



# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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August 23, 2021

President Virginia Arthur  
Metropolitan State University  
700 E. Seventh St.  
St. Paul, MN 55106-5000

Dear President Arthur

This letter serves to inform you that Metropolitan State University has successfully completed its Year 4 Assurance Review with no recommended monitoring.

Metropolitan State University will not receive an official action letter from HLC's Institutional Actions Council. This letter serves as your confirmation that this review is complete.

In two weeks, this review will be added to the Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Report, a resource for CEOs and Accreditation Liaison Officers to review and manage information regarding the institution's accreditation relationship. CEOs and Accreditation Liaison Officers may request the ISR Report on HLC's website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/isr-request>.

The next step in the institution's ongoing accreditation relationship is to begin work on a Quality Initiative project and to prepare for the institution's comprehensive evaluation in Year 10, which will include an action regarding the institution's Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

If you have any questions, please contact the institution's HLC staff liaison Tom Bordenkircher. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Commission

cc. Vahid Lotfi, Chair, Peer Review Team  
Tom Bordenkircher, Vice President for Accreditation Relations

# Metropolitan State University

HLC ID 1395

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OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review

Review Date: 7/19/2021

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**Ms. Virginia Arthur**  
*President*

**Tom Bordenkircher**  
*HLC Liaison*

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*Team Member*

## Context and Nature of Review

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### Review Date

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7/19/2021

#### Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

#### Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

### Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review
- COVID-19 Response Form

## Institutional Context

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Metropolitan State University (Metro State) is a public not-for-profit institution and is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MN State). Metro State was founded in 1971 and was designed to serve a diverse, underserved population of adult and transfer students. The university currently offers 65 bachelor's degrees, 22 master's degrees, two doctoral degrees, and 34 certificate programs. The institution also offers programs at 19 different locations and was awarded the HLC location "Notification" privilege in 2013.

Metro State was first accredited by the Commission in 1975 and its last comprehensive visit was in academic year 2016-2017. Metro State had been an AQIP institution until 2018 when it was awarded the Open Pathways because of the phase out of AQIP. During its last comprehensive visit, Metro State was placed on "monitoring," requiring two interim reports on: a. consistency of syllabi across all modalities; and b. development of a policy on attendance and establishment of program-level learning outcomes. Metro State successfully submitted the required reports in 2018 and was notified of their acceptance by the Commission in 2018.

Metro State is an open access institution with a mission of, "academic excellence and community partnerships through curriculum, teaching, scholarship and service designed to support an urban mission." In accordance with its mission of serving "underserved" students, majority of the students are non-traditional, first generation learners, delaying enrollment in college after high school, attending part-time, financially dependent or have dependents (i.e., spouse and/or children), and do not live on campus. In academic year 2020-21, the student body consisted of approximately 10,200 students with 89% pursuing undergraduate degrees, 59% classified as part-time and 87% of undergrad students having transferred to Metro State. The average student age was 30 and the majority of students

(53%) self-identify as belonging to a community of color. In 2017, the university was identified as a Minority Serving Institution based on the number of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro State has implemented a number of strategies to mitigate its possible negative effects. Some of the measures include significant expansion of online program and course offerings, expansion of student services and launch of online tutoring, implementation of multiple measures for course placement in lieu of on-campus placement tests, refinement of budgets to address enrollment decline, and conversion of committee and board meetings to virtual format. Metro state has also surveyed the students with respect to the desirability of online classes versus on-campus format.

## **Interactions with Constituencies**

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President

Assistant Provost and Dean

## **Additional Documents**

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None.

# 1 - Mission

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

## Rating

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Met

## Rationale

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Metropolitan State University (Metro State) was established in 1971 with a clear mission of serving “students who were underrepresented in higher education including adults, working students, students with children, low-income students, and students who attend part-time.” This mission was designed to meet a critical need of the stated student populations at the time. The mission has been reassessed through the years with a range of strategic planning and comprehensive surveys, both involving a wide range of stakeholders. For example, the recent rebranding process involved a survey of 2,540, students, faculty, and staff members as well as assessing other stakeholders' perspectives. Yet the major thrust to increase opportunities in higher-education for post traditional students has not changed. The most recent plan, Strategic Plan 2020-2024, is closely aligned to the mission and the *Equity 2030 Plan* of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MN State).

