution's mission (Criterion 1, RoA 8, 9, 10)

All Towson University graduates are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- communicating effectively;
- gathering and evaluating information;
- thinking critically and meaningfully;
- using technology effectively;
- appreciating diversity and commonalities;
- and making informed ethical choices.

Supporting the achievement of these outcomes at the undergraduate level is a [core curriculum of fourteen areas](#) (S5.004) and academic major program learning outcomes.

When developing a new program, or engaging in significant changes to existing programs, the department and/or program director must develop an [assessment plan](#) (S5.005) with concomitant student learning outcomes that demonstrate how and where they support [institutional outcomes](#) (S5.006). Additionally, the plan includes a curriculum map demonstrating what courses and/or learning opportunities support achievement of the program's learning outcomes (S5.005). Similar requirements apply to individual courses seeking inclusion in the Core Curriculum; they must provide a college-approved plan for institutional consideration.

Figures V.2 and V.3 below outlines the steps in course assessment plans' and program approval. At the course level, the [Course Approval and Review Committee](#) (CARC) (S5.007), a sub-committee of the UCC, reviews new courses and changes to existing courses to ensure that they have course outcomes and an assessment plan. Additionally, any new or existing course that seeks eligibility to fulfill a Core Curriculum requirement undergoes consideration for certification by the [Core Curriculum Reporting Committee](#) (CCRC) (S5.008). Upon approval, the Office of Assessment adds the course assessment plan to the Campus Labs-Planning Module, the department submits an annual report, which undergoes a review on Core Assessment Day.

New academic programs require a college approved assessment plan; additionally, the state coordinating board, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), requires evidence of an assessment plan before a program proposal receives its consideration. Upon MHEC approval, the Office of Assessment adds the program's assessment plan to Campus Labs-Plan-

Figure V.2: Course Assessment Plan Development and Approval Process

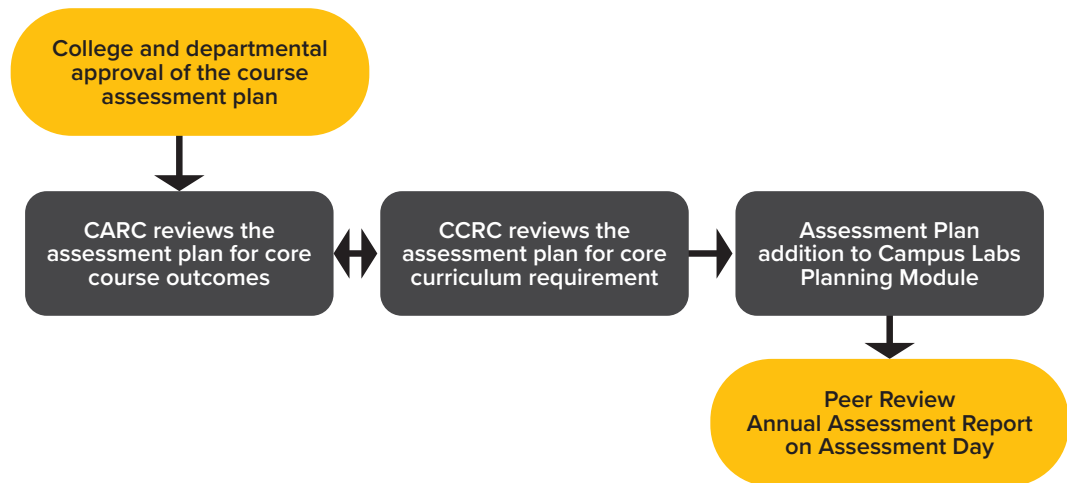
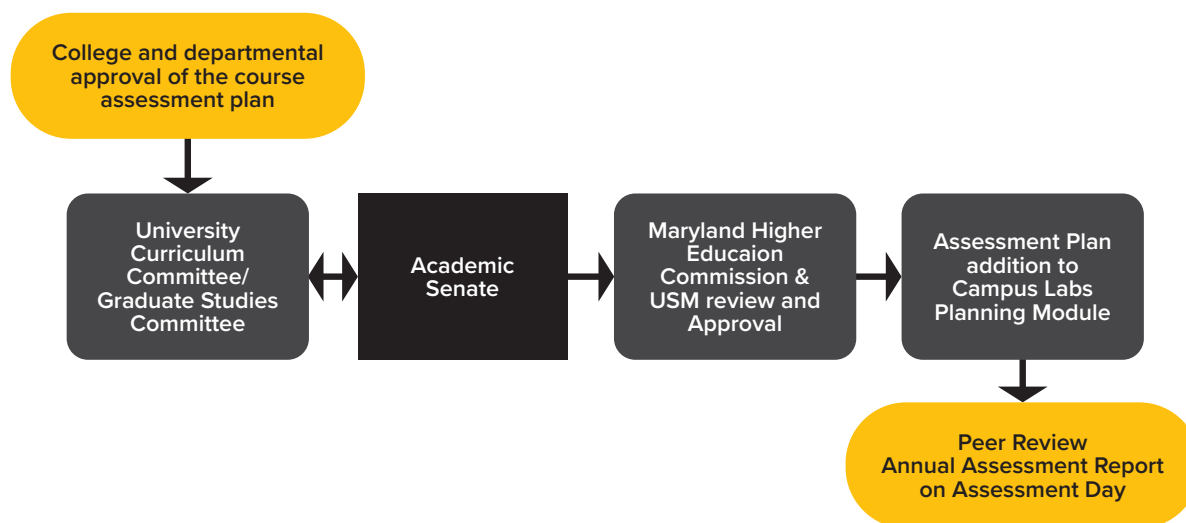


Figure V.3: Program Assessment Plan Development and Approval Process



ning Module, and the program reports annually on its fulfillment of the assessment plan, receiving peer review each January at Programs Assessment Day.

Organized and Systematic Assessments (Criterion 2; RoA 8, 9, 10)

Student Outcomes and Success

Ultimately, the institution’s mission is to educate students who successfully graduate with outcomes that demonstrate attributes consistent with its mission. Towson University boasts excellent completion rates and times to completion, as discussed and illustrated in Chapter IV. These are readily available on the university website in a series of [infographics and dashboards](#) (S5.009) that allow internal and external constituents to view the university’s success and the study body it

serves. The university also makes available pass rates for its licensure programs, which include nursing³, accounting⁴, occupational therapy⁵, physician assistant⁶ audiology⁷, speech-language pathology⁸, and education.⁹ These achievement data are also available via the Consumer Information webpage¹⁰.

Towson University’s student success has also included closure of the “Achievement Gap,” which is addressed in Chapter 3 and is the result of the development, enactment, and assessment of many of the institution’s student success programs discussed in Chapter 4.

³ Nursing NCLEX-RN examination pass rates, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/nursing/undergrad/nursing/>

⁴ Gleim CPA review, retrieved on April 1, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/cbe/departments/accounting/resources/cpa-exam-resources.html>

⁵ Occupational Therapy National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy pass rates, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/occutherapy/>

⁶ National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) Examination Performance – Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE), retrieved on March 28, 2021, from

⁷ Audiology Praxis examination pass rate, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/health-sciences/grad/physician-assistant/documents/nccpa-pa-docs.pdf> <https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/asld/grad/audiology/achievement-data.html>

⁸ Speech-Language Pathology Praxis examination pass rate, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/asld/grad/speech/data.html>

⁹ Educator Preparation Programs state licensure pass rates and ETS Praxis pass rate report, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/coe/about/accountability.html>

¹⁰ Consumer Information/Accreditation and Approval, retrieved on March 28, 2021 from <https://www.towson.edu/about/consumer/accreditation/>

Table V.1: What was the general quality of instruction at Towson University?

Response rating	%	Total Respondents: 6,471
Excellent	33%	2,124
Good	56%	3,634
Fair	10%	655
Poor	1%	58

Table V.2: If you could start over would you again choose to attend Towson University?

Response rating	%	Total Respondents: 6,418
Definitely yes	40%	2,592
Probably yes	45%	2,909
Probably no	11%	714
Definitely no	3%	203

Graduating Seniors Survey

Data from the Graduating Senior Survey also testifies to the institution’s and students’ success in achieving institutional and program goals (Tables V.1 & V.2).

Annual Program Assessment

Every November, each academic program submits a report on its assessment activities for the previous academic year. Core courses, subject to review in that year, also submit a report in November. In January, a day-long peer review of these programs and core courses occurs on consecutive days. Faculty review teams apply an approved rubric to facilitate review, inform, and compose any recommendations regarding changes to assessment plans and/or practice.

For each of the rubric’s characteristics, the peer reviewers assign a rating of “Best Practice,” “Meets Expectations,” “Beginning,” or “Not Able to Rate.” These ratings, along with qualitative feedback, ensure that programs and Core courses receive an evaluation that provides guidance for improvements in student learning and/or planning. A longitudinal analysis of Core and program assessment reveals that from 2014-19, 82% of Core courses and 81% of undergraduate program learning outcomes assessed met or exceeded targeted outcomes. At the graduate level, between 2014-15 and 2018-19, 92% of program outcomes assessed met or exceeded performance targets (S5.010) (See also Tables V.3 - V.6).

Core Assessment

The university assesses the Core on a seven-year cycle (S5.011). Each year all courses associated with two of the fourteen core areas ([Core Curriculum encompasses fourteen areas in which students must complete forty-three credits in fourteen categories of course](#)) (S5.004) are assessed. Sponsoring departments receive peer review of their assessment reports using [a rubric](#) (S5.012) similar to that applied to program assessment.

The 2020 Core Assessment Day identified a proclivity to develop Core courses with student learning outcomes that cluster around “critical reasoning and analysis” and “specialized knowledge in defined fields” (1,206 in both areas). It identified that the institutional outcomes that had the fewest corresponding program outcomes were “working in multi-faceted work environments” and “local and global citizenship and leadership” (447 in both areas) (S5.013). The Office of Academic Assessment shared these results with the UAC at its May 2020 meeting. Discussion is currently underway to offer a more balanced number of offerings, though the pandemic disrupted immediate progress.

Table V.3: Undergraduate Outcomes Achievement (AY 2014-2015 to AY 2018-2019)

Academic year	Percentage of outcomes exceeding performance target	Percentage of outcomes meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes not meeting performance target	Percentage ^{1*} of outcomes other*	Total number of TU Student Learning Outcomes to be assessed in that cycle
2014–2015	50%	32%	10%	8%	558
2015–2016	60%	20%	10%	10%	416
2016–2017	61%	23%	8%	7%	482
2017–2018	54%	25%	12%	9%	491
2018–2019	57%	24%	14%	5%	510

^{1*} Denotes that the program failed to complete and/or submit a report or the program did not assess the SLO in that reporting year.

