

Self-Study Design

SUBMITTED TO
THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
UTICA UNIVERSITY
May 30, 2025



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Institutional Overview | Pages 1 – 13 |
| Progress on Recommendations from 2017-2018 Self-Study | Pages 13 – 19 |
| Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in Self-Study | Pages 19 – 21 |
| Intended Outcomes of Self-Study | Pages 21 & 22 |
| Organizational Structure of Steering Committee and Working Groups | Pages 22 & 23 |
| Specific Charges and Membership of Working Groups | Pages 24 – 38 |
| Guidelines for Reporting | Pages 30 – 40 |
| Organization of the Final Self-Study Report | Page 40 |
| Self-Study Timeline | Pages 40 & 41 |
| Communication Plan | Pages 41 – 44 |
| Evaluation Team Profile | Pages 44 – 47 |
| Annual Institutional Update Indicators and Metrics | Pages 47 |
| Managing the Evidence Inventory | Pages 47 – 49 |

Institutional Overview

Utica University is an independent, comprehensive university that historically serves a predominantly first-generation student population. The University was established in 1946 as a branch campus of Syracuse University (SU) to meet the educational needs of returning World War II veterans. In 1995, the University (then Utica College) became a fully independent institution with a Board of Trustees to oversee its educational programs, capital assets, and financial health. Even after becoming an independent institution, Utica College maintained a relationship with Syracuse University until 2008, when it began the process of separating itself from SU. In 2022, Utica College became Utica University.

In addition to its main campus in Utica, New York where on-ground graduate and undergraduate programs are offered, the University has operated additional locations in St. Petersburg, Florida; Miramar, Florida; Liverpool, New York; and Latham, New York. Accelerated degree programs in nursing have been offered at these additional sites, an effort to address the nursing shortage in both Florida and New York State.

A fifth additional site is the Clark City Center in downtown Utica, where the University's undergraduate and graduate programs in business administration have been offered since 2016.

Declining enrollments resulted in a loss of revenue at the two Florida campuses, making neither additional location viable. Consequently, the University closed the Miramar site on May 31, 2024, after all enrolled students completed their degree program. The St. Petersburg site is targeted for closure in August 2026, once all enrolled students complete their degree.

In February 2025, a fire destroyed 290 Elwood Davis Road, the instructional site in Liverpool, New York, where the University offered an accelerated, second-degree program in nursing. Fortunately, the 60 students were able to be accommodated on the main campus in Utica, fifty-four miles east of the original site. The University will submit a substantive change prior to July 1, 2025 to close the Liverpool location.

The University has also submitted a substantive change to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to close the Clark City Center. Declining enrollments have resulted in increased classroom and office space on the main campus to support the University's business program.

Utica University currently employs 170 full-time faculty. Forty-eight percent are tenured faculty, 22% are tenure-track, and 29% are non-tenure eligible, including Professors of Practice, most of whom teach in the professional and pre-professional programs. The student-faculty ratio is 12:1.

University Leadership

Since the previous self-study and accreditation review, the University's leadership changed. Dr. Laura Casamento, who was appointed to serve as the 9th President in 2016, retired in July 2023. A national search was conducted to find her replacement, and in August 2023, Dr. Todd Pfannestiel assumed the position of University President. Dr. Pfannestiel had been serving the institution as Provost since 2018. Dr. Stephanie Nesbitt, Dean of Business and Justice Studies, was named the Interim Provost for the 2023-2024 academic year, and, following a national search, she became the permanent Provost in June 2024.

Board leadership likewise changed. Mr. Robert Brevnick concluded his term as Board Chair in May 2023, and Mr. Jeremy Thurston assumed leadership of the Board.

Additional administrative changes included the appointments of new vice presidents in the following divisions: Enrollment Management, Financial Affairs, Integrated Information Technology Services, and Advancement. A Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions and a Vice President for Emergency Management were added to the campus's leadership team since the previous self-study. In addition, the University created a Dean of Student Success position, and a new Dean of Students was appointed in 2023.

Mission, Values, and Vision

The University's mission statement was developed in 2019, when the institution engaged in strategic planning. The current mission reads, "We empower learners to achieve their career and life goals through personally enriching experiences and outstanding educational pathways."

This mission rests upon a foundation of values that guide planning and decision making. These values are:

- Individual attention
- Intellectual growth, creativity, and scholarship in the pursuit of knowledge
- Innovative and relevant approaches to teaching and learning
- Diversity of perspective, background, and experience in an equitable, respectful, and inclusive environment
- Freedom of expression and civil discourse
- Community engagement and service
- Ethical behavior and integrity
- Continuous pursuit of excellence

The University's vision statement—"We will focus our innovative energy on inspiring learners to create a future beyond their imagining"—underscores the institution's commitment to successful student outcomes and the importance of preparing students for their career and life goals.

Strategic Planning

Following its last self-study and reaccreditation, the University, under the leadership of President Laura Casamento, embarked on strategic planning. A strategic planning committee was formed, consisting of Trustees, University leadership, faculty representing each of the three schools, professional staff, and the President of the Student Government Association. Focus groups were conducted to include diverse voices from the University community in the planning process.

The strategic planning committee met from December 2018 until September 2019. In fall 2019, a draft of the strategic plan and the newly revised mission statement were shared with the institution's governance groups, who approved the plan for a January 2020 launch. The plan was created to guide the University from 2020 until 2025.