Metro State has formed a task force to engage all of its constituent groups in a comprehensive review its mission, vision, and values during the 2021-2022 academic year. This initiative is especially important as the MN State Board of Trustees requires regular review of the university functions and must approve any changes. Metro State will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary during this time. It seems a propitious for a comprehensive review, especially as the country will enter a post pandemic era and of the higher education is undergoing reevaluation and renewal.

The university has given considerable attention to various constituents it serves, both directly and indirectly. Metro State has an explicit and intentional definition of post traditional students: “Post-traditional learners are a diverse group of adult learners of any age, full-time employees, low-income students, students who commute to school, and/or are working parents.” This definition further elaborates specifics of each characteristic.

Academic offerings are regularly assessed through systematic program reviews. Faculty members consider the characteristics of each general area of circular offering in terms of its relevance and application to the post traditional student. Each college has a statement of purpose that is connected to the university’s mission. Three examples are provided: the College of Individual Studies, College of Sciences, and College of Management. It is clear that evaluation of academic offerings has been given considerable attention throughout the institution’s planning processes. There is a balance between meeting student specific needs for workforce readiness and the expectations of a general liberal arts and sciences education.

The institution has clearly defined statements of its mission, vision, values, and priorities. These statements are made public via several venues including the university’s Web site, planning documents, brochures, catalog, and publications. There has been much attention to addressing public perceptions of the institution. The rebranding exercise is an example. The PowerPoint slides of the *Rebrand Update* (April 29, 2021) are an excellent example of how to interact with the public to further understanding of values and mission, and to refine vision in a dynamic environment.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State, one of seven public universities within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MN State), is committed to serve post traditional students. Various documents provided within the assurance system clearly attest to Metro State's mission of contributing to the greater good. The evidence delineates that the institution is earnest and certainly not surreptitiously serving a superordinate entity.

Educational and instructional primacy continue to be inherent in Metro State's mission, vision, and values statements. The institution is public and does not have investors, nor a parent company or organization. There are no indications that external interests are having any influence on the institution.

Metro State continues to offer a number of outreach programs, designed to serve its community. For example, in the Community Learning Centers social work majors work in communities of color during their second semester. They communicate through a Neighborhood House for food distribution. First Saturday Science reaches out to prospective STEM students. The GROW-IT Center is an outreach for agricultural research. The university library partners with the Dayton's Bluff Saint Paul Public Library.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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An important role of a general arts and sciences education is to prepare students for an informed and meaningful life, contributing to understanding of the world, benefiting society, and connecting to human values. It is clear that these values continue to underlay Metro State's curricula. The American Democracy Project, for example, prepares students for lifelong contributions to the community. Metro State Votes strives to enhance voter participation. A program by the Multicultural, American Indian, and Retention Services promotes better understanding of systemic racism.

As reflected by the central component of its mission, Metro State continues to stand for inclusive and equitable treatment for all of its students, faculty, and staff. The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 includes Strategic Commitment #5, which states: "Model a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion for students, faculty, staff, and partners." Metro State is working in many ways to improve its student, faculty, and staff success without differential impact on racial, cultural, religious, or other aspects of one's identity. The university has an Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Council which monitors and oversees the equity and diversity plan. This group is involved in conducting surveys to inform the institution's continued updates of the equity, inclusion, and anti-racism plan.

Culture and identity inclusion continue to be fundamental to the mission of Metro State. They are central to the underlying culture of the institution; yet there are many examples provided of explicit and focused programs to address respect for diversity. They include: The Faculty of Color Mentorship Program; Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Council; Search Committee Equity Champions; Equity by Design Team; as well as regular surveys of campus climate such as the PACE survey and the National Assessment of Collegiate Campuses survey.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## **1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary**

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### **Rationale**

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Metro State's mission is clear and is articulated publicly and continues to guide the institution's operations. Since its inception, Metro State has recognized its unique role within the State of Minnesota. Its mission is explicit and clearly establishes itself within a metropolitan, urban setting. The university continues to ensure that post traditional students are well served and that they connect to collaborate and enhance the city, the state, the country, and the world. Metro State has many long-standing programs designed to work for outreach to post traditional students as well as to promote service and engagement to the community.