Table V.4: Program Performance in Meeting Institutional SLOs - Undergraduate Programs (2014 to 2019)

Institutional learning outcomes	Percentage of outcomes exceeding performance target	Percentage of outcomes meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes not meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes other*	Number of program SLOs assessed aligned to ILOs
TU 1 information literacy and technology competency	58%	24%	10%	8%	382
TU 2 effective communication	57%	26%	10%	7%	422
TU 3 critical analysis and reasoning	54%	25%	12%	9%	591
TU 4 specialized knowledge in defined fields	54%	28%	10%	8%	615
TU 5 working in multifaceted work environments	58%	24%	12%	7%	224
TU 6 local and global citizenship and leadership	60%	22%	10%	8%	223
Average percentage (2014-2019)	56.83%	24.83%	10.66%	7.83%	2,457

Table V.5: Graduate Achievement (AY 2014-2015 to AY 2018-2019)

Academic year	Percentage of outcomes assessed exceeding performance target	Percentage of outcomes assessed meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes assessed not meeting performance target	Percentage ^{1*} of outcomes other*	Total number of TU Student Learning Outcomes to be assessed in that cycle
2014–2015	48.4%	44.2%	7.4%	51.9%	283
2015–2016	68.2%	27.4%	4.5%	39.7%	292
2016–2017	53.5%	36.7%	9.8%	26.6%	387
2017–2018	58.9%	30.4%	10.7%	22.7%	411
2018–2019	53.1%	38.7%	8.2%	22.7%	20.0%

^{1*} Denotes that the program failed to complete and/or submit a report or the program did not assess the SLO in that reporting year.

Table V.6: Program Performance in Meeting Institutional SLOs - Graduate Programs (2014 to 2019)

Institutional learning outcomes	Percentage of outcomes assessed exceeding performance target	Percentage of outcomes assessed meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes assessed not meeting performance target	Percentage of outcomes other*	Number of program SLOs assessed aligned to ILOs
TU 1 information literacy and technology competency	56%	35%	9%	33%	302
TU 2 effective communication	54%	37%	8%	30%	331
TU 3 critical analysis and reasoning	56%	34%	10%	33%	388
TU 4 specialized knowledge in defined fields	51%	40%	9%	34%	433
TU 5 working in multifaceted work environments	65%	30%	5%	27%	178
TU 6 local and global citizenship and leadership	69%	27%	4%	32%	144
Average percentage (2014-2019)	58%	34%	8%	32%	1,776

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Educational Effectiveness (Criterion 3; RoA 8, 9, 10)

The university uses a range of assessment results to improve educational effectiveness; they include the Review of Academic Departments, outlined in more detail in Chapter 3, Course Evaluations, and the aforementioned assessment plans required of all programs and Core Curriculum Courses. Outlined below is evidence of each using assessment to improve educational effectiveness.

Review of Academic Departments

The Review of Academic Departments (RAD) ensures that departments conduct a formal assessment of operations and programs every seven years, though more informal processes take place more frequently. This assessment includes a self-study, an external review, and a report to the USM. The RAD enhances the annual assessment of educational effectiveness by encouraging academic programs and departments to integrate trends into long-term departmental planning and resource allocation. The self-study requires departments to describe curricular and/or administrative changes made to improve programs, provide summary assessment findings evidencing the changes, and where available, describe the impact of the changes (S5.014).

Table V.7 represents an enumeration of changes and actions that departments’ seven year RAD prompted them to undertake, and an identification of the impact related to the criterion 3 of Standard V.

Course Evaluations

The university provides enrolled students with the opportunity to communicate feedback on their courses, materials, instruction, environment, and other aspects of their class experience. Departments use these evaluations to inform decisions on individual courses and to aid departmental planning. The Office of the Provost provides departments with five years of course evaluation data for their RAD self-study. Departments and faculty receive specific guidance on the use and application of course evaluation results, and how to solicit meaningful student responses that can promote reflection and potential changes in teaching methodology. (S5.015).

In October 2019, the Provost’s Teaching Evaluation Committee, including twelve members and representation from each college including faculty, chairpersons, and Academic Senate members, was charged with assessing the current teaching evaluation process and to propose a comprehensive plan to revise peer and student evaluations of teaching. The committee’s charge tasked it to research literature on bias in student teaching evaluations and to recommend solutions that allow for student and peer feedback that enhances student learning. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the committee’s suspension in March 2020. The com-

Table V.7: Review of Academic Departments' Assessment Results to Improve Educational

RAD cohort year	Academic programs in reporting year	V3a: Assist students in improving their learning. Ex: Actions related to assessment of student learning	V3b: Improve Pedagogy and Curriculum	V3c: Revise Academic Programs (new program; add track, minor, conc.) & Support Services (improve advising)	V3d: Plan, Conduct & Support a Range of Professional Development Activities.	V3e: Plan and budget for the provision of academic programs and services	3f: Inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs	V3g: Improve key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates	V3h: Implement other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services
2016	21	6	13	16	1	15	11	12	12
2017	15	2	10	14	1	8	7	8	10
2018	15	3	4	9	0	8	6	6	11
2019	22	1	15	11	2	19	1	2	18
2020	11	1	5	13	4	5	6	2	5
TOTALS	84	13	47	63	8	55	31	30	56

Table V.8: Actions and Changes reported by Undergraduate Programs' Annual Reports in Reporting Years AY 2014-2015 – AY 2019-2020

Institutional Learning Outcome	# SLOs across all reporting periods AY2014-15 thru 2019-20	V3a: Assist students in improving their learning. Ex: Actions related to assessment of student learning	V3b: Improve Pedagogy and Curriculum	V3c: Revise Academic Programs (new program; add track, minor, conc.) & Support Services (improve advising)	V3d: Plan, Conduct & Support a Range of Professional Development Activities. Ex: Start mentoring program	V3e: Plan and budget for the provision of academic programs and services	3f: Inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs	V3g: Improve key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates	V3h: Implement other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services
TU SLO 1. Information literacy & technological competency	480	338	156	36	16	7	5	11	10
TU SLO 2. Effective communication	533	411	155	75	41	6	7	7	15
TU SLO 3. Critical analysis & reasoning	757	424	166	39	16	4	19	7	1
TU SLO 4. Specialized knowledge in defined fields	801	379	125	39	9	2	0	0	0
TU SLO 5. Work in multifaceted work environments	284	153	91	9	11	1	0	0	0
TU SLO 6. Local & global citizenship & leadership	281	11	50	15	5	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	3,136	1,716	743	213	98	20	31	25	26



Table V.9: Actions and Changes reported by Graduate Programs' Annual Reports in Reporting Years AY 2014-2015 – AY 2019-2020

Institutional Learning Outcome	# SLOs across all reporting periods AY2014-15 thru 2019-20	V3a: Assist students in improving their learning. Ex: Actions related to assessment of student learning	V3b: Improve Pedagogy and Curriculum	V3c: Revise Academic Programs and Support Services	V3d: Planning, Conducting & Supporting a Range of Professional Development Activities.	V3e: Plan and budget for the provision of academic programs and services	3f: Inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs	V3g: Improve key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates	V3h: Implement other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services
TU SLO 1. Information literacy & technological competency	534	372	413	27	50	6	7	4	2
TU SLO 2. Effective communication	556	369	390	19	49	1	1	5	15
TU SLO 3. Critical analysis & reasoning	695	263	131	43	10	5	1	3	1
TU SLO 4. Specialized knowledge in defined fields	778	259	112	24	3	1	1	6	0
TU SLO 5. Work in multifaceted work environments	284	134	26	32	3	1	0	0	0
TU SLO 6. Local & global citizenship & leadership	246	95	24	5	0	0	0	2	0
TOTALS	3,093	1,492	1,096	150	115	14	10	20	18

mittee reconvened in November 2020 and provided a report and recommendations to the Academic Senate in spring 2021. A Chapter 3 recommendation endorses implementing the results.

Assessment Reports and use of Assessment Report

While Tables V.3-V.6 demonstrate achievement of student learning outcomes, the university encourages programs to approach assessment as not merely an audit of learning outcomes achievement, but also as an opportunity to identify opportunities for improvement. Tables V.8 and V.9 provide an enumeration of annual reports' elucidation of changes and actions that their assessments prompt, an identification of the corresponding institutional learning outcomes they support, and the form of change they represent in relation to criterion 3 of Standard V. Following the tables are a few representative examples and concomitant details of these changes. These data represent an earnest and systematic consideration and use of assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness consistent with mission and goals.

Mathematics Placement Assessment

Between 2014 and 2019, the undergraduate population increased by 4.3%. The number of first-year students interested in STEM-related majors increased by 25.9%, contributing to a total growth of 30.9% in undergraduate enrollment in the Jess & Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics (FCSM). This increase placed an exceptional burden on the Department of Mathematics; in addition to offering sufficient Core 3 courses, the department had to accommodate more students requiring highly specialized mathematics courses for their majors. In response, the Department of Mathematics created two committees, one to address Core courses, and one to address departmental curricular changes. Both committees meet openly and regularly and host an annual "Assessment Fest" in September. The department shares reports that emerge from the committees' efforts; this work has informed changes to

Table V.10: SPAN-303 and SPAN-304 Enrollments by Academic Year

Course	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
SPAN-303	10	36	23	20	20
SPAN-304	16	17	23	18	24
Total	26	53	46	38	44

Source: PeopleSoft, Retrieved 2/3/2021

individual courses, core courses, and the mathematics placement course [ALEKS Placement](#) (S5.016). Assessment results also assisted course redesign, the Maryland Open Source Textbook initiative (USM sponsored), and most notably, the implementation of the [mathematics pathways](#) (S5.017) ([USM First in the World Maryland Mathematics Reform Initiative](#)) (S5.018), which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Writing Center

Academic assessments have also improved academic support services that assist student across all disciplines and programs. In 2012, to buttress the achievement of better writing outcomes for all TU students, the College of Liberal Arts restructured and physically expanded the Writing Center. This included hiring a new director and appointing an inaugural assistant director. Between 2012 and 2019, the annual number of individual appointments held rose from 7,166 to 14,577 (S5.019). Together, the director and assistant director recruit, train, and supervise a staff of more than sixty student employees. In 2019, the Writing Center hired an Assistant Director for Faculty Outreach to meet the increasing demand for faculty workshops on the teaching of writing as well as to provide individual pedagogical support and outreach to writing classes. This staff member also runs the fellows program, which embeds tutors in writing intensive classes. The Writing Center has also used assessment of its services to support faculty development, including a three-day writing workshop every June, and specialized workshops on demand (S5.019).¹¹

Equity and Diversity, and the Curriculum

The Department of Electronic Media and Film (EMF) provides a representative effort to connect assessment to achievement of this learning outcome at the program level. Longitudinal analysis of EMF 313 *History of Film* term papers identified the need for greater diversity in reading assignments and film viewings, and the faculty responded by changing their courses accordingly. The adjustment proved effective and the department introduced new analytical frameworks that addressed racial stereotypes, transgender representation, special effects, and the use of lighting to convey thematic oppositions. As a result, in the 2016-2017 EMF program review, 313 students demonstrated significant improvement in reasoning and analytical writing ability, in part due to their exposure to new ideas (S5.020).

In 2014, the Department of Foreign Languages introduced the Brigham Young placement exam and deployed it to determine in which course students of French, German, Italian, and Spanish should enroll. This standardized test also allowed for comparison of data from multiple sections, permitting accurate assessment of achievement of Core Curriculum learning outcomes. Because of this assessment, the department developed new courses designed to address the specific grammar development needs of heritage Spanish speakers – a growing population of students in the Department of Foreign Languages. These new courses address both an identified opportunity for improvement in a discrete but growing part of the department’s student body while also fulfilling the Arts and Humanities requirement (Core 5) and Global Perspectives (Core 12) elements of the Core Curriculum. Since their inception, enrollment in these courses has grown quickly, as shown in Table V.10.