The Covid pandemic and the subsequent shutdown in March 2020 impacted the University's ability to achieve a number of the strategic plan's goals, particularly those related to enrollment and financial

growth. Nonetheless, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, the institution successfully achieved several of its strategic goals, including a revision of its general education program, an increase in the number of racially and ethnically diverse faculty, and the implementation of several DEI initiatives.

In May 2023, when it became apparent that the University was not going to achieve the remaining goals in the strategic plan, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that the 2020-2025 strategic plan be discontinued, and that the University develop a three-year strategic plan.

President Casamento retired at the close of the 2022-2023 academic year, and in August 2023, Dr. Todd Pfannestiel was named the 10th President of Utica University. President Pfannestiel originally intended to begin the strategic planning process in his first year. However, the University's financial circumstances, which, like many other institutions, were affected by the pandemic, made resourcing strategic initiatives unlikely. Rather than develop a strategic plan, President Pfannestiel drafted an institutional effectiveness plan (IEP) in support of the University's mission and his own vision to create a sustainable institution by making comprehensive structural changes.

The 2024-2025 IEP guided decisions regarding how the institution might preserve or reallocate resources. For example, an assessment of the viability of additional instructional sites led to the decision to close the Clark Center in downtown Utica and the campus in St. Petersburg, Florida. The St. Petersburg closure will result in budgetary savings from personnel, operating, marketing, and facilities costs. More specifically, the University will recognize annual savings on fixed expenditures of around \$894K. \$579K related to fixed payroll costs (lab instructors, site director, transfer credit evaluator, and success coach), and \$315K pertains to facilities costs. Closing the Clark Center will result in \$695,850 savings for the University.

The 2025-2026 Institutional Effectiveness Plan addresses the University's ability to meet prospective students' interests and both employer and community needs. Additionally, it aims to identify what distinguishes the University from similar institutions, particularly those in the Central New York region. The initial planning included key University leaders, faculty selected from the twelve academic programs with the largest enrollments, and representatives from community and government agencies, area businesses, and local healthcare organizations.

Curricular Offerings

Utica University's 69 undergraduate degree programs and 35 graduate programs are organized in three distinct schools: Arts and Sciences, Business and Justice Studies, and Health Professions and Education. Arts and Sciences is further broken down into two divisions: Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Health Professions and Education and Business and Justice Studies each have a dean appointed to them. In Arts and Sciences, there are two deans, one for each division.

The University's 2,335 undergraduate students seek degrees primarily in education, healthcare, nursing, business management, construction management, and cybersecurity. In fall 2024, 413 undergraduates (17.7%) were enrolled in liberal arts majors, 830 (35.5%) in business and justice studies majors, and 1,040 (44.5%) in health professions and education majors. Similarly, the majority of the 1,301 graduate students are enrolled in programs related to health professions and education, followed by business

management, cybersecurity, and health care administration.

The following academic programs are accredited by discipline-specific accrediting agencies: Business (undergraduate and graduate programs), Construction Management, Education, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and the Master of Social Work. The chemistry program is approved by the American Chemical Society, and B.S. and M.S. Cybersecurity programs have been designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence, and a National Center of Digital Forensics Academic Excellence.

All academic programs engage in annual assessments of student learning and operational effectiveness. Programs that do not have a specialized accreditor also complete a self-study every five years as part of a program review process.

In addition to the undergraduate majors offered by the University, students may choose from 62 minors to advance their knowledge and skills in a specific discipline. Among the more popular minors over a 4-year period are Fraud and Financial Crime Investigation, Psychology, Healthcare Ethics, and Healthcare Advocacy. A certificate program in Financial Crimes Investigation is also available at the University.

Since the previous accreditation visit, the general education curriculum underwent a major revision. During the strategic planning process in 2019, the then Provost and Dean of Business and Justice Studies facilitated several focus groups with various constituent groups. At that time, a distributive Core Curriculum required that students complete 31 – 55 credits in liberal arts offerings. A more streamlined curriculum consisting of fewer credits was a common refrain in the focus groups, articulated primarily by students, success coaches, and faculty in the professional schools. The latter group was particularly concerned that the current Core requirements, coupled with the requirements of the academic major, often meant that students had to complete more than 120 credit hours to graduate, exceeding what the New York State Department of Education stipulates and resulting in additional student loan debt. Participants in focus groups further concurred that the Core Curriculum was outdated.

Indirect evidence further suggested that a revision to the Core Curriculum might be warranted. In 2019, on a survey administered to full-time faculty, less than 50% of respondents said the current Core Curriculum developed the skills associated with an undergraduate education much or a great deal. Findings from three administrations of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) showed that over 70% of seniors perceived that the institution contributed “Quite a bit/Much” to their ability to write clearly and think critically. In all other areas—oral communication, quantitative reasoning, problem-solving—the percentage of students who credited the University with developing their soft skills “Quite a bit/Much” ranged from 49% to 69%. These findings were reiterated by the 2020 and 2021 Graduate to Be survey, which asked students to rate how well the institution contributed to the development of those skills and competencies associated with an undergraduate education.