This role is articulated not just in official records and reports; but it is advertised by how the university presents itself to the public, how it functions to reach and stimulate students, and how it connects to major stakeholder groups.

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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As evidenced by a thorough review of the Assurance Argument and associated evidence, Metropolitan State University (Metro State) continues to follow policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff. As a member of the Minnesota State College and University System (MN State), the 15-member Board is appointed by the Governor of Minnesota. The policy, as reviewed in the Statutes, clearly outlines the responsibilities, powers, duties, committees, and agenda expectations of the Board. A code of conduct policy governs the Board's actions. The mission statement is publicly communicated and was developed in compliance with Board Policy.

Transparency in leadership and shared governance is evident through a review of contracts of five bargaining units. The University Council structure was reviewed, providing evidence of history, rationale, calendars, and responsibilities. The minutes and agendas provide evidence of communication and transparency.

The Board's policy clearly delineates the responsibilities, accountability, and reporting structure of the Chancellor, thus showcasing appropriate delegation of authority. State policy requires that all institutions prepare balanced budgets consistent with policies and procedures; Metropolitan State's Resource Planning and Alignment Council held budget forums to communicate the process and outcomes. The Board's responsibilities for approval duties of academic programs, program requirements, and awarding of certificates and degrees is clear through a review of policy. Undergraduate admissions standards are clear through a review of the University's web site.

All employees are expected to operate within the code of conduct, and periodic training occurs. State policy is applied and followed in reporting and reviewing violations, exhibiting non-discrimination and equal opportunity in both educational and employment practices.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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As evidenced through a review of the Assurance Argument and supporting documentation, Metro State continues to present itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

Accuracy of information on the website is controlled through use of a Marketing Service Portal, with identified personnel who collect, review, and manage change requests. Examples of social media postings, printed mailings, and software were reviewed; evidence exists in all cases of dissemination of information as appropriate. Accreditation, both regional and programmatic, is clearly stated. Annual campus reporting policies and statistics are provided. University Policies dictate a code of conduct and procedures on hearings and appeals as needed. Academic performance expectations and requirements are provided in the academic catalog and University Policies. A dashboard example of the MN State tool, ISRS, its student information system, was reviewed. An example of the learning management system was provided, available to students through their eServices account.

Appropriate information is found on the Consumer Information page on the University's web site. The University's commitment to the educational experience in terms of experiential learning, community engagement, and contributions to research are evidenced by a review of examples such as the Democracy Project, Grow-It Center, and student organizations such as Chess Club and Lavender Bridge (the University's LGBTQ+ org). Collaborative learning opportunities are further supported through Strategic Commitment #3 of the University's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, Building a Resilient, Student Ready University.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MS State) system. Accordingly, the State provides clear guidance for Board membership, including expectations and orientation. Evidence of this was found in agendas for orientation and retreats as well as examples of training. Meeting summaries detailing policy responsibility were shared, including a website page for the Board. Evidence of appropriate committees of the Board was provided. State Policy exists for the Trustees' code of conduct. System Procedure 1A.2.2 also details responsibilities for the Chancellor in delegating authority to the presidents and employees in the system office.

The day-to-day management of Metro State is conducted by the President's Executive Cabinet, as evident through a review of agendas, including preparatory work prior to meetings. An example shared in the Assurance Argument was the two-year collaboration to develop and evaluate budget proposals. Shared governance is illustrated through the University Council Structure, consisting of ten councils with representation from administration and each of the five bargaining units.

As evidenced by a review of the University Council charters, Councils provide monthly summaries and annual reports of their work. One example is that of the charge to the Academic Affairs Committee, supplemented with minutes.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Commitment to academic freedom at Metro State is quite apparent, as evident through a review of Article 4, Academic Freedom Policy, included in the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) Contract. A grievance process also exists and was reviewed.