¹¹ See also the Writing Center website, <https://www.towson.edu/cla/centers/writing/facultystaff.html>

In addition to prompting curricular changes, participation in assessment has encouraged departments to allocate financial and human resources to enhance core courses. The Deaf Studies Program created a new paid position to coordinate American Sign Language (ASL) 1 (DFST 104), a Core 5 (Arts and Humanities) course taught by many regular and adjunct faculty, all of whom are deaf. Assessment results also spurred the creation of a mentoring program for ASL professors to meet regularly to discuss content, assessment, teaching techniques, and other curriculum matters. The process has proven instrumental in supporting faculty to provide consistency and rigor across all sections of DFST 104. The ASL coordinator identified weaknesses in the progression of the courses within the sequence of ASL 1 through 5, prompting substantial modifications to curriculum manuals and a review all courses' assessment plans.

While most academic assessment for continuous improvement appropriately takes place at the program or college level, the Office of the Provost has on occasion collaborated with faculty and other university partners to develop programs that support the achievement of student learning outcomes. As one example, the university established an Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) program (S5.021) to facilitate learning through the often difficult discussions surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. IGD facilitates sustained classroom conversation over several weeks, allowing students and faculty to engage more deeply and consistently with topics that often create tension and conflict. Now in its fifth year, assessment results indicate that this model increases individuals' empathic understanding of different perspectives and cultural competence. Consequently, a Towson Seminar (TSEM) that fulfills the Core Curriculum learning outcome of English Composition (Core 2), and a variety of courses in Education and Psychology have incorporated elements of IGD.

Experiential Learning

In response to assessments of technological agility and critical thinking skills, the College of Business and Economics developed two new required courses in Business Analytics: EBTM 250 *Problem Solving for Business I* and EBTM 251 *Problem Solving for Business II* to incorporate experiential learning and emphasize decision-making. Guided by a set of assessments in students' ability to use technology, the program made it a requirement to earn a Microsoft Office Specialist Excel certification. Since its introduction in fall 2016, pass rates have improved dramatically. This improvement is due to the development of an introductory lecture by alumni and faculty providing motivational messaging and advice for the courses' successful completion. Faculty worked with the publisher of the custom textbook to improve the content of course material, and met together to share instructional best practices. Faculty also staffed open lab hours with day and evening sessions to increase contact with students. As a result, pass rates went from 65% in 2016 to 76% in 2017, 86% in 2018, 83% in 2019, and 98% in 2020.

Economics and Assessment Standardization

Departments have used technology to assist in the challenging task of assessing courses with multiple sections taught by many different faculty. For example, the Department of Economics directed course coordinators to develop assessment tools via Blackboard to gather data from ECON 201-204, which are Core 6 (Social and Behavioral Science) courses and ECON 205, which is a Core 3 (Mathematics) course. This standardizes the measures across sections, assuring more complete and simple data gathering, and encourages courses' standardized assessment, providing greater rigor to results and analysis. The pilot program started in spring 2020, with full implementation occurring in fall 2020 (S5.022). The resulting data collection and summarization provides an effective means for the chairperson to identify quickly and accurately any areas of concern that require attention.

Table V.11. Service Learning Sections Offered Annually by College

Assessment Cycle	College of Business and Economics	College of Education	College of Fine Arts and Communication	College of Health Professions	College of Liberal Arts	Fischer College of Science and Mathematics	Total number of Service Learning sections
2014-2015	0	16	2	14	14	0	46
2015-2016	2	26	2	21	25	1	77
2016-2017	0	29	2	19	24	2	76
2017-2018	0	20	4	20	14	0	58
2018-2019	0	27	6	22	28	1	84

Citizenship and Leadership

Following the identification of proportionally fewer opportunities for Core Curriculum learning outcomes in “working in multifaceted work environments” and “local and global citizenship and leadership,” the university established two faculty development initiatives to create additional learning opportunities in these domains. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility has facilitated the preparation of faculty to increase the number of courses and standardize the requirements and academic rigor of the Service Learning Component (SLC) offered. Integrating a SLC into an already existing course, usually a minimum of fifteen hours of service outside of class, ensures that the course provides learning opportunities in interpersonal development and the promotion of citizenship skills. The total number of courses offering a SLC has increased 82.6% from 2014 to 2018. Table V.11 illustrates the increase.

Assessment of the impact of experiential learning, service learning, and IGD courses is preliminary. The Office of Civic Engagement has developed a series of rubrics and surveys to assess courses with IGD elements and IGD program leaders have committed to developing an assessment plan upon which it will begin reporting for the academic year 2020-2021 (S5.024). Faculty have published early results of IGD’s impact in *The Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* (S5.025). Notwithstanding these steps toward effective assessment, it is clear that a more systematic and sustained effort is required to embed these initiatives into the curriculum. Developing curricular maps identifying each initiative and their links to institutional learning outcomes and the Core Curriculum would assist the university in assessing impact and in promoting these high impact practices.

Institutional Review and Approval of Third Party Assessment Services (Criterion 4)

Not applicable.

Periodic Review of Effectiveness of Assessment Process (Criterion 5, RoA 8, 10)

In many respects, the annual assessment days represent the assessment of assessment processes that the university deploys. However, discussions at the University Assessment Council and the Sub-Committee on Student Learning Assessment have identified two issues, described briefly below, that prompt a reconsideration of the university’s assessment structures.

Assessment Structures and Roles

In 2015, the university adopted a plan for the recertification of core courses at the end of their seven-year assessment cycle. Course supply and demand, syllabus consistency, and assessment results are the plan’s criteria for courses’ recertification. (S5.025). Responsibility for the plan’s implementation remains unresolved with the UAC and CCRC unable to come to a mutual understanding.

Additionally, the SSLA’s role in the development of a new annual reports assessment rubric prompted concerns in one college, which then sought clarification on the roles, authority, and relationships between the committees that oversee and/or support student learning outcomes assessment at the university.

These two instances reflect an ambiguity in responsibilities and authority between committees that has prompted the UAC to a reconsideration of assessment structures and the Academic Senate constitution that regulates the aforementioned committees' roles, authority, and relationships. For example, the constitution declares that the UAC "shall provide guidance, structure and support for SLO assessment" and act in a "consultant" and "advisory role;" however, the constitution also requires the SSLA to implement the "policies of the UAC and the Academic Senate that apply to the assessment of academic programs and the core." The UAC has no explicit authority to develop and apply policies and this contradictory constitutional language has helped engender a scenario in which committees are unsure of their roles and authority, causing significant stalemates requiring repeated intervention to move assessment forward. Clearly, one important objective will be to clarify roles and responsibilities of the various shared governance entities regarding academic assessment. Another important objective will be to communicate clearly updates to stakeholders.

Assessment Exemplar – Program and Core Rubric Revision

Following each annual assessment day for programs and for core, the Office of Assessment collect assessment data from participants via a feedback survey. In recent years, feedback from individual assessment coordinators at the program and core course level, along with assessment day findings indicated deficiencies in the rubric deployed on Assessment Days. This has included consistent feedback that the report templates and the rubric do not align, that faculty need training on deploying the rubric, and that there was a need to better articulate expectations via the rubric. Additionally, the outcomes of the rubric's deployment failed to engender explicit recommendations to ameliorate program or core course challenges (S5.026). Consequently, the University Assessment Council asked the Sub-Committee on Student Learning Assessment to consider revisions to the rubric.

The development of the new rubric occurred throughout 2017-2020 and involved desk based research on other institutions' practice, continued consideration of assessment days feedback, and deliberation by the SSLA and UAC. The new rubric, completed in May 2021, will encourage and guide programs and courses to engage in more meaningful and significant assessment with a focus on the use of a longitudinal analysis of results to effect change.

Following drafting by the SSLA, it received consideration by the UAC with recommended changes, and upon UAC endorsement, consideration and endorsement by the erstwhile University Senate – now Academic Senate in May 2021. The university will deploy the new rubric at its January 2023 Assessment Days in peer review of 2021-22 program and core assessment reports (S5.027).

Conclusion

Towson University fully meets Standard V and the corresponding Requirements of Affiliation 8-10. However, the self-study process has identified two opportunities for improvement.

Recommendations

1. Clarify roles, responsibility, and relationships between the various shared governance entities charged with academic assessment.
2. Develop informatics and training that communicates the outcomes of the above recommendation.

Sources

- (S5.001) University Assessment Council
- (S5.002) Academic Assessment Policy Approval Policy of Assessment Plans by College
- (S5.003) Office of Academic Assessment
- (S5.004) Learning Goals and Related Course Outcomes Applied To 14 Core Requirements
- (S5.005) Program Assessment Plan
- (S5.006) Student Learning Outcomes and their Relationship to Institutional Mission and Middle States' Expectations
- (S5.007) Course Approval Review Committee
- (S5.008) Core Curriculum Review Committee
- (S5.009) Office of Institutional Research – Student Data
- (S5.010) Assessment Days Results 2014-2019.
- (S5.011) Seven Year Reporting & Recertification Cycle for Core Courses
- (S5.012) Assessment Days Rubric
- (S5.013) Assessment Days report 2020
- (S5.014) Review of Academic Departments Guidebook
- (S5.015) Helpful Tips for Course Evaluations
- (S5.016) ALEKS Placement
- (S5.017) Mathematics Pathways
- (S5.018) USM P-20: First in the World Maryland Mathematics Reform Initiative
- (S5.019) Writing Center Unit Assessment Report 2019
- (S5.020) EMF Assessment Report 2016-17
- (S5.021) Intergroup Dialogue Program
- (S5.022) College of Business and Economics Core Annual Report 2018-2019
- (S5.023) Office of Civic Engagement IGD Report
- (S5.024) Christa K. Schmidt, David R. Earnest, and Joseph R. Miles, "Expanding the reach of Intergroup Dialogue: A quasi-experimental study of two teaching methods for undergraduate multicultural courses in *The Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, Vol 13, issue 3, (2019), pp. 265-273
- (S5.025) Core Re-certification Plan
- (S5.026) Assessment Day surveys 2015-19 compendium
- (S5.027) Revised Assessment Day Rubric 2021



Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Requirements of Affiliation (RoA) addressed in Standard VI

- **Requirement 10:** Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.
- **Requirement 11:** The institution has documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability. The institution demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and undergoes an external financial audit annually.

Towson University fully meets Standard VI and the corresponding Requirements of Affiliation 10 and 11. The university has a student body of roughly 22,000 students, with approximately 3,200 of that total being graduate students. TU has a remarkable record of fiscal responsibility: despite receiving the lowest funding per student in the University System of Maryland (USM), the university continues to achieve retention and graduation rates that are among the highest in the USM. The university's overall budget of approximately \$540,000,000 renders it well positioned to support all operations, even during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As noted in chapter 1 and throughout the self-study, the Presidential Priorities and TU 2020 provide the institutional objectives that have guided planning and resource allocations for the bulk of the period under review in this report, and the new university strategic plan adopted in January 2021 will frame decision-making for the next decade. As previously outlined, a series of taskforces, including TIGER Way, have assessed operations and objectives that inform strategic divisional and unit planning to achieve goals established in the Presidential Priorities and TU 2020. Other units, such as Office of Technology Services (OTS), have engaged in long-term planning to assure critical infrastructure operations continue to have the resources necessary to support the institution.

The president's Strategic Plan Alignment priority aims to align the university vision and strategic plan, divisions' and colleges' strategic plans, and the Campus Master Plan to formulate an operating plan and funding model supporting the institution's mission and strategic goals. In implementing this concept, the university linked all new funding for fiscal year 2019 Strategic Plan goals and featured in the "Highlights of funding for Strategic Plan Goals" section of the annually published *Internal Operating Budget and Plan* (S6.001).