A revised general education program, representing a move away from a Core model, was implemented in 2022. The current program, which consists of 37 credits, is structured around 7 institutional learning objectives and includes foundational courses and themed pathways that have students explore a topic from diverse liberal arts perspectives. The most recent indirect assessment findings indicate that most students perceive that their education contributed much or a great deal to their developing the skills and competencies associated with an undergraduate education, particularly in critical thinking, quantitative

reasoning, information literacy, and problem-solving. Direct assessments suggest that students are achieving the program's learning objectives.

Since the previous accreditation visit, the University has added academic programs that align with the goals of the strategic plan and that meet the regional needs of New York State, particularly Central New York. The following undergraduate programs were added to the University's academic portfolio: B.A. in Africana Studies, minor in Africana Studies, B.S. in Digital Media Marketing, and B.B.A. degrees in multiple business offerings. The University also established a partnership with Worcester Polytechnic Institute to create a 4-plus-1 program in physics to engineering.

Graduate offerings were likewise expanded to include an M.S. in Computer Science, M.S. in Dietetics and Nutrition, M.S. in Accounting, M.S. in Forensic Accounting, multiple M.S. programs in Nursing, a Master's in Social Work, and graduate certificates in Nursing.

To ensure the currency and relevance of undergraduate and graduate programs, significant curriculum revisions were made to programs in Psychology-Child Life, Psychology, Education, Exercise and Wellness, and Cybersecurity.

While the University expanded its academic offerings in some disciplines, continued low enrollments in others resulted in a Board resolution requiring University leadership to assess the University's academic portfolio and make recommendations regarding the elimination of programs that have had historically low enrollments and minimal interest from prospective students. The following programs were discontinued in 2023: Criminal Justice (distance), Spanish, Geoscience (B.A. and B.S.), International Studies, Philosophy, Public Relations and Marketing, Healthcare Management (distance and on-ground), Nutrition, Sociology and Anthropology, and Therapeutic Recreation.

The students in these programs are currently being taught out.

Student Profile and Educational Outcomes

Utica University serves primarily first-generation students from New York State, particularly from those counties in proximity to the Utica campus. Forty-four percent of the first-time, full-time cohort in 2024 were Pell Grant recipients, a figure consistent with previous years. In 2023, *US News and World Report* ranked Utica University 28th in social mobility for regional universities in the North.

Utica University has a student population that is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2024, 28.9% of undergraduate students identified as members of a racially or ethnically diverse population, and 33.5% of graduate students identified as members of a racially or ethnically diverse group. Thirty-two percent of traditional undergraduates are student-athletes, and 44% reside on campus.

The University also serves students with diverse learning needs who require specific accommodations in support of their educational goals. The most recent data from the Office of Learning Services (2023-2024) indicates 511 students indicated they had a disability. Of these 511 students, 223 or 44% reported mental health difficulties.

The University has improved its graduation rates since the previous accreditation visit. In 2017, the 6-year graduation rate was 49.1%. In 2024, it was 56.1%. Seventy-seven percent of graduates from 2024

who responded to a survey regarding their employment status indicated they were employed full-time, and 60% indicated that their employment was directly related to their career goals.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Utica University was founded to serve a historically underserved population and to prepare them for a post-war workforce. The institution's commitment to this original mission—to prepare learners, particularly underserved learners, for careers—has not wavered in the last 80 years. Utica University has historically demonstrated a commitment to the principles embraced by what has recently been referred to as diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). At the time of the previous self-study and accreditation visit, the institution had a Dean for Diversity and Inclusion who reported to the Provost. Under this dean's leadership, a strategic advisory committee for diversity, equity, and inclusion was formed; an operational plan was developed to address the goals of DEI; and the Bias Response Referral Network (BRRN) was established.

In 2019, following a series of racially biased incidents on campus and based on data gathered from a climate survey, President Casamento created a Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position to serve as a member of her Cabinet. Three professional staff positions were added to support the efforts of the vice president.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan included the goal, "Develop a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive climate," and key performance indicators were established to measure progress on this particular goal.

The institution further committed resources to increasing the number of faculty and staff who represent a racially or ethnically diverse group, and the number of employees hired representing racially or ethnically diverse groups significantly increased over a 4-year period, from 4 in 2018 to 25 in 2021.

The financial challenges the University experienced post-pandemic resulted in hiring freezes, an increase in the number of vacant faculty-staff positions, and a decrease in the resources available to recruit a diverse workforce. Nevertheless, the institution continued to successfully attract faculty representing a range of races and ethnicities. In 2023-2024, 33% of the faculty hired represented a racially or ethnically diverse group, and 91% of faculty from racially and ethnically diverse groups were retained at the institution.

In 2020, the Division for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions collaborated with the Division for Advancement and the *Alpha Phi Alpha* Fraternity to launch three scholarships supporting underrepresented students, particularly students who identify as Black, African American, or Latinx.

The following year, the University's Advancement team secured a gift that funded the renovation of the Francis A. Wilcox Intercultural and Student Organization Center, a facility for DEI programming. Advancement further secured funding for the Wilcox Fellowship Program, the largest scholarship program in the University's history, to support academically promising students with financial need. Additional opportunities made possible through the efforts of the Advancement Division in collaboration with faculty and staff are as follows: \$10M in endowed scholarships, the vast majority of which support students with demonstrated financial need; the

S-STEM grant that provides funding for academically promising students from low-income backgrounds; grant funding for TRIO-Student Support Services for First-Generation, Pell-eligible students; the National Science Foundation-funded Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), which provides research and career development for under-represented minority students in the sciences¹ and a DOJ OVM grant that has a focus on providing services to our LGBTIA+ students.