Faculty professional development is supported by a fund for faculty to engage in activities that improve and expand their professional competence. An example given was the methodology to apply for a sabbatical leave, which contains the purpose and eligibility of such leave. Explanations of timelines, full or 80% salary, and eligibility criterion are included in the policy and processes.

MN State Board Policy 3.1 was reviewed, covering student rights and responsibilities. This policy includes a statement about freedom of expression, freedom to learn, and freedom of association. In addition, University Procedure 219 details the expectations for Student Academic Integrity, a definition of violations with sanctions, and an appeal process.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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As reviewed by the Team, Metro State has appropriate policy and oversight of applied research, evidenced by its Human Subjects Review Board's responsibilities, detailed in the University Policy 2060. Applications for review are submitted to the Human Subjects Review Board through a website which includes additional details and expectations.

University Policy 2190, the Student Academic Integrity Policy, was reviewed to ensure that appropriate oversight exists over citations of source material. An additional layer shared in the Assurance Argument is the use of plagiarism software. The Academic Appeals Committee charter was reviewed, which details a process should a student desire to appeal a sanction.

The Library has a comprehensive website with Research Guides for assisting student research. The university has faculty librarians who serve as supports for students was also shared. An annual report on academic integrity violations is prepared by the Associate Provost and was reviewed as further evidence of consideration of appropriate oversight of responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by faculty, staff, and students.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary**

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### **Rationale**

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Metropolitan State University (Metro State) continues to operate with integrity in its functions. As a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, it has a 15-member Board appointed by the Governor of Minnesota. The Board operates with appropriate oversight and authority, while delegating day-to-day operational decisions to the University's leadership. The governing board engages in training with clear expectations.

Metro State continues to present itself clearly to the public and to its students, utilizing a variety of mechanisms. The institution values transparency in leadership and illustrates shared governance through its University Council structure.

Metro State illustrates its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression through appropriate policy and actions. It also engages in responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students.



## **3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support**

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The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **3.A - Core Component 3.A**

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The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

### **Rating**

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Met

### **Rationale**

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Metro State highlights faculty-driven transfer articulation agreements with likely feeder community colleges. This Transfer Pathways program provides a detailed view of what is expected of students transferring from one of the likely feeder schools. Additionally, the institution cites an alumni survey completed in spring 2021 that provides information regarding program satisfaction and applicability to career paths.

Metro State contributes to the Minnesota State Transfer Curriculum (MnTC), "a common curriculum required at all public colleges and universities in Minnesota that includes 40 unduplicated credits across ten goal areas."

The periodic program review process (also mentioned in Criterion 4) stipulates that all programs should have stated learning outcomes. Further, all potentially "new undergraduate courses and undergraduate or graduate programs go through a rigorous internal review process prior to adoption that includes a review of learning outcomes." Metro State has a detailed approval matrix process for new courses and academic programs that includes faculty at the departmental and college levels. The institution's process for establishing new academic programs is set up to ensure that the new programs are consistent with the institutional mission, have academic integrity and quality, and have established learning outcomes.

Metro State continues to ensure that program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery. The institution provides evidence for this by highlighting a standard syllabus template that requires each course section aligns with approved course learning objectives and other

essential information, regardless of delivery method or instructor. Additionally, syllabi are regularly reviewed by department chairs and/or academic deans to ensure consistency.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State effectively articulates the purpose of its undergraduate general education requirements. The requirements are consistent with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (Mn State) policy, designed for higher education institutions. Titled General Education and Liberal Studies (GELS), the faculty-driven general education curriculum adheres to the Minnesota State Transfer Curriculum (MnTC), which aids in an easier path for transferring between state-run institutions.

Through the Racial Issue Graduation Requirement (RIGR), undergraduate students are also required to take a course that focuses on race and racism. Metro State provides clear reasons for the inclusion of the graduation requirement as being consistent with the University's mission and vision to "develop and expand students' critical knowledge of the central role of race, racism, and anti-racism in multiples contexts of society and aspects of everyday life" and is meant to prepare students with lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.