Institutional Objectives (Criterion 1)

The university's mission statement, strategic plan, and Presidential Priorities have been the guiding documents for institutional objectives. All divisions and units develop and regularly review objectives in support of these plans. The university uses Campus Labs' Planning Module to aid the development and reporting of assessment plans. The Planning Module assessment plan template requires units to identify the divisional objectives that the unit supports, articulate unit outcomes, identify associated measures and benchmarks of success, and determine the frequency with which it assesses outcomes (S6.002). The annual reports require the unit to demonstrate how it has operationalized its assessment plan for the reporting period, including its analysis of assessment data and actions it prompts. The reports facilitate units' communication regarding measures and assessment tools used to evaluate outcome achievement and help elucidate analysis of the results undertaken (S6.003).

Annually, the Office of the Provost hosts a Divisional Assessment Day, analogous to those for academic programs and the Core Curriculum that Chapter 5 details. These Divisional Assessment Days provide units an opportunity to engage in peer review and discussion of their units' assessment practices. Recommended actions are documented in the assessments, implemented, and results reported in the next reporting period.

Planning and Improvement Processes and Use of Assessment Results (Criterion 2)

The university has multiple mechanisms for constituent participation in planning and improvement processes, ranging from institutional to division and unit-level planning. In each case, planning and assessment go hand-in-hand, as the various committees revise plans based on continuous assessment. Membership on these committees includes representatives from across campus, providing important insight from all divisions.

The Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) supports the evaluation of institutional, divisional, and unit level goals that are stated clearly, assessed appropriately, suitably aligned, and informed by assessment conclusions. Representatives from each university division and major unit and from each of the university's shared governance bodies are SIE members. Complementing this are the university's Accreditation Liaison Officer (Chair), Director of Accreditation and Compliance, and the Director of Academic Assessment.

An individual appointed by the Vice President of Student Affairs chairs the Subcommittee on Student Affairs Assessment (SSAA) and membership consists of representatives appointed in consultations with the Student Affairs Vice President's Council, and an undergraduate student appointed by the Student Government Association. The SSAA supports co-curricular student learning outcomes assessment and the division's unit outcomes (S6.004).

The Subcommittee on Student Learning Assessment (SSLA) supports student learning outcomes assessment, both academic programs' and the general education curriculum (CORE Curriculum). This subcommittee also provides information relevant to Core Curriculum recertification, communicates with and supports faculty, and helps facilitate annual peer review of student learning assessment; Chapter 5 addresses this in more detail. The SSLA includes two faculty from each college, appointed to the committee as a reflection of their assessment expertise; one representative each from the library, Graduate Studies, the Honors College, a representative of the Core Curriculum Review Committee; and the Director of Academic Assessment (S6.004).

Each of the groups described above play important roles in planning and improving university functions. A culture of assessment drives a reflective process wherein multiple units continually review their areas and make changes for improvement. Chapter 5 details these academic areas, but this culture of planning, assessment, and improvement applies throughout campus. Examples include the following:

Housing and Residence Life's Equity Tank

Housing and Residence Life's (HRL) Equity Tank initiative is an assessment and organizational change process focused on examining student needs and HRL processes to provide a more equity-based approach to residence life. In the summer of 2018, the department assessed low socio-economic status students' needs and identified ways that HRL could reframe its practices and processes to serve better students with high financial need. The result was the implementation of multiple strategies to assist these students: assistance with FAFSA completion; targeted outreach programs to assist students who have an Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) of \$6,500 or lower to get necessary documentation to receive maximum state financial assistance; and a new lower cost housing option for triple occupancy in select spaces. The triple room option launched in fall 2019, with 100% occupancy in those room types.

Strategic Plan 2020-2030 process

In September 2019, Towson University began the process of developing a new strategic plan. Figure IV.1 depicts the foundation of the development of the *TU 2020-2030 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good*. President Schatzel charged the provost with leading this effort, and requested that the campus create a comprehensive ten-year plan that would both provide direction and allow flexibility for the decade ahead. After a fifteen-month process (made slightly longer than originally intended due to the pandemic), in December 2020, a draft plan became available online for final comments and suggestions. In the first Academic Senate meeting of 2021, the Senate voted unanimously to endorse the plan.

Collaboration and transparency characterized the plan’s development and included multiple opportunities for participation from every member of campus. The initial phase was a series of listening sessions and SWOT analyses led by the provost and SIE members, and involving students, faculty, staff, and the Board of Visitors. Deans conducted similar sessions within their colleges. These sessions were ending when the pandemic required the campus to move to remote work, disrupting the draft plan’s intended face-to-face presentations. Nonetheless, the SIE continued its work remotely, using the notes gathered from multiple sessions to continue to work on a proposed plan throughout the spring and summer. Following numerous revisions and a presentation of the draft plan to the President’s Cabinet, the university published a draft on the university website inviting comments and suggestions from the community, either using their name for attribution or anonymously, for two weeks. Incorporating many of the changes, the plan was finalized and shared with all governance bodies.

The plan’s goals reflect the university’s values.

- Dedication to student intellectual and personal growth
- Commitment to creating and disseminating knowledge of the highest caliber
- Passion for continuous learning
- Devotion to civic responsibility and community service
- Commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Integrity and ethical action as leaders for the public good

The strategic plan’s aim is to move the university from regional to national prominence during the plan’s ten-year life. The high-level plan encompasses six primary goals:

Educate

We will achieve national recognition for our innovative student-centered curriculum emphasizing engaged learning, in-demand academic programs, and new approaches to instruction and learning in the liberal arts, business, health professions, STEM, arts and teacher preparation.

Innovate

Our faculty are leaders in scholarship and creative activities and will be fully supported in their efforts to generate new knowledge and new creative works.

Engage

We will serve as community leaders and partners extending the talents of our students, faculty and staff beyond our campus boundaries to create opportunities for leadership, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and experiential learning.

Include

We will build an even more inclusive, equitable, and collaborative community where people from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.

Figure VI.1: strategic plan foundation





Support

We will recruit, retain and graduate students of the highest caliber, offer outstanding student success services, and provide an engaging campus experience that reflects the educational values of Towson University and produces graduates prepared for careers or advanced education.

Sustain

We will act as leaders in advancing sustainability of all resources—environmental, human, and financial.

Each goal has complementary measurable and achievable actions, each consistent with the university’s mission. All of the institution’s self-study recommendations will support one or more of the institution’s strategic plan goals and actions (S6.005)

The university is now engaged in the second phase of the strategic planning process, where more detailed unit-level planning and resource allocation connected directly to the plan will take place. The approach mandates that all units develop their own strategic plans by mid-summer 2021, clearly mapping their objectives and goals to the high-level goals in the university plan. All units have received a common template that will allow them to identify goals, timeline, responsible parties, and fiscal resources required where necessary. Each unit will review their progress annually and write a report for the SIE’s review.

Financial Planning and Budgeting Aligned to Mission and Goals (Criteria 3, 8, 9)

For most of the period under review, the university’s strategic plan, *TU 2020: A Focused Vision for Towson University*, and the Presidential Priorities have guided planning and budgeting. The president and senior leadership establish long-term goals that also guide university-wide resource allocation. Shared governance bodies play an important role in the development, accountability, and transparency of the university budget at each stage of its development. With the deployment of the new university strategic plan, there will be even greater alignment of resource allocation at the college, divisional, and unit levels.

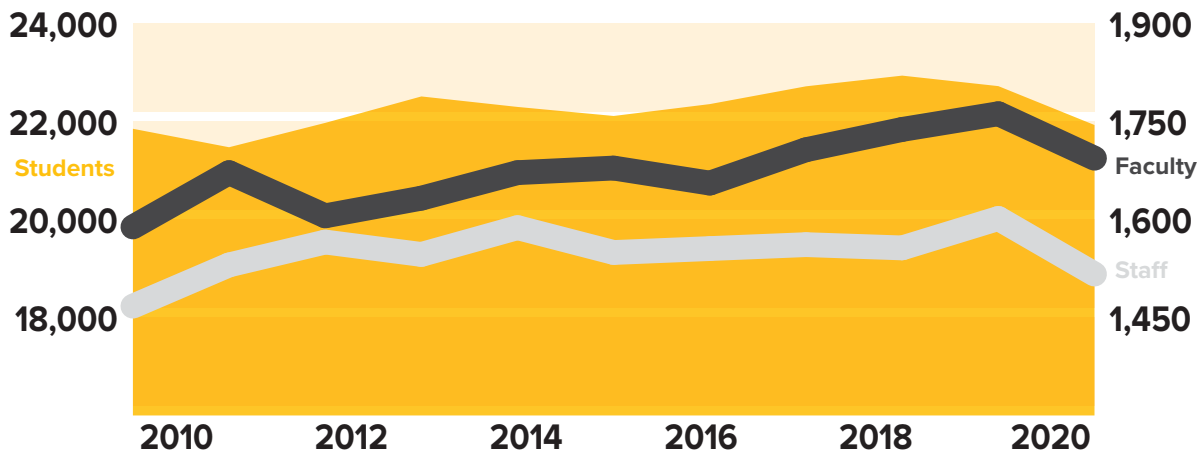
Annually, the university submits its proposed budget for operating expenses to the USM and ultimately to the State of Maryland. The USM may set parameters for anticipated growth and tuition rates. Following the proposed budget’s submission, the Vice President for Administration and Finance and the University Budget Office work with vice presidents and their staff to prepare their divisional budget allocation request.

The president requires the vice presidents to review and reallocate their resources in alignment with the strategic plan and priorities before submitting requests for additional resources. The University Budget Committee (UBC), established in 2019 to serve as the college deans’ representative voice in Towson University’s resource planning process, advises the President’s Cabinet on high-level strategic issues and serve as liaisons between administrative leadership and academic leadership to provide a regular communication with faculty, staff and students. The UBC is the first shared governance group to review the annual budget requests for review.

[The Resource Planning Advisory Committee \(RPAC\)](#) (S6.006) receives these requests after the UBC. RPAC has representation from each college and division, shared governance bodies, and the UBC. It includes the chief financial officer, the provost, rotating representation from the deans, and the Academic Senate chair. RPAC and UBC forward their budgetary recommendations to the president and senior leadership. The President’s Cabinet makes the final decisions, while taking into consideration the input of the shared governance committees. Once allocated, the University Budget Office develops an [Internal Operating Budget and Plan](#) (S6.001) that includes the internal budget detailing expenditures and revenue sources.

Departmental budget contacts have access to their budgets in PeopleSoft Financials, including Budgets Overview, nVision Reports, and a number of secured queries. Divisional Budget Officers provide oversight of their division’s budgets. Vice Presidents report to RPAC on resource use in the current budget. Additionally, the CFO has created a series of executive level dashboards, including budget vs. actual variances that are shared routinely with the President’s Cabinet. To promote transparency, the budget process and timelines, as well as operating budgets for the past seven years, are available on the [Budget Office](#) (S6.007) website.

Figure VI.2: Students, Faculty, and Staff Headcounts: Fall 2010 to Fall 2020



In previous years, university budgeting was primarily incremental, with the vast majority of the budget being rolled over with slight increases universally. Most of the input from shared governance bodies was around the use of any incremental increase, thus limiting discussion to a relatively small portion of the overall budget. Recognizing that this was not a strategic deployment of resources or a good use of shared governance input, the Vice President of Administration and Finance initiated a series of changes in 2020 to develop a more transparent, meaningful, and strategic budgeting process for the university.