Ongoing professional development has been available to campus leadership, faculty, staff, and students on topics related to DEI, and Utica University was included as a case study in equitable assessment practices in the publication *Reframing Assessment to Center Equity: Theories, Models, and Practices*².

The University is currently examining its DEIB practices with respect to President Trump's January 21, 2025 Executive Order to end DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs, and activities at institutions receiving Title IV funds. Neither the University's admission decisions nor hiring practices show preference for any particular race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual identity but instead comply with non-discriminatory policies and practices, as mandated by the Office of Civil Rights. Nonetheless, the institution did make modifications to its hiring procedures, given the executive order. Specifically, diversity advocates were eliminated from search committees, and a diversity statement was no longer required of job applicants.

The University further reviewed its scholarship offerings to guard against any potentially discriminatory practices, and the faculty is currently debating whether to continue requiring all students to complete a DEI course to graduate. Finally, web pages dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion were removed from the University's website.

Utica University remains confident that it has not violated any civil rights laws, but acting with an abundance of caution, has taken these steps in response to President Trump's executive order and the subsequent "Dear Colleague" letter.

Administration and Leadership

In addition to the Office of the President, the administration at Utica University is organized into eight divisions: Academic Affairs; Enrollment Management; Financial Affairs; Advancement; Integrated Information Technology Services; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions; Marketing and Communications; and Emergency Management and Facilities.

Since the previous accreditation, two vice president positions were added to the institution's structure, one in Emergency Management and another in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. The Vice President for Planning/Senior Executive Assistant to the President position was eliminated, and other positions were combined or restructured to avoid duplication of efforts and to keep operations organized around mission.

The President is assisted in his leadership by his Cabinet, nine key advisors who oversee the University's operations and have responsibility for implementing the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

¹ Regretfully, grant funding for LSAMP was discontinued by the Trump administration in May 2025.

² Henning, Gavin, and Gianna R. Baker, Natasha A. Jankowski, Anne E. Lundquist, and Erick Montenegro, editors. *Reframing Assessment to Center Equity: Theories, Models, and Practices*. Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2022

Members of the President's Cabinet are as follows:

- Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Senior Associate Provost
- Vice President for Financial Affairs/Treasurer
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Advancement
- Vice President for Marketing and Communication
- Vice President for Market Innovation and New Ventures
- Vice President for Emergency Management and Facilities
- Director of Athletics

The Provost's Cabinet is assembled by the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs to advise her on academic matters and assist with strategic planning for Academic Affairs.

Members of the Provost's Cabinet include the Registrar, the Dean of Student Success, the Dean of the Library, the Dean of Students, the Senior Associate Provost, and the four school deans. A Deans' Council functions in a similar capacity, but this body consists solely of the Provost, the four school deans, and the Senior Associate Provost. The Council focuses primarily on academic policies and procedures.

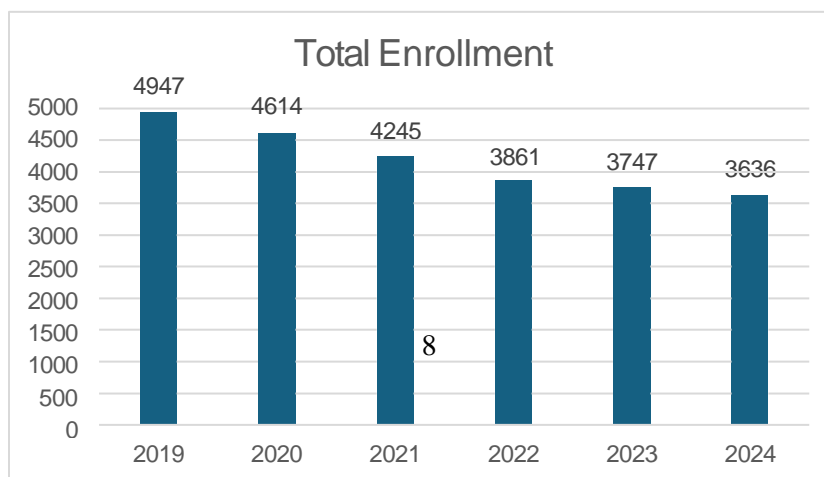
On a monthly basis, the President's and Provost's Cabinets meet as a Joint Cabinet. These meetings allow members of the Provost's Cabinet to hear directly from the University President about important institutional issues and strategic priorities, and they provide an opportunity for the institution's academic leaders to participate in institutional planning and decision-making.

Challenges

Utica University has faced and is facing the challenges common to many smaller, private, regional institutions. Currently, the most pressing challenges are enrollment, limited fiscal resources, inequities in student achievement, and campus climate.

Enrollment

Utica University began experiencing declining enrollments even before the forecasted demographic cliff. Since the previous accreditation, total enrollments at the University decreased by slightly over 1,300 students.



Currently, the University enrolls 1,153 fewer undergraduates than it did in 2019. There was a slight increase in 2024 in graduate enrollments, most likely the result of an increase in the number of international students attending Utica University to earn degrees in business, cybersecurity, and computer science. However, those numbers had been trending down from 2019 to 2023. Enrollments on the main campus are the lowest in 2024 they have been in two decades.