Metro State requires full-time faculty to be engaged in scholarship for purposes of tenure and/or promotion. As is constituent with graduate programs, the institution requires graduate students to complete original research. Metro State provides an avenue for students to share their research with the public via regular research symposia, a practice that was continued remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other avenues for sharing student research and creative activities are the University's literary and arts magazine, Haute Dish, the independent newspaper, The Metropolitan, and via the Gordon Parks Gallery and Student Center on the St. Paul campus, where students art work are regularly featured.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State has successfully implemented a “Faculty Recruitment Plan to Increase Faculty Diversity” and included “Equity Champions” in the faculty search process, resulting in hiring a more diverse faculty.

“Understanding the impact that faculty and student interactions have on the teaching and learning process” the institution employs a sufficient number of faculty members, resulting in average class sizes of 21 students.

A “Minimum Faculty Qualification Evaluation Form” is used during the faculty hiring process to ensure all instructors are appropriately qualified for all instructional levels. Additionally, the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) has detailed standards for the recruitment, screening, and selection of new faculty.

Professional development appears to be a significant focus for ensuring that full-time instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles. As part of the annual evaluation process for full-time faculty, they submit a professional development plan with specific objectives, methods, and expected achievements for teaching effectiveness, scholarly activity, and creative achievement, continued preparation and study, contribution to student growth and development, and service to the

university and community. Dedicated funding for such endeavors is a part of faculty contracts. The Center for Faculty Development offers support in various ways for both full-time and part-time faculty and orientation for new faculty. Additionally, online faculty, as well as instructors of courses with considerable online content, are supported by the Center for Online Learning. At the heart of all of these professional development opportunities are faculty helping faculty.

There are also incentives and opportunities for adjunct/community faculty to stay current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles. Recent evidence for this is the \$59,500 available to adjunct faculty for improving professional competence related to their teaching assignments. This institution is committed to assisting adjuncts and plans to increase professional improvement funds to \$ 70,000 in 2021.

The institution ensures that all faculty are available for student inquiry outside the classroom by requiring a minimum of 10 office hours per week. Additionally, the Inter Faculty Organization contact requirements state that full-time faculty are limited to a maximum of 45 students assigned to them for academic advisement.

Through the Center for Academic Excellence and Center for Accessibility Resources, the institution provides student support opportunities such as tutoring, study skill coaching, and disability/accessibility services for students and faculty related to instruction. The institution staff, titled "service faculty," are part of the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF) and have a significant impact in roles associated with admissions, student support services, financial aid, and academic advising. MSUAASF employees appear to be appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development. They are required to have attained a bachelor's degree and take advantage of ongoing professional development related to overall student success.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State continues to provide comprehensive services for supporting student's needs. These services include the typical student support services provided at institutions of higher education. A highlight among these is the extraordinary effort during the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent survey suggests many students wish to continue to have remote access to support services in the coming year.

Metro State has a well-defined process in place for directing entering students to courses for which they are adequately prepared. Course placement for math and writing courses is done through a number of avenues such as ACT, SAT, and Accuplacer. As stated in the Assurance Argument, preparation of students is also a result of the majority of the students having transferred to Metro State with more than 16 credits. The pandemic has forced many changes to the course placement process, namely, the need to use stand-alone and self-reported high school GPAs and guided self-placement. Results of these actions do not appear to be significantly different from other forms of placement. The institution has now joined 27 other Minnesota state colleges and universities in an effort to examine course placement best practices.

In an effort to strengthen the focus on academic advising, Metro State recently engaged a reviewer from the national advising organization NACADA to evaluate its advising process. The resulting recommendation and subsequent dialogue among faculty, staff, and administrators have led to a new charter and restructuring of the Academic Advising Leadership Committee for the purpose of drafting actions that will enhance academic advisement in the immediate future.