The shifts in the budget process reflect a commitment to long-term financial planning, with an eye towards proactive rather than reactive budgeting. Known recurring permanent expenses and legislatively required expenses are now included in the base budget. The university also built a larger contingency into the base budget, a strategy that paid off during the fiscal challenges of the pandemic.

Some of the improvements are mechanical in nature but have considerably improved the budgeting process; for example, the budget process and calendar are now initiated earlier in the fiscal year than previously (October versus December), allowing for budget loads into the financial system prior to the start of the next fiscal year. This simple change allows for more strategic budgeting, allowing for better alignment of unit-level budgeting with the annual budget process. As just one example, in previous years there was a disconnect between the Information Technology budget planning

process and the university's; with the timing now aligned, we can better support and plan for expected IT expenditures.

With these changes in place, shared governance's role in budgeting has become more consequential. Rather than focusing on a small slice of the budget (the previous incremental model), RPAC and the UBC have input on the larger questions of strategic deployment of resources, looking at the university budget as a whole and connecting deployment of resources to the strategic plan.

Fiscal and Human Resources (Criterion 4)

Significant fiscal and human resources support the university, which has been important in overcoming the challenges that the planned significant growth and the pandemic's unplanned impact have posed. The physical campus has grown and continues to see significant improvements that better serve students, faculty, and staff. Improvements in technology infrastructure allowed a successful transition to remote learning during the pandemic.

In the last decade, Towson University has experienced a period of steady student growth, until the pandemic's disruptions. This enrollment growth was intentional and consistent with university goals; significant investments in the human resources and infrastructure necessary have supported this growth. Figure VI.2 demonstrates the relationship between student, faculty, and staff numbers. The downturn in fall 2020 reflects the enrollment challenges due to the pandemic, and the impact of the subsequent hiring freeze.

Office of Human Resources

As the campus community grew in number and complexity, it became clear that the human resources operations required enhancements. Changes included the creation of four new positions referred to as HR partners, who each have full human resources responsibility for specific divisions and departments. Additionally, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) realigned its traditional functions into units that work more closely together; this included talent management (staffing, training, and organization development), total rewards (pay, benefits, and recognition), human resources information systems, faculty/staff relations and human resources policy and compliance, and customer service. The partner functions as a consultative resource to faculty and staff, providing guidance and support for HR questions, concerns, and challenges. The university expects that this approach will facilitate better availability, accessibility, and response from the Office of Human Resources. While anecdotal evidence suggests the changes have been successful, formal assessment of the unit will begin in late summer. This will include establishing a dashboard and metrics to assess and monitor effectiveness and to support decision making.

One of the Office of Human Resources' major initiatives was the university's first comprehensive salary study. Launched in December 2019, it seeks to develop a formal compensation philosophy and to assess the overall market competitiveness of faculty and staff pay with comparable institutions. The university collaborated with a nationally recognized compensation consultant, Segal, to help identify, gather and analyze the appropriate market data and to make recommendations. This collaborative process included our shared governance groups to provide valuable input and feedback, helping assure transparency. The overall finding was that while the vast majority of faculty and staff receive competitive compensation, there were pockets that required attention. The university has prioritized the final recommendations for adjustments and will implement them based on their impact on our competitiveness and availability of funding.

Office of Technology Services

The pandemic has brought into sharp relief the importance of having an innovative, responsive, and well-resourced technology division in institutions of higher education. Fortunately, Towson University had such a division in place long before the recent events elevated the need for these important services. The Office of Technology Services (OTS) is a large team that is an essential human resource to support students, staff, and faculty in their work and learning. Specific initiatives include the OTS College Coordinator Program. The program helps faculty with technology and OTS staff serve as consultants for faculty and colleges to determine needs and the adoption of tools and software. It includes workshops for faculty and students to support successful the use of technology laboratories. The coordinators regularly meet with colleges' academic leadership to assess needs. OTS also monitors technology use to evaluate technology adoption and engages in weekly review of classroom issues to identify areas of faculty development needs. OTS collaborates closely with the Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson (FACET) to identify faculty need and to develop solutions to scale sustainably the deployment of resources and solutions. This includes the sharing of course analytics and student support information.

Assessment that is more formal occurs via the [Academic Technology Engagement Program](#) (S6.008). OTS liaises with constituent groups (students, faculty, chairs, and associate deans) to maintain a dialogue on developing and emerging needs. The program runs college-specific exercises to develop college themes and objectives that OTS presents to the colleges for their consideration in resource allocation.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a significant increase in operations for both OTS and FACET to ensure that faculty and students had access to proper technology to support remote learning, as well as the proper knowledge to deliver courses in various remote formats. As described elsewhere in this report, OTS immediately invested in technologies for students and faculty, creating a distribution process to provide laptops and hot spots for students and faculty in need. Additionally, OTS transformed thirty-two classrooms to deliver classes face-to-face in reduced density while simultaneously delivering the class via video live-stream or recording, bringing the total of such classrooms to 78% of our inventory. Additional to securing

and installing the technology, OTS professionals held 1:1 training sessions with 124 faculty, demonstrating how to use the technology for faculty individual needs.

FACET rapidly increased its work with faculty to support the move to remote learning, and collaborated with OTS in finding technological solutions to identified problems. One successful strategy employed was to offer pop-up listening sessions where faculty could drop in online and share any challenges they were having in delivering distance education with professionals from FACET and OTS. These sessions helped define problems and develop solutions that FACET shared broadly with faculty. OTS uses questions and concerns that emerge during these sessions to refine and/or identify technology support needs.

In addition to its critical function supporting academic programs, OTS is a vital resource to other key campus operations, supporting enterprise systems across multiple units and university functions, including enrollment management, document management, budgeting, student payments, financial aid and management, academic advising, student services, facilities management, and public safety. The staff in OTS employ a future-oriented technology strategy, including goals to modernize and support business applications, streamline business processes, automate manual tasks, and provide data and analytics to support decision making. OTS provides Business Intelligence Dashboards, which help with decision making related to health/pandemic and general department scenarios.

To serve the campus effectively, OTS regularly assesses its operations, looking for ways to utilize technology to improve the experience of faculty, staff, and students. For example, OTS has a team focused on Digital Experience and Digital Accessibility. The work of this group includes developing a new look for the towson.edu university website, launching a simpler timesheet experience, and implementing a new Identity and Access Management system (NetID). All of these updates will modernize processes, improve Digital Accessibility, and provide mobile-friendly experiences. To improve Digital Accessibility efforts TU policies have been converted from PDFs to individual html webpages, training and educational events have been held, and all potential (Project Management Office/PMO) technology projects reviewed for accessibility concerns.

Decision Making Processes (Criterion 5)

The university has several layers of administrative bodies with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The President's Cabinet is Towson University's senior leadership team. It meets bi-weekly to discuss and address institutional strategies, priorities, and policies, and includes the divisional vice presidents, Athletic Director, Executive Director of Governmental and Community Relations, Director of Public Safety, and Associate Vice President of Human Resources. The President's Cabinet discuss institutional strategies when prioritizing resources as part of the internal budget process. These prioritized resource recommendations are presented to the University Budget Committee (UBC) and then to the Resource Planning and Advisory Committee (RPAC) by the CFO with the President's Council's authority.

There are two councils within academic affairs that support planning, resource allocation, and institutional improvement. The Provost's Council (S6.009) meets twice a month to discuss, plan, and aid the implementation of initiatives associated with admissions; enrollment; academic programming; diversity, equity and inclusion; faculty development; research and sponsored programs; accreditation and compliance; student support services; and the library and colleges. It also advises the provost on issues affecting academic affairs policies and procedures. The Deans' Council, composed of the academic deans, provost, and vice provost, meets twice a month to discuss cross college problem solving, planning, projects, and cooperation.

The Academic Senate, detailed in Chapter 7, is responsible for helping establish university policies, strategic direction, and prosecution of the mission. To support this responsibility it has established committees and [sub-committees](#) (S6.010) to provide oversight for everything from academic standards to athletics.

Facilities Planning and Infrastructure (Criterion 6)

Towson University's physical resources provide an outstanding experience where faculty, staff, and students can work, live, and learn. The main campus is a 329-acre site located in Towson, with recent acquisitions in the downtown area demonstrating the university's commitment to being a vibrant part of a rapidly growing business district. The university also has satellite operations in the Towson University in Northeastern Maryland (TUNE) building located on the grounds of Harford Community College, and at USM operations at Shady Grove, Southern Maryland, and Hagerstown. In recent years, the university and the State of Maryland have made significant investments in the physical infrastructure of the campus, including the planning and construction of the largest academic building on campus, the new Science Complex, and an 85,000 square foot addition and renovation of the existing Student Union.

Campus Master Plan

The university's facilities [Campus Master Plan](#) (S6.011) is the primary means by which it plans for and ensures it has the necessary human, physical, and technical resources to support its operations. The university creates a master plan every five years, including a major revision every ten years and a minor revision midway.

The university developed its current Master Plan in three phases (S6.012). The first phase included the collection of data and meetings to gather input from external and internal campus constituents from more than 600 students, faculty, staff, and community member participants. The second phase involved the review and documentation of the recommendations from the 2009 Master Plan. This review informed recommended updates to the master plan internal and external constituents received a presentation for consideration. In the final phase of the process, the university incorporated the responses into a draft of the final master plan update, which the university presented to the USM for approval.

The 2020 Master Plan update is under development, led by senior leadership and with the assistance of an outside consultant group. The planning process involves numerous consultations with shared governance groups, the deans, students, and members of the local community. Ultimately, the campus master plan will align with the university's strategic plan in support of the broader goals of the campus community. Sustainability and

accessibility are major strategic initiatives to be incorporated into the current Master Plan update, moving the campus towards a more outward facing focus and integrating with the uptown Towson community.

Space Committee

Oversight for facilities planning and budgeting comes from the [Space Committee \(SC\)](#) (S6.013), which the president chairs and includes the vice presidents, athletic director, legal counsel, and representatives from Facilities Management. It meets monthly to address space usage and long-term facility planning and projects. The SC has responsibility for the oversight of campus facilities expenditures and related requests made to the state. It coordinates the development of recommendations for the State Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the institutional USM Funded Construction Program (SFCP), the Access Maryland Program (AMP), and the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program (S6.014).

The USM Chancellor approves institutional cash funded projects between \$1M and \$5M. The Board of Regents must authorize all projects in the CIP (state-funded) requests and SFCP (institutionally funded) projects over \$5M. The Associate Vice President for Facilities Management oversees the Facilities Renewal Program. This program addresses infrastructure repair and replacement, which includes utility systems, building systems, and exterior infrastructure. The key measurement of the Facilities Renewal Program is the deferred maintenance backlog, which the university updates every ten years.

Each division presents facilities project priorities to the committee for review. The committee announces those projects it has approved at its December meeting. This affords Facilities Management sufficient time to develop plans and solicit bids for the approved projects. The work for these projects largely occurs during the summer months in an effort to minimize any disruption to student/staff activity.