While these declines may be attributable to the Covid pandemic, an aversion to student loan debt, and an increase in public distrust of higher education, evidence indicates that the institution is underperforming in its own market. A recent analysis done by the Vice President of Enrollment Management suggests that inadequate marketing and the University's inability to distinguish itself and promote the distinctiveness of its programs may be contributing factors.

Retention rates have declined, from 77.9% in the 2019 cohort to 70.8% in the 2023 cohort. Most recently, traditional undergraduates who withdrew from the University prior to completing their degrees cited financial circumstances as the major reason contributing to their decision, followed by academic performance, medical or mental health issues, and social life on campus. Undergraduates in distance programs indicated work/family/personal responsibilities mostly influenced their decision to withdraw, followed by financial reasons.

Retention has likely been influenced by students' increased lack of academic preparedness and diminished abilities to cope with stress and manage conflict, all of which has been documented in annual assessment reports from academic departments and in the research on the effects of the Covid pandemic on student learning.

To address these challenges, the University has taken the following measures:

- The Provost assembled a standing committee for retention, co-chaired by the Dean of Student Success and the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- The newly hired Vice President for Enrollment Management is drafting an evidence-based, detailed enrollment management plan that includes targets and goals by location, points of entry, international students, and student-athletes.
- The University introduced the Pioneer Passport Program in fall 2024, which assures academically qualified, first-time-in-college New York State residents with an Adjusted Gross Income of \$65,000 or less free tuition and fees to attend Utica University.
- The Web Advisory Group is developing strategies to rethink the website design, navigation, and content to better engage prospective students and their families.
- The institution has increased the size of its counseling staff and partners with UWill to provide tele-counseling services for all students in an effort to address the mental health needs that impact students' ability to achieve their educational goals.
- The institution will identify through both the self-study and 2025-2026 IEP what distinguishes Utica University and its signature programs.

Additionally, the University established partnerships with Upgrad, ApplyBoard, Global Study Partners, and New Mind Education Partners to recruit and enroll international students in its graduate programs,

specifically the M.B.A., M.S. Cybersecurity, and M.S. Computer Science. These partnerships have already yielded results: in Fall 2024, the University enrolled 159 international students, compared to 90 in Fall 2023. Thirty-nine new international students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in the Spring 2025 term, and the institution projects 180 new students in August 2025.

Limited fiscal resources

The declining undergraduate enrollments on its campuses has had an unfavorable impact on Utica University's finances. The fiscal year ending May 31, 2024 saw diminished results with a total net asset decrease, a debt-service coverage ratio below the 1.2 requirement, and a Department of Education Composite Financial Responsibility score of 0.5.

The Fiscal Year 2024 cash-based operating budget resulted in a \$10.1M budget deficit. As per a Board resolution, the University committed to achieving a balanced cash-based operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025, which necessitated significant reductions in operating and payroll and related expenses.

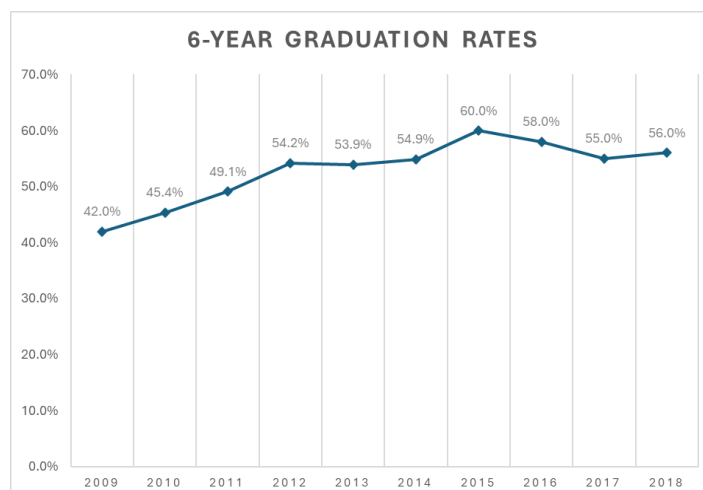
To achieve a balanced budget and address the fiscal challenges, the University's President and members of his leadership team have taken clear and definitive actions, as outlined below:

- The University reduced payroll and related expenses by restructuring or eliminating staff positions and not filling all open positions. Additionally, a salary reduction was imposed on staff earning over \$60,450.00 per year.
- The University's retirement contribution for staff has been frozen.
- The Provost enforced controls on instructional costs by enhancing course load efficiencies, ensuring courses run at maximum capacity, and reviewing the rotation of course offerings.
- The Office of Financial Affairs instituted ongoing budget review meetings with budget managers to monitor prudent use of budget resources and responsible stewardship of funds.
- The additional location in Miramar, Florida closed on May 31, 2024 due to low enrollment, and for the same reason, the St. Petersburg site is scheduled to close in August 2026. Clark City Center will close at the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- The institution is evaluating the return-on-investment of athletics programs to determine whether the current offering of 25 sports is commensurate with those at other schools in the same athletic conference and appropriate for the Utica's size and resources.
- Negotiations with the faculty collective bargaining unit resulted in a faculty sacrifice of approximately \$1.4 million through a combination of wage reductions and a freeze in employer retirement contributions commensurate with those previously enacted within the staff.
- The President is developing a plan to "right-size" the faculty and staff to serve current and projected student populations.