Metro State continues to have adequate infrastructure and resources to support effective teaching and learning. The institution has extensive library services to support faculty and student activities. The report highlights several science laboratories, simulation practice lab spaces, computer labs, fine arts studios, and an art gallery contributing to the academic experience. The technology infrastructure is

quite comprehensive. The Information Technology Services manage and provide support for all hardware and software across campus, including the learning management system (D2L) and several discipline-specific programs.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## **3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary**

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The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **Rationale**

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Metro State provides high-quality education. The university ensures course and program learning goals are articulated and consistent across all modes of delivery through standardized syllabi content and regular review of course syllabi by academic administrators. The institution's processes for establishing new academic programs are designed to ensure that new programs are consistent with the institutional mission, have academic integrity and quality, and have established learning outcomes. The rigorous, faculty-driven general education curriculum, titled General Education and Liberal Studies (GELS), includes a course that focuses on race and racism, which is consistent with the University's mission and vision to "develop and expand students' critical knowledge of the central role of race, racism, and anti-racism in multiples contexts of society and aspects of everyday life." The institution provides opportunities and incentives for full-time faculty, adjunct/community faculty, and service faculty to deliver high-quality programs and student services effectively. Metro State is committed to providing support for student learning and is currently in the process of re-imagining the academic advisement process.

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

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The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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As evidenced in the assurance argument and supplemental documents, all academic programs, including certificates and degrees, engage in a 5-year program review. This process is further supported by University Policy 2550, which provides the purpose and rationale for the university program review process. The Assistant Provost reviews and approves the program review plan, then the academic department begin the program review evaluation process. The program review includes program data received from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (IER), internal assessment data and creates an overall program review with recommendations and identifies any necessary action steps.

Metropolitan State University (Metro State) continues to provide an experiential learning assessment for college credit governed by University Policy 2150, University Procedure 215, and supported by

the Student-Directed Learning (SDL) Office. Faculty are engaged in the student-directed learning process by serving on the Student-Directed Learning (SDL) Advisory Committee. The university's prior learning assessment guidelines align with best practices recommended by nationally recognized organizations such as the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). The university does not have dual-credit programs.

Transfer credit is awarded through several processes, which align with the University Policy 2120. The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) applies to all public colleges and universities in the Minnesota State systems, including Metropolitan State University.

As evidenced in the assurance argument and supplemental documentation 3A2 UG Course Proposal, program faculty determine the preparation needed for specific programs. These same standards apply to courses offered by high school students through Minnesota's Post-Secondary Option (PSEO). Prerequisites are established to inform students about the background needed to succeed in courses and are communicated in several ways, such as through advising and undergraduate and graduate catalogs.

As evidenced in the supplemental documentation 3B1 Accreditation, Metropolitan State University maintains several specialized accreditations; examples include Nursing, Social Work, Business programs (ACBSP), and Education programs.

Metro State monitors its graduates' progress and success using various tools; examples include targeted board and licensing exam data, graduate survey data, employment data, and the National Career Mobility Survey (NACM) survey results.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State continues to make changes and improvements to its process for the assessment of student learning. This is evidenced by the timeline and improvements over the last 5 years and its continued participation in the HLC Assessment Academy. A Student Learning Task Force was initially created in 2016 and charged with formalizing a program review process and using it as the university's assessment of student learning processes. The Student Learning Task Force has since evolved into the Academic Assessment Committee as of 2019. The Academic Assessment Committee includes faculty representation from each college and staff members from other university departments. As evidenced in the assurance argument and supplemental documents, the Assessment Committee is charged to develop and revise university assessment processes and practices and also provide support to strengthen assessment practices within academic areas across the university. The university clearly states the goals for student learning based on the institutional, program, and course outcomes as evidenced in the assurance argument and on the university website.

The five-year Program Review document is used as the primary comprehensive assessment document. The university demonstrates that assessment data generated through the Program Review document is used to improve student learning. As evidenced in the assurance document and supplemental documentation, several changes have been made and implemented based on proposed recommendations. The university is currently piloting an annual reflection document as evidenced in the assurance document and supplemental information, that was developed by the Assessment Committee and the Academic Planning Task Force to use as a tool for academic units to discuss assessment of student learning activities that will be conducted annually. These annual reflection documents will be used as the guiding or foundational documents for the five-year Program Reviews.

Metro State is using eLumen as the central software repository for the assessment of student learning data. As outlined in the assurance argument, updates to the software repository are currently underway at the university. These updates will provide further reporting to the academic programs that further improve the process of assessing student progress and success at varying institutional levels.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The Board of Trustees for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MN State), which Metropolitan State University falls under, approved the Strategic Framework Performance Measures. This includes enrollment, persistence, and completion dashboards with defined Student Success Metrics and Performance Measures for each institution within the overall system. Metropolitan State University's (Metro State) definitions of retention, persistence, and completion align with definitions set forth by the Board and are similar to those established by IPEDs.