Environmental Sustainability

Even as the university has experienced significant growth, it does so with a careful eye to issues of sustainability. Towson University is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Since the release of the President Obama Climate Action Plan in 2013, the university has invested \$10M in energy-saving technologies, reducing energy coast by \$2M annually. The university has an aggressive renewable energy

procurement strategy, which commits to sourcing 50% of purchased electricity from renewable sources and increasing to 55% in 2020, with goal of 100% renewable by 2030. To date, the university has installed a 1.3 megawatt rooftop canopy Solar PV System and will study additional on-site/off-site solar power opportunities as systems become more affordable. By the end of 2020, the university will have received over \$2.5M in utility rebates as part of the BGE Energy Savers Program.

During the Climate Action Plan's initial years, the university focused on renewable sources for purchased power because it has higher carbon intensity than grid purchased power. The university is completing a study on the condition and efficiency of the existing plant, and the steam, electric, and chilled water distribution systems that accommodates both the growth that the Campus Master Plan predicts and the Climate Action Plan's carbon reduction goals. Increased energy efficiency through technological improvements, expanded metering program, retro commissioning, behavior change, investment in renewable energy sources, and analysis of opportunities to construct a combined heat and power plant aim to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The university subscribes to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles. The state of Maryland requires that USM buildings, both new facilities and major renovations, be LEED Silver certified. Many buildings on campus are LEED Silver certified and six are LEED Gold certified buildings. Sustainability initiatives include campus dining services, through a commitment to use local and sustainable food sources when possible. Since 2013, the university has doubled its recycling rate and expanded its composting to all sectors of the campus.

Independent Audit (Criterion 7)

The university aims to be a responsible steward of the environment and a responsible steward of financial resources. [USM policy on financial management](#) (\$6.015) requires an annual external audit of each system university. The university's Office of Management Advisory and Compliance Services is the point of contact on any concerns addressed in the Management Letter. The auditors present the final audit report to the USM System Office, the Audit Committee of the USM Board of Regents, and to the Chancellor. The Chancellor and Regents review and resolve any findings. The Chancellor also submits periodic financial management reports to the Board of Regents

that include revenue and expenditures for the year to date compared with budgeted data, an assessment of expected revenues and expenditures for the year, and an analysis of deviations.

Fiscal Challenges of the Pandemic

Towson University saw a \$35 million loss of revenue in FY20, and a \$76.5 million loss in FY21 due to COVID-19. This loss included a reduction in state appropriations, student tuition and fees, and auxiliary business revenues. In addition, the university absorbed COVID-19 related expenses totaling almost \$8 million over the two fiscal years. These expenses included costs associated with testing, cleaning, remote learning, public safety, teleworking, and physical adjustments to the campus itself.

In response to these unprecedented challenges the university took swift action to adjust its FY21 budget and implement numerous cost-saving actions:

- Implemented a 9.3 percent pro-rata reduction to the university's state-assisted operating budget.
- Implemented reductions to auxiliary operating budgets to account for reduced revenues.
- Implemented temporary pay reductions for faculty and staff, including:
 - A 10 percent reduction for the president and any individual earning more than \$375,000;
 - A five percent reduction for all vice presidents and any individual earning \$200,000 - \$375,000.
- A two percent reduction for any individual earning \$150,000 - \$199,999.
- Applied for and received approximately \$13 million in institutional CARES Act funding, including \$8.65 million in federal relief and \$4.35 million in state relief to offset COVID-related losses. TU also received \$18.5 million in institutional funding in the most recent federal stimulus program.
- Limited FY 2021 expenditures to those that are essential.
- Deferred more than \$2.1 million in funding for new initiatives.
- Froze hiring for non-mission critical and nonessential positions saving \$17.6 million in salary and fringe benefit costs for 159 vacant staff and thirty-five vacant faculty positions. No layoffs or furloughs occurred.

- Limited construction and facilities renewals to projects necessary for reopening campus or maintaining campus safety, with the exception of ongoing/planned construction.
- Limited business travel to Maryland and the District of Columbia.

The administration determined and applied these cost-savings actions very intentionally to prioritize the quality of our education and infrastructure. TU continued to support initiatives that reinforce the academic mission, such as funding the creation of outdoor classrooms that enable students in our performing arts, health professions, and other programs to fulfill safely the experiential learning requirements of their degrees during COVID-19. The university also continued to invest strategically in key institutional goals, including instructional enhancements to support student success, additional counseling positions to support student well-being, and the StarTUP business incubator to advance entrepreneurship and investment in our region.

Assessment Exemplar- Unit Assessment

Since 2015, the Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness committee has engaged in an annual peer review of unit assessments. The committee provided oversight to ensure units engaged in assessment activities supporting institutional priorities; ensuring clearly articulated and appropriate alignment between institutional priorities, divisional goals, and units. Initially this took the form of a university unit assessment day that complemented academic assessment day for core and for programs. In 2019, this changed to one for divisions, resulting in six assessment days, one for each division. [An analysis of results of these six assessment days, the 2018 assessment day, and a participants' survey prompted a number of recommendations to reform how units engage in assessment planning](#) (S6.016).¹² This process indicated that units needed guidance on writing appropriate outcomes, developing appropriate complementary measures, and aligning outcomes with divisional objectives. In short, most units were conflating outcomes with operational tasks, and enumeration thereof as assessment

– units were rarely using “assessment results” to inform change or resource allocation.

In 2020 the SIE persisted with divisional assessment days, but to better support amelioration of the challenges detailed, the Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services [developed a series of workshops for divisions and developed guidance for each division on how to more effectively orientate and manage their unit assessment practices](#)(S6.017).¹³ These workshops further demonstrated the need to provide divisions with support and guidance on unit assessment reform.

Unit Assessment Handbook

The unit assessment self-assessment of recent years prompted the development of the inaugural [institutional effectiveness handbook](#) (S6.018).¹⁴ The handbook provides explicit, practical, and transparent guidance on unit assessment good practice and seeks to dispel some commonly held misconceptions that were undermining units' engagement with necessary change to practice. The Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness considered the proposed handbook at its February 2020 meeting and following some committee requested changes, subsequently adopted the handbook via remote polling.

Unit Assessment Days' Abolition

Throughout the spring of 2020, face-to-face pre-COVID-19, and remotely during the pandemic, the second annual divisional assessment days occurred. The challenging conditions of COVID-19 meant these events were not an effective means of initiating change as originally intended. These assessment days were successful, however, in establishing a structure to begin practice and conversations about institutional effectiveness assessment and in identifying challenges to developing more meaningful and useful assessment.

In September 2020, the SIE considered a proposal to abandon assessment days in favor of revised plan and report templates that more effectively reflect unit outcomes' desired out-

¹² Westley Forsythe, Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services to Gary Levy, Associate Provost, 3 September 2019.

¹³ Westley Forsythe, Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services to Natalie Dabrowski, Budget Manager – Divisional Budget Office, University Marketing and Communication, 27 April 2020.

¹⁴ *Unit Assessment: a handbook to institutional effectiveness*, (2020).

comes and that complemented the unit assessment handbook. Replacing it will be SIE peer review of each division's unit reports, using the new templates, guided by the handbook, and iterated by SIE peer review. This new approach will launch in late summer 2021 based on a [timeline reflecting SIE response to a survey](#). (S6.019)

New Unit Plan and Report Templates

In Fall 2020, informed by the previous two years' experience, the Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services worked with Campus Labs to develop [new plan](#) (S6.002) and [report templates](#) (S6.003), informed by unit assessment day findings, SIE discussions, and the new principles of approach that the unit assessment handbook reflect. The SIE adopted the new templates in November 2020. These templates will accommodate new plans and reports beginning fall 2021 for the 2020-21 reporting period.

New Approach

1. Two revisions of peer review assessment days, moving from a university assessment day, to divisional assessment days, to units receiving peer review from the Institutional Effectiveness committee.
2. Inaugural Unit Assessment handbook
3. Revised unit plan and report templates
4. Ad-hoc workshops in unit assessment
5. New plan and report templates
6. New schedule and approach to unit assessment peer review.

Expected Outcomes

The SIE anticipates that these reform measures, informed by assessment findings, will achieve the following:

1. The development of appropriate unit outcomes, without which, assessment is largely task completion enumeration.
2. More meaningful and useful assessment data collection and analysis by units via unit plans and report templates that reflect the good practice identified in the unit assessment handbook.
3. Better alignment of unit outcomes to divisional objectives and strategic plan goals.

Conclusion

Towson University fully meets Standard VI and the corresponding Requirements of Affiliation 10 and 11, remaining fiscally sound and well prepared to continue its important mission long after the pandemic subsides. Careful planning, fiscal responsibility, and the participation of representatives from throughout the campus community have allowed the university to continue operations uninterrupted.

Recommendations

1. Improve unit-level assessment processes and reporting across campus through a systematic approach, including training and accountability measures.

Sources

- (S6.001) Internal Operating Budget and Plan
- (S6.002) Campus Labs Planning Module unit assessment plan template
- (S6.003) Campus Labs Planning Module unit assessment report template
- (S6.004) University Assessment Council and subcommittees
- ((S6.005) Strategic Plan Goals— Strategic Plan Action— Self-Study Recommendation crosswalk
- (S6.006) Resource Planning and Advisory Committee
- (S6.007) Budget Office
- (S6.008) Academic Technology Engagement Program
- (S6.009) The Provost's Council
- (S6.010) Academic Senate Sub-committees
- (S6.011) Campus Master Plan
- (S6.012) Campus Master Plan Update
- (S6.013) Space Committee
- (S6.014) Capital Improvement Program
- (S6.015) USM by laws, "VIII.700 Policy on Financial Management
- (S6.016) Westley Forsythe, Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services to Gary Levy, Associate Provost, 3 September 2019.
- (S6.017) Westley Forsythe, Director of Accreditation and Compliance Services to Natalie Dabrowski, Budget Manager – Divisional Budget Office, University Marketing and Communication, 27 April 2020.
- (S6.018) Unit Assessment Handbook
- (S6.019) SIE unit assessment timeline



**Standard VII: Governance,
Leadership, and Administration**



The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals and in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

Requirements of Affiliation addressed in Standard VII

- **Requirement 12:** The institution fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure(s) including any related entities (including without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership). The institution’s governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution’s mission is being carried out.
- **Requirement 13:** A majority of the institution’s governing body’s members have no employment, family, ownership or other personal financial interest in the institution. The governing body adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution. The institution’s district/system or other chief executive officer shall not serve as the chair of the governing body.

Towson University fully meets Standard VII and associated Requirements 12 and 13. As a public institution with several layers of oversight, the university meets

this standard, both through its institutional operations and with support and accountability from both internal and external constituents with whom it works and to whom it is accountable.