Fortunately, in Fiscal Year 2024, positive returns in the financial markets partially offset unfavorable operational results. Additionally, the University experienced another remarkable year of fundraising and grant procurement by the Division for Advancement. Efforts at private philanthropy raised \$5,944,365, an increase of \$940,138 over FY23. Grant procurement raised \$6,906,669, with \$2,009,086 pending.

Inequities in Student Outcomes

Utica University has made progress in its 6-year graduation rates, from 42.0% in 2015 to 56.0% in 2024. The following graph shows the 6-year graduation rates by cohort.



However, graduation rates for students who identify as Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, and multiple races remain lower than for those students who identify as White or Asian. In the 2018 cohort, 62% of students who identified as White graduated within 6 years, and 58% who identified as Asian/Asian American completed their degrees within 6 years. In contrast, 31% of students who identified as Hispanic/Latinx and 39% who reported they were Black/African American graduated within 6 years. This trend is consistent with previous cohorts.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan included a goal to close the graduation gap between White students and students of color. The University's continued commitment to addressing inequitable outcomes is evidenced in the 2024-2025 Institutional Effectiveness Plan that includes an objective related to addressing these inequities.

Proposed tactics to address inequities that impact student success include the following:

- Re-establish alumni mentors for students of color, particularly Black/African American and Latinx.
- Provide faculty development opportunities in inclusive, student-centered pedagogy.
- Develop a system and criteria to award course-enhancement grants to faculty to develop courses that reflect diversity and that utilize anti-racist, student-centered pedagogy.
- Where possible, provide incentives to departments that have increased the engagement of historically marginalized student groups.
- Using data from first-year courses, improve the course schedule to ensure that students, particularly first-year students, are enrolled in a selection and combination of courses where they can be successful.

Some of the proposed actions require resources that are currently unavailable, but others, such as faculty development in inclusive pedagogies and being more strategic about scheduling, are budget neutral.

Campus Climate

Survey data suggest that the University has made progress towards creating an inclusive environment for its students. In the most recent climate survey (2022-2023), slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents reported being generally or very satisfied with the overall campus climate, and the majority reported they were generally or very satisfied with the extent to which they feel all members experience

a sense of belonging.

Disaggregated survey findings, however, indicated that some students perceive the University as less welcoming than others. Specifically, students who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community and as persons with a permanent disability indicated less satisfaction with the overall campus climate than their peers.

Numerous University offices and departments addressed and continue to address concerns about campus climate and the student experience, as outlined below:

- In addition to organizing a significant of extra and co-curricular campus events, the Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging promotes awareness of all cultures and cultural events on its website, electronic message boards, in the daily publication of *Morning Mention*, and in its programming efforts.
- The Office of Learning Services received grant funding from the New York State Education Department to support a peer mentor program for incoming new students who identify as having a disability.
- The University's Provost serves as the advisor to the student group, the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and co-sponsors the annual Coming Out Day celebration.
- Academic departments initiate activities and events to promote belonging, including pizza parties for new majors, book clubs and discussions, and outings.
- The New Student Orientation Program was re-envisioned to include topics such as Title IX training and campus resources, DEI forums and peer sessions, and domestic/sexual violence workshops.
- The Office of Campus Engagement developed a committee to create a support space for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The University's financial challenges have had an adverse effect on faculty and staff, who continue to support the institution's mission and goals despite salary cuts, staff reductions, and limited fiscal resources. To address matters of campus climate while having to make difficult decisions to sustain the institution remains an enormous challenge for University leadership.

Preparation for the Self-Study

As of May 2025, the following has been accomplished in preparation for the self-study:

- The co-chairs, which includes the Accreditation Liaison Officer, attended the Self-Study Institute in fall 2024 (September – November).
- The co-chairs proposed the Institutional Priorities and Intended Outcome of the self-study to the faculty staff, and University President, who had the final say for both.
- The Division of Marketing and Communication, in consultation with the co-chairs, created a Middle States Self-Study web page to keep the University community apprised of progress on the self-study.
- The co-chairs articulated the roles and responsibilities of the co-chairs, the steering committee, and the working groups.
- The faculty co-chair, Dr. Rachel Wolfe, presented to the full faculty on the self-study process at the Faculty Senate meeting in October 2024. Updates on the self-study process are given to the faculty monthly at Senate meetings.
- The administrative co-chair, Dr. Ann Damiano, presented on the self-study process to the Professional

Staff Advisory Committee in November 2024.