Metro State has its own completion and persistence goals, as evidenced in the assurance argument and supplemental documents (2020-2024 strategic plan). Data was used from the MN State Student Success Metrics dashboard reports to develop the goals and will be used to monitor student success. The university cited several examples in the assurance argument and supporting documentation on how they use student success data to improve.

In response to an MN State System initiative called Equity 2030, Metropolitan State University is implementing Equity by Design as evidenced in the assurance argument and supplemental documents. A campus work team is in place and has begun working on this initiative to review student data and identify opportunities and address disparities that impact academic progression and success for students.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary**

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

### **Rationale**

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Metropolitan State University (Metro State) has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. The university evaluates its effectiveness for student learning through processes to promote continuous improvement. For example, the university has provided evidence in the assurance argument and supplemental documentation, which support ongoing initiatives to improve assessment activities and processes by establishing the University Assessment Committee. It will be important for the university to finalize the annual assessment review process that is currently being piloted to provide an opportunity for academic units to discuss assessment of student learning activities ongoing. Additionally, completing the initiatives outlined in the assurance argument for eLumen that will input all program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, institutional learning outcomes, general education and liberal studies goals, racial issues graduation requirements will enhance their ability to assess student progress and success at varying levels within the university.



## 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State continues to practice strong shared governance by systematically engaging its internal constituents, including faculty, staff, administrators, board of trustees, and students, in developing and implementing academic and administrative policies and procedures. The university accomplishes shared governance through its committees and task forces, all of which are connected to various university councils. One specific example, delineating commitment to shared governance, is the "Joint Task Force on IFO Shared Governance" with the goal of working to develop a common and agreed upon understanding of the meaning, form, and operation of shared governance with the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO), the faculty collective bargaining unit. Another example is the Strategic Planning Task Force, which facilitates the development of the University's strategic plans.

Metro State makes extensive use of data and information in its routine operational activities as well as in planning for the future. The institution has access to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system database which provides a variety of demographic and enrollment data and statistics. The university also uses results of a number of surveys such as NSSE, PACE, internal branding, and student surveys. Metro State recently partnered with Noel Levitz to conduct an environmental scan and development of the current Strategic Enrollment Plan. In addition, students were surveyed to better understand the impact of the pandemic on their ability to continue their educational pursuits.

The University Policy 1000 document guides the development, implementation, and maintenance of various university policies and procedures. This document stipulates that in all cases creation and revision of such policies/procedures must go through the shared governance process. Another example of engaging faculty and staff in setting academic and administrative policies is the Academic Planning Task Force, responsible for developing an Academic Plan which will be based upon student outcomes, workforce needs and feedback from all of the university stakeholders.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State has sufficient qualified staff and adequate infrastructure to support its operations in all modalities and locations. The university has detailed policies and procedures for hiring faculty, staff, and administrators. Metro State continues to offer training programs for new employees as well as professional development opportunities for existing employees. Performance evaluations are conducted annually to ensure university employees remain current within their professions. Within each unit there is funding available for professional development. In addition, the State of Minnesota offers professional development opportunities through its Enterprise Learning Management system.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 clearly identifies the institution's strategies as well as its priorities. The six strategies, articulated in this plan, are realistic and align with the university's resources. The plan also articulates opportunities for growth and programs enhancements.

There is a well-developed process in place for budgeting and monitoring the university's fiscal resources. At present, the university is in the process of developing a three-year budget plan. The process engages all of the Metro State's stakeholders at different levels. There are clearly defined goals for budget planning which are articulated in the Budget Guidebook 2022-2024. The annual budget development process requires each division/college head to complete and submit a budget workbook and to present their budget to the Cabinet.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Metro State continues to make budget and resource allocations based on its priorities as guided by its mission and strategic plans. A review of the institution's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan clearly attests to this commitment. Resource allocations and planning are undertaken in conjunction with several high-level committees and task forces including: the Comprehensive Facilities Planning Task Force; Academic Planning Task Force; Resource Planning and Alignment Committee; and Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Group.