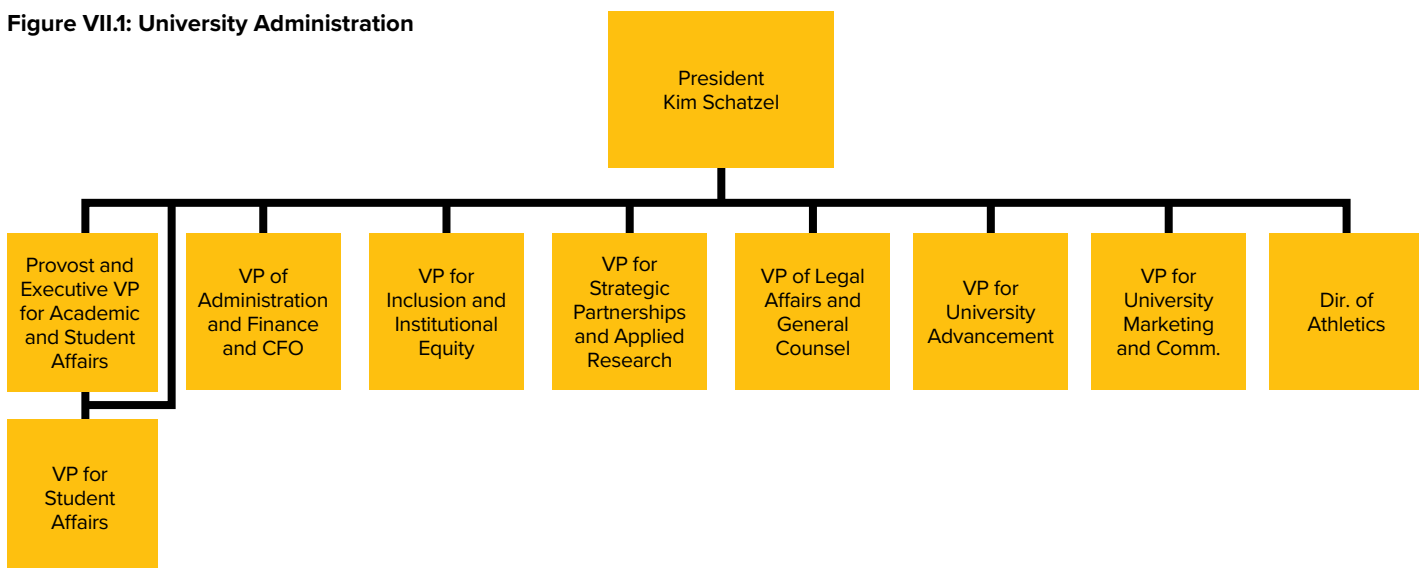
The university constitutes seven administrative divisions (see Figure VII.1) each with a vice president reporting to the president. The Vice President for Inclusion and Institutional Equity, the Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel, the Director of Athletics, and the Associate Vice President for Human Resources make up the Executive Division.

The Provost oversees the Division of Academic Affairs, which includes the academic colleges, university library, several institutes and programs, institutional research, enrollment management, international initiatives, and other academic administrative units. In 2019, the Division of Student Affairs began reporting to the Provost. This change serves our students more effectively by fostering greater collaboration between the academic units and student affairs.

Shared Governance (Criterion 1; RoA 12)

Shared governance is a key value for Towson University. Consistent with the commonly accepted principles of shared governance and the requirements of the [USM policy on shared governance](#) (S7.001), Towson Univer-

Figure VII.1: University Administration



sity has “formal structures that provide for appropriate collaboration and communication between and among administration, faculty, staff, and students.” In March 2019, in response to an assessment of the university’s comportment with USM policy on governance representation, the University Senate, which included representatives from faculty, staff, and students, dissolved itself and created new structures to enable a more balanced organization of shared governance at Towson University. The criterion addressing periodic assessment discusses this in more detail. Four bodies currently represent the university’s primary constituents: the [Academic Senate](#) (S7.002), the [Towson University Staff Senate](#) (TUSS) (S7.003), the [Student Government Association \(SGA\)](#) (S7.004), and the [Graduate Student Association](#) (GSA) (S7.005).

Academic Senate

The Academic Senate addresses the following areas, either directly or through its committees: admission standards; academic requirements, new academic program proposals and significant changes thereto; faculty promotion, rank, tenure, and merit policies and procedures; evaluation and approval of faculty development resources; and formation of new academic departments or colleges, and reconfiguration or dissolution of departments or colleges. It meets monthly during the fall and spring semesters. Consistent with USM policy on shared governance, the Academic Senate reports to the campus community any administrative veto of policy or procedure it recommends; any failure to enact a recommendation; or any action taken contrary to an Academic Senate recommendation.

Towson University Staff Senate

The TUSS, also established in March 2019, replacing the antecedent Towson University Staff Council, serves as an advisory body to the president on non-faculty matters. TUSS provides staff with an opportunity to express ideas and concerns and provides a means for assessing campus opinion on important staff issues. It also facilitates communication between the president and the university staff, advises on staff matters and the work environment, and the university’s welfare as a whole. It meets monthly throughout the calendar year and has a series of committees devoted to specific issues, including staff development, staff or all employee human resources policy, by-laws, and communications.

Student Government Association

All enrolled undergraduate students have the right to vote in the Student Government Association (SGA) elections and to participate in the SGA. The SGA comprises three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. The Student Senate is the student body’s legislative arm; it represents the student body, writes legislation, and monitors university policies and/or programming that affect undergraduate students. The SGA also approves and governs student organizations and their budgets. The SGA meets weekly for two hours during the fall and spring semesters.

Graduate Student Association

All graduate students are Graduate Student Association (GSA) members. The GSA represents all graduate students and provides a means by which graduate students can express their needs, interests, and concerns to university administration. It also hosts events to build community among the graduate population and aid in professional development. Some events include new graduate student orientation, Career Center workshops, and social activities. The GSA officers meet once a week with the Office of Graduate Studies staff; those meetings are open to all graduate students.

The GSA officers also meet with TU administrators once a semester in a formal Meet and Confer process. Through this Meet and Confer process, the GSA provides suggestions to enhance graduate students’ experience and decides whether to continue to meet with institutional leaders in this manner or whether to elect to have an outside organization represent them in such meetings.

The Academic Senate calls a combined meeting of the executive boards of these four shared governance bodies once a semester. The university is currently working on a document that outlines the spheres of authority of each body and formalizes their collaboration. The criterion addressing periodic assessment discusses this in more detail.

Governing Bodies (Criterion 2)

Three governing bodies oversee and support the university's work: the USM Board of Regents, an institutional Board of Visitors, and the state coordinating board, the [Maryland Higher Education Commission \(MHEC\)](#) (S7.006). Towson University (S7.002) is a member of the [University System of Maryland \(USM\)](#) (S7.007), which comprises twelve institutions and three regional higher education centers led by Chancellor Jay A. Perman. A USM [Board of Regents](#) (S7.008) appointed by the governor has oversight over the USM campuses and centers.

USM Board of Regents

A twenty-one member Board of Regents governs the University System of Maryland. Members are appointed by the governor, president of the state senate, and the speaker of the house for five-year terms (student members are appointed to two-year terms), and are not financially compensated for their service. Article VII of the [Board of Regents' by-laws](#) (S7.009) details its duties and responsibilities, which include reviewing and approving a performance accountability plan for each institution for which each president is accountable. In consultation with the system chancellor and institutions, the board approves consolidated budget requests for each institution's operation budget and capital budget.

Board of Visitors

Complementing these external governing and regulatory bodies is the institution's [Board of Visitors](#) (S7.010). It is the president's advisory group including presidential appointed alumni, business professionals, educators, and volunteers. Faculty, staff, and student body representatives from the shared governance bodies also populate the board.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

The [Maryland Higher Education Commission \(MHEC\)](#) (S7.006), established in 1988, is the state's higher education coordinating board responsible for establishing statewide policies for Maryland public and independent colleges and universities.

Independence and Integrity

Board of Regents members are subject to the board's [policy on public ethics](#) (S7.011) and the Board's Committee on Audit monitors the board's observance of the Maryland Public Ethics Law. The university's senior officials are also subject to the Ethics Code and its reporting requirements. University staff are subject to the USM [Policy on Professional Conduct and Workplace Bullying of nonexempt and exempt staff employees](#) (S7.012).

The Secretary of Higher Education and all MHEC employees are subject to the [Maryland Public Ethics Code](#) (Code of Maryland, Title 5) (S7.013), which requires financial disclosure to the State Ethics Commission. This commission maintains standards of conduct for state officials and employees to prevent conflict, assure impartiality and independent judgment, and avoid improper influence or the appearance of improper influence. Additional to obligations under the State Ethics Code, Board of Regents members are subject to the Board's policy on public ethics. The university's senior staff are also subject to the Ethics Code and its reporting requirements. Additionally, University faculty and staff are subject to the Towson University Policy on Conflict of Interest.

The Towson University Foundation, Inc., was established in 1970 as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation to manage gifts and other funds received for the university's benefit. The Foundation Board of Directors has primary fiduciary responsibility for the foundation. The Board of Directors includes an Executive Committee, an Investment Committee, an Audit Committee, and a Spending Committee. The Audit Committee reviews the financial reporting process, the system of internal control, the audit process, and the process for monitoring compliance with laws and regulations. [Article VII](#) (S7.014) of the foundation's by-laws requires the disclosure to the entire board of all known conflicts of interest between any officer and board member and the foundation's interests or purposes and the provision of the Corporations and Associations Article of the Annotated code of Maryland governing interested director transactions apply to the foundation.

Chief Executive Officer (criteria 3, 5)

Credentials

The Board of Regents in consultation with the USM Chancellor appoints the President and Chief Executive Officer of the university. [Dr. Kim Schatzel](#) (S7.015) currently occupies this role. Her substantial experience in leadership roles in both private industry and at academic institutions complements the institution's mission, which includes educating graduates who can enrich the region's culture, society, economy, and environment.

Authority and Autonomy

President Schatzel is accountable to the Board of Regents for the successful conduct of all aspects of the institution and supervision of each of its departments. [Article V of the Board of Regents bylaws](#) (S7.009) bestows the president with the authority and responsibility to formulate operating and capital budget requests, make appointments, establish salaries, grant tenure, terminate personnel and other common HR functions, establish admission standards, set tuition and fees, administer financial aid, enter contracts and agreements, develop and/or remove academic programs, develop an institutional mission, regulate and administer athletic and student activities, recommend a change to the institution's name or status, accept gifts and grants and maintain and manage endowment income, establish campus traffic regulations, administer alumni affairs, oversee affirmative action and equal employment opportunities; and establish an institutional advisory board.

Assistance of Qualified Administrators

The president's primary internal advisory body is the [President's Cabinet](#) (S7.016). Criterion 4 addresses their responsibilities in detail. The President's Cabinet includes each division's vice president, and the offices of the Executive Division, with the principals of the Office of the President, Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity (Vice President of Inclusion and Institutional Equity), Office of the General Counsel (Vice President of Legal Affairs and General Counsel), and Athletics (Director of Athletics).

The Towson University [Board of Visitors \(BoV\)](#) (S7.010) is an additional key presidential advisory group and includes presidential appointed alumni, business professionals, educators, and volunteers. The BoV also has representation from faculty, staff, and each of the shared governance bodies. This board provides the president with advice and assists in community

relations and institutional development. To address specific issues the BoV has established four standing committees that members of the President's Council support: Education Policy and Student Life, Finance, Athletics, and Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research.

Administration (Criterion 4)

The university's administrative core is the president and seven vice presidents, each of whom has extensive experience in higher education. This [Executive Division](#) (S7.017) also houses Athletics, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Human Resources, and the Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity.

[The Office of the President](#) (S7.018) focuses on the university's vision and academic mission while enhancing the learning, leadership and success of faculty, staff, and students.

The [Division of Academic Affairs](#) (S7.019) includes six academic colleges, each led by a [dean](#) (S7.020) and the academic support units necessary to manage the academic enterprise. The Office of the Provost oversees the Division of Academic Affairs, which is responsible for academic programs and services offered through the academic colleges, [Honors College](#) (S7.021), [Albert S. Cook Library](#) (S7.022), and the [Office of Graduate Studies](#) (S7.023), this also includes oversight of institutional research, enrollment management, and international initiatives administrative units.