There is clear evidence of linkage between processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations and budgeting. Since the last comprehensive visit, Metro State has increased resources in support of assessment. One example is a newly established process, requiring academic units to complete and submit annual reflection documents to the Office of the University Provost. The document must discuss outcomes assessment results and could contain a request for additional resources to improve student outcomes.

Metro State clearly plans on the basis of understanding its capacity. The university's planning documents demonstrate the institution's anticipation of fluctuation in resources including enrollment shifts. Further, the planning processes recognize the changing environment and emerging factors. For example, the divisions' budget priorities are linked with current and projected resource needs. These priorities are further refined as they go through the Resource Planning and Alignment Council to form the basis of the annual budget plans.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary**

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The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

### **Rationale**

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Metro State resources, structures, processes, and planning efforts continue to be sufficient to fulfill its mission and improve the quality of its educational offerings. The university practices shared governance in its routine operations as well as planning for the future. A number of data sources are utilized to inform its planning process. There are sufficient faculty, staff, and administrators to develop, implement and maintain quality academic program offerings. The budgeting process is multi-level and involves all of the university's stakeholders. Metro State understands its capacity and continues to plan for the future, using a systematic and data-driven methodology.

## Review Dashboard

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Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

## Review Summary

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### Conclusion

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Metropolitan State University (Metro State) continues to remain committed to its mission, which is publicly stated and aligns with the university's nature and its culture. The mission and planning documents are reviewed and updated routinely, and they guide Metro State's operations. The university is committed to diversity and is actively engaged with its external constituents and community. This role is articulated not just in official records and reports; but it is advertised by how the university presents itself to the public, how it functions to reach and stimulate students, and how it connects to major stakeholder groups.

Metro State continues to operate with integrity in its functions. The university is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MN State) and has a 15-member Board of Trustees which operates with appropriate oversight, authority, and delegates day-to-day operational decisions to the university's leadership. The university demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression through appropriate policies and actions. Metro State continues to engage in responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students. Since the last comprehensive visit in 2017, the university has reviewed, updated, or established policies related to student complaints, sexual misconduct, Title IX, etc. and implemented Title IX training and safety training.

Metro State ensures course and program learning goals are articulated and consistent across all modes of delivery through standardized syllabi content and regular review of course syllabi by academic administrators. The university's processes for establishing new academic programs are designed to ensure that new programs are consistent with the institutional mission, have academic integrity and quality, and have established learning outcomes. The rigorous, faculty-driven general education curriculum, titled General Education and Liberal Studies (GELS), includes a course that focuses on race and racism, consistent with the University's mission and vision. The university provides opportunities and incentives for full-time faculty, adjunct/community faculty, and service faculty to be effective in delivering high-quality programs and student services. Metro State is committed to providing support for student learning and is currently in the process of re-imagining the academic advisement process.

The University continues its commitment to ensuring its educational programs, learning environments, and support services are of high quality. Metro State evaluates its effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement. The team recommends that the university finalizes the annual assessment review process that is currently being piloted to provide an opportunity for academic units to discuss assessment of student learning activities ongoing. Additionally, completing the initiatives outlined in the assurance argument for eLumen will enhance the university's ability to assess student progress and success at varying levels within the university.

Metro State's physical, fiscal, human, and technological resources are sufficient and continue to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. A number of data sources are utilized to inform its planning processes and the university is actively engaged in a well-established shared governance. There are sufficient faculty, staff, and administrators to develop, implement and maintain quality academic program offerings. The budgeting process is multi-level and involves all of the university's stakeholders. Metro State understands its capacity and continues to plan for the future, using a systematic and data-driven methodology.

The team recommends continued accreditation with no monitoring. The team also recommends allowing Metro



State to remain on the open pathway.

## **Overall Recommendations**

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### **Criteria For Accreditation**

Met

### **Sanctions Recommendation**

No Sanction

### **Pathways Recommendation**

Eligible to choose

***No Interim Monitoring Recommended.***