A Provost's Council or a Provost's and Deans' Council has been in place for over a decade to support and advise the provost on issues that affect academic affairs. The current provost established a separate Deans' Council in spring 2020 to discuss specific college collaborations, increase input to policy decisions, and continue efforts to provide deans with greater authority over budget decision-making. Concurrently, the Provost's and Deans' Council was renamed the Provost's Council. The membership of the Provost's Council was broadened to include the Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Assistant Provost for Faculty Center of Excellence, Director of Accreditation and Compliance, and the Assistant Vice President, Sponsored Programs and Research. Additionally, the Vice President of Student Affairs was included in a new joint reporting structure of student affairs to the president and the provost to promote greater collaboration and support of joint shared governance to facilitate student success.

The [Department of Athletics](#) (S7.024) supports opportunities for all students to participate in a range of sports activities and leadership opportunities that support physical well-being and personal excellence. The Director of Athletics leads the department, which comprises three units: Engagement, Sport Administration, and Student Athlete Services.

The [Office of General Counsel](#) (OGC) (S7.025) led by the Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel, coordinates and manages the university's legal affairs and serves as the contact point for legal enquiries, public records requests, subpoenas, and other forms of legal process. In addition to having general expertise in a variety of matters affecting the university, each attorney serves as the primary point of contact for specific practice areas. As part of the University System of Maryland, the OGC works closely with the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, Educational Affairs Division.

[Office of Human Resources](#) (OHR) (S7.026) advises on and interprets university policies, procedures, regulations, labor contracts, and laws for managers and individual faculty/staff. It offers training and professional development and conducts new hire orientation. It consults on conflict resolution and guides supervisors, managers, and administrators in maintaining positive, productive working relationships. It facilitates performance management including annual performance evaluations. However, OHR is not involved in human resource management of faculty; departmental chairpersons, deans, and the provost largely address human resources from the faculty perspective. Both administrative and faculty review processes are discussed in Criterion 5.

The [Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity](#) (OIIE) (S7.027), created in 2016, advances the Presidential Priority to achieve a diverse and inclusive campus. It fosters a culture of integrity that values shared responsibility as a critical element of an inclusive, equitable, and diverse community. Under the president's auspices, the OIIE affirms and supports a commitment to diversity and inclusion, striving for a learning and working environment free from sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, hate, and bias.

The [Division of Administration and Finance](#) (S7.028) secures resources from state and auxiliary revenue streams and serves as stewards of those resources to maximize their impact on student learning. The division includes Auxiliary Services, Facilities Management, Financial Affairs, Financial Planning, Accounting and Analysis, Management Advisory and Compliance

Services, the Office of Public Safety, and the Office of Technology Services. The division is responsible for fiduciary management and managing the university's capital infrastructure, including production of the Campus Master Plan. The [2015 Campus Master Plan](#) (S7.029) is the most recent. The division is also responsible for campus maintenance and [environmental health and sustainability](#) (S7.030). The Vice President of Administration and Finance leads the division.

The [Division of Strategic Partnerships & Applied Research](#) (SPAR) (S7.031) is the university's business and public engagement arm. It serves a leading role in the Presidential Priorities of "BTU – Partnerships at work for greater Baltimore" and "TU matters to Maryland."

The [Division of Student Affairs](#) (S7.032) comprises sixteen departments and 200 staff, aiding the university in fulfilling its mission to educate students consistent with its mission, but also playing a leading role in students' development as leaders and active citizens upon graduation. The co-curricular opportunities offered complement academic life to enhance social, cultural, ethical, physical, spiritual, and intellectual development. The Vice President for Student Affairs, who reports to the provost and has a dual report to the president, leads the division.

The [Division of University Advancement](#) (S7.033) engages with alumni and friends of the university to raise TU's philanthropic and alumni engagement profile in support of the institution's strategic priorities. Advancing Towson University's interests by increased financial resources and alumni participation is critical to support academic programs and to respond to Maryland's educational and workforce needs. The division indirectly supports all the Presidential Priorities especially "Culture of Philanthropy." The division comprises three units, Alumni Relations, Development, and University Promotion and Events.

The [Division of University Marketing & Communications](#) (S7.034) provides communications services and works with both internal and external constituents to strengthen the university's brand. It achieves this through promotion of the university's achievements and objectives. This includes both internal and external communications and plays a fundamental role in ensuring regular engagement with faculty and students in advancing the institution's goals and objectives. Most recently, this has included a [university re-branding](#) (S7.035).

Engagement with Faculty and Students in Advancing the Institution's Goals and Objectives

University administrators meet regularly in both formal and informal settings with students, staff, and faculty. The university's structures of shared governance largely facilitate the more formal meetings, as senior leaders including the President, Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Vice President of Administration and Finance meet regularly with representatives of each of the shared governance bodies. These meetings often provide valuable insight that lead to institutional changes. As one recent example, after meeting with the executive leadership of the Student Government Association to hear their concerns about students' pandemic-related challenges, the provost initiated several temporary policy changes, including a revision of the pass/fail grading policy.

Evaluation of Administrative Units and Assessment Data

The University Assessment Council's Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness aids units in the development and deployment of assessment plans, including most recently the development of a reformed approach to unit assessment to complement and support the implementation of the institution's next strategic plan that covers the period 2020-30. Chapter 6 addresses this in detail.

Periodic Assessment of the Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership, and Administration (Criterion 5)

[The Board of Regents Bylaws VII-5.00 \(S7.036\)](#) requires that the chancellor annually evaluates the president's performance and discusses the evaluation results with the Board of Regents Committee on Governance and Compensation in accordance with Article X of the Board of Regents By-laws. Complementarily, every five years the Board of Regents engages in a review of institutional presidents in accordance with [The Board of Regents Bylaws VII-5.01 \(S7.037\)](#). The review highlights major accomplishments, offers constructive suggestions for improvement in performance, and provides guidance on continuation of a president's service.

[The Board of Regents Policy VII-5.20 \(S7.038\)](#) also requires that institutions establish a Performance Management Program (PMP). All members of the president's senior leadership team have individual meetings with the president to establish annual goals, followed by a mid-year assessment of each goal's status. The president provides feedback on the progress at

mid-year and completes a detailed annual performance review highlighting areas of strength and areas for performance improvement.

While the president conducts extensive reviews of her senior leadership team, there was no mechanism for the Towson University community to provide feedback on administrative leadership performance. Recognizing this, on April 1, 2019, the Academic Senate approved a motion recommending that Human Resources and the Academic Senate create a method to provide regular and consistent input regarding university leaders' efficiency and effectiveness. The assessment tool, developed during the fall 2020 semester, was implemented in spring 2021.

Assessment Exemplar- University Senate Reform

In addition to assessing individual performance of leadership, Towson University has conducted periodic reviews of the effectiveness of shared governance structures. In 2016, the University Senate became increasingly aware of concerns. Students and staff believed that the University Senate had disproportionate faculty representation—a proportion not reflective of a true “university” senate. Many faculty considered the University Senate a *de facto* faculty senate. Meanwhile, faculty felt marginalized since they lacked dedicated representation akin to the Towson University Staff Council (TUSC).

Responding to these concerns, in 2017 the University Senate formed a taskforce to review shared governance. The taskforce, comprised of faculty, students, and staff, examined the problem and shared its report and recommendations with the University Senate at its March 6, 2017 meeting (S7.039). The Senate voted overwhelmingly to accept the task force recommendations that suggested exploring the creation of a faculty senate and creating a smaller University Steering Committee comprised of the executive leadership of the various shared governance bodies to allow for a more balanced number of faculty, staff, and students.

The University Senate formed a small subcommittee that met several times over the summer of 2017 to create a draft constitution for a faculty senate; this was followed by a larger subcommittee, with representatives from each of the colleges and the library, that met several times to

review, edit, and produce multiple versions. This careful process culminated in a draft constitution for an Academic Senate that the University Senate considered at its December 18, 2017 meeting, and presented to the entire faculty following the meeting. The integration of feedback from the campus community, and more review and editing, produced the final draft. At its November 5, 2018, meeting the University Senate voted to approve the final draft of the Academic Senate Constitution (by a vote of 18-1-0). (S7.040)

The establishment of the [Towson University Staff Senate \(TUSS\)](#) (S7.041) complemented the establishment of the Academic Senate. In recent years, the Staff Senate has aided a number of assessment activities and provided feedback on HR initiatives, including the [Segal market assessment and pay study](#) (S7.042) in which the TUSS Vice-Chair was a member of the study's Staff Advisory Group. TUSS also participated in a parking study via engagement with consultants who were aiding the university's appraisal of parking services.

Conclusion

Towson University fully meets Standard VII and associated Requirements 12 and 13. The importance of having an experienced and highly collaborative leadership team from the president to the shared governance bodies has become more apparent by the challenges presented by the pandemic. Towson University has weathered these challenges in no small degree due to the confidence the campus community has in the university governance.

As the change in structure of the shared governance bodies is recent, it is unclear whether the change has accomplished the intent of increasing rather than decreasing the impact of multiple constituencies on campus. Understanding whether this is the case is a critical element in securing the campus trust in the decisions, and thus warrants further examination.

Recommendations

1. Assess the structure, processes, supports, and effectiveness of the new Academic Senate and Towson University Staff Senate (TUSS) and its communication and working relationship with SGA and GSA.
2. Fully implement the system of campus-wide evaluation of senior leadership.

Sources

- (S7.001) USM Bylaws, "I-6.00, Policy on Shared Governance"
- (S7.002) Academic Senate
- (S7.003) Towson University Staff Senate
- (S7.004) Student Government Association
- (S7.005) Graduate Student Association
- (S7.006) Maryland Higher Education Commission
- (S7.007) University System of Maryland
- (S7.008) USM Board of Regents
- (S7.009) Bylaws of the Board of Regents
- (S7.010) Board of Visitors
- (S7.011) USM Bylaws, "I-7.00, Policy on Public Ethics of Members of the Board of Regents"
- (S7.012) USM Bylaws, "VII-8.05, Policy on Professional Conduct and Workplace Bullying"
- (S7.013) Maryland Public Ethics Code
- (S7.014) Towson University Foundation Bylaws
- (S7.015) Dr. Kim Schatzel
- (S7.016) President's Cabinet
- (S7.017) Executive Division
- (S7.018) Office of the President
- (S7.019) Division of Academic Affairs
- (S7.020) College Deans
- (S7.021) Honors College
- (S7.022) Albert S. Cook Library
- (S7.023) Office of Graduate Studies
- (S7.024) Department of Athletics
- (S7.025) Office of the General Counsel
- (S7.026) Office of Human Resources
- (S7.027) Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity
- (S7.028) Division of Administration and Finance
- (S7.029) Campus Master Plan
- (S7.030) Environmental Health and Sustainability
- (S7.031) Division of Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research
- (S7.032) Division of Student Affairs
- (S7.033) Division of University Advancement
- (S7.034) Division of University Marketing and Communication
- (S7.035) University re-branding
- (S7.036) Board of Regents Bylaws VII-5.00
- (S7.037) Board of Regents Bylaws VII-5.01
- (S7.038) Board of Regents Policy VII-5.20
- (S7.039) University Senate meeting minutes, March 6, 2017
- (S7.040) University Senate meeting minutes, November 5, 2018
- (S7.041) Towson University Staff Senate
- (S7.042) Segal market assessment and pay study



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