- The co-chairs assembled the steering committee and began meeting with the members in December 2024.
- Steering Committee members, in consultation with the co-chairs, identified members of the working groups for each standard.
- The working groups met and developed Lines of Inquiry, reviewed evidence related to their respective standards, and identified the additional evidence they would need to address both the criteria related to the standard and the Lines of Inquiry.
- Steering Committee members mapped Lines of Inquiry to the criteria for each individual standard.
- Dr. Ann Damiano presented to the Board of Trustees in January 2025 regarding accreditation and the self-study process.
- The co-chairs drafted the Self-Study Design and shared it with the University community, soliciting written feedback through a portal on the Middle States Self-Study web page.
- The Self-Study Design was revised based on feedback from the University community.
- The Self-Study Design was submitted to Dr. Ryan Hartnett, Vice President for Institutional Field Relations in February 2025.
- Ms. Donna Dolansky, member of the Steering Committee, and Dr. Ann Damiano, Co-Chair, began organizing the Evidence Inventory for the various working groups.
- The co-chairs reviewed the required evidence by standard and identified any evidence currently missing or not available.
- The University hosted Dr. Hartnett's visit on April 8, 2025 and welcomed the feedback he provided on the Self-Study Design.
- The Steering Committee developed new Institutional Priorities, Intended Outcomes, and Lines of Inquiry based on Dr. Hartnett's feedback. The Institutional Priorities and Intended Outcome were vetted and modified by the University President.
- The Institutional Effectiveness Committee, under the expert leadership of the Vice President for Enrollment Management, identified new sets of peer and aspirant groups that will be used to inform potential members of the visiting team.
- The working groups completed detailed outlines of each chapter (standard) in May 2025.
- Co-chairs presented on accreditation and the self-study process to the Board of Trustees in May 2025.
- Steering Committee members committed to completing an initial draft of their chapters (standards) by June 30, 2025.
- The Institutional Research Associate will assemble the required evidence beginning in June 2025.

Progress on Recommendations from the 2017-2018 Self-Study

What follows is a description of the progress Utica University made on each of the recommendations from the visiting team in April 2018.

Standard III

1. With the reliance of adjunct faculty to help deliver the wide variety of academic and professional programs with various modes of delivery, the team concurs with the self-study recommendation that the College will determine a comprehensive approach to integrating adjunct faculty members into the life of the College and into their academic departments, taking into account the needs and perspectives of adjunct faculty members as well as the needs and perspectives of individual academic programs.

Progress: Following the 2017-2018 self-study, the University (then College) made an intentional effort to include adjunct faculty more in institutional and departmental initiatives. For example, an adjunct faculty in English was invited to serve on the Strategic Planning Committee. *Ad hoc* efforts were made in the three schools—Arts and Sciences, Business and Justice Studies, and Health Professions and Education—to ensure that part-time faculty felt they were part of the institution’s culture. Deans reported, however, that most adjunct faculty were not interested in being integrated into the University or academic departments, primarily because they were not compensated for any additional time investment outside of teaching, and for many, their full-time professional jobs were their primary responsibilities.

Nonetheless, to provide adjunct faculty with greater opportunities to interact with full-time faculty, in 2023, the University eliminated the single adjunct office and established adjunct “jump desk” offices in several locations on campus. Adjunct faculty offices for Arts and Sciences were moved to offices located in the same area as departmental faculty. As a result, chairs stated that there is more interaction between adjunct faculty and full-time faculty. In the Business program, adjunct offices were located downtown with other faculty and with the move of the business school back to campus, adjuncts will be located near the business classrooms.

2. The College has already created a robust system to support the online delivery of courses for several academic programs. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will develop an effective teaching practices strategy across all instructional delivery modes to inform, share, and improve teaching and learning.

Progress: This recommendation came from the self-study report and was included in the team report. In April 2019, the Faculty Senate sponsored a survey to determine the most commonly used instructional methods at Utica College. The survey also solicited information regarding the faculty’s participation in the scholarship of teaching and learning, their use of educational technologies, and their overall teaching responsibilities. The results of this survey were shared with the full faculty through the Faculty Senate, the Provost, and the Academic Technology Committee.

The findings were intended to be used in the formation of a Center for Teaching Excellence, a vision of the former Provost in 2018. Recommendations for such a center were generated by one of the task forces assembled to work on an academic master plan in fall 2019 and spring 2020. The institution’s shutdown in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic thwarted progress on the academic master plan. However, the plans for a center to support faculty were not shelved. Rather, the University opened a Center for Faculty Excellence in January 2024 that also houses the Office of Instructional Design and Technology.

The Senior Associate Provost consults with the Academic Assessment Committee, the Dean of Student Success, and the Office of Instructional Design and Technology elicit topics of interest or concern before the start of the Fall and Spring semesters. This information is used to develop programming that is delivered by faculty champions. While current resources might limit the Center’s ability to provide robust professional development, faculty have benefitted from programming efforts on topics such as “Trauma Informed Pedagogy.”

3. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will reexamine the role that faculty

and staff members play in advising, provide more opportunities for collaboration in defining those roles and areas of shared responsibility, and ensure that all members of the College community fully understand the role that faculty advisors, navigators, and success coaches play in improving student success.

Progress: At the time of the previous self-study, what are now referred to as “success coaches” were called “navigators.” There was not a uniform job description for navigators. Rather, their duties depended on which school they were assigned to support. Those who were assisting Business and Justice Studies and Health Professions and Education registered students for courses, while those working with Arts and Sciences did not.

The University eliminated the navigator position, changing the position’s title to “success coach.” All success coaches have identical job descriptions that outline clear performance expectations. Each success coach is required to hold registration meetings with the students assigned to them; each is mandated to advise all first-semester students and register all first-year students. Faculty advisors, also referred to as academic advisors, assume responsibility for mentoring students in the major, exploring with them career and educational goals. They typically do academic advisement after the students in their programs have completed at least 30 credit hours.

Survey findings from both satisfaction surveys and withdrawing students’ surveys indicate general satisfaction with the University’s advisement practices. Most recently (December 2024), the majority of students who withdrew from the institution prior to completing an undergraduate degree reported they were satisfied/very satisfied with the quality of academic advising. Survey results indicate that both success coaching and academic advisement support student success at the University.

4. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will work together to develop an institutionally agreed-upon definition of student success and further develop tools to systematically assess students’ preparedness and the extent to which they retain and achieve academic goals to graduate from the College.

Progress: Members of the institution’s academic leadership team developed a model that operationalized a student success definition, articulated outcomes, identified key performance indicators, and included assessment measures. This model was shared with the Retention and Completion Task Force, the Provost Cabinet, and the Faculty Senate. The President’s Cabinet approved the model with minor revisions in April 2019.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 included student success as its first goal and expanded on the key performance indicators used to demonstrate student success, especially for students of color. The 2024-2025 Institutional Effectiveness Plan likewise included a goal related to student success and required that administrative units and co-curricular operations revise their mission statements to show how they support student success.

5. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will continue the cycle of assessment in academic and co-curricular programs and demonstrate utilization of student learning outcomes to inform course and program content, delivery, and pedagogy.

Progress: The College hired a Dean of Assessment in 2017 to be responsible for ensuring that the

institution not only continue but improve upon its assessment processes. The dean was promoted in 2019 to Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and became a member of the President's Cabinet.

Utica University has robust assessment processes. All academic departments and co-curricular/student support operations have student learning and operational goals that are assessed on an annual basis. Two assessment committees—the Academic Assessment Committee and the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee—review assessment reports and provide feedback to departments via face-to-face meetings and scored rubrics that measure the effectiveness of each department's assessment practices. Departments document how they use assessment findings in an executive summary that is part of the annual report and on surveys regarding assessment culture.

Both committees complete reports on an annual or semi-annual basis that assess the assessment processes in academic departments and co-curricular/student support operations and summarize how assessment results are being utilized. These reports are shared with relevant University constituents (e.g. Faculty Senate) and posted on each committee's website.

In addition to the annual assessment report, academic departments and co-curricular/student support operations complete a self-study every five years that reflects on their successes, notes where continuous improvement is needed, and summarizes trends in student learning.

Members of the Utica University community have presented at regional and national conferences, including the Middle States Annual Conference, on effective assessment practices.

6. The College will develop a process to communicate student learning outcomes assessment findings linking General Education outcomes to student achievement.

Progress: The Academic Assessment Committee in collaboration with the General Education Council developed a five-year assessment plan to measure student achievement with respect to general education outcomes. The plan includes both direct and indirect assessments. Results from these assessments are posted on a web page titled "Evidence of Student Learning and Student Success." Results are also shared with the Deans' Council.

7. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will develop its new strategic plan in tandem with the re-examination of its mission statement, developing goals that are appropriate, realistic, and measurable, and effective strategies to measure and communicate that progress.

Progress: A strategic planning committee consisting of members representing various stakeholder groups from students to faculty to Trustees was assembled and began meeting in December 2018. As part of the planning process, the institutional mission was revised based on feedback gathered from a series of college-wide focus groups. The planning committee developed strategic goals that informed continuous improvement in areas such as student success, financial stability, and campus climate. The plan was vetted by the institution's governance groups in fall 2019 and launched in January 2020.

Semi-annual progress reports were completed by the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness. These reports, as well as evidence of the strategic planning committee's activities, were posted on a website dedicated to strategic planning.

8. The College will develop an academic plan and enrollment management plan to address its goals for institutional sustainability and provide a foundation for long-range financial planning, facilities and information planning, and annual budgeting. The long-range financial plan should include specific goals for financial reserves and maintenance of the key financial ratios. All academic, enrollment management, financial, facilities, infrastructure, and technology plans are to be integrated with the strategic plan.

Progress: An academic master plan and an enrollment management plan were included as tactics in the 2020-2025 strategic plan, as was a goal to increase net assets.

In November 2019, a faculty steering committee, working with the Provost, assembled five task forces on topics germane to an academic plan: teaching excellence and innovation; academic advising and student support; research, scholarship, and creative activity; academic structure and policies; and academic information systems. Task forces identified recommendations in their respective areas to the steering committee in March 2020. The original intent was for the steering committee to complete a draft of the plan in June 2020 for full vetting by various constituent groups.

Regretfully, the shutdown precipitated by the pandemic thwarted these efforts, and the steering committee did not resume its work following the shutdown.

While not necessarily intended as part of an academic master plan, in August 2022, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution directing the University administration to undertake an academic portfolio review designed to provide recommendations for any changes to credentials or academic offerings. This resolution was the result of declining enrollments and an academic portfolio that did not necessarily reflect students' interests or employer needs.

In response to the Board resolution, the Provost assembled a task force, aptly named the Academic Portfolio Review Task Force. This body met weekly for the duration of the fall 2022 semester to review admissions and enrollment data, IPEDS data, and projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A final report from the task force was submitted to the President and the Board of Trustees in December 2022. This report included the polling results from task force members regarding whether academic programs with low enrollments and minimum student interest should remain part of the University's portfolio of offerings.

In February 2023, the Board of Trustees, referencing the task force report as well as written rebuttals from affected academic departments, voted to eliminate eleven of its academic programs.

Regarding an enrollment management plan, the former Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Life formed a strategic enrollment management committee. This group assisted with developing a plan to grow enrollments outside of the traditional ground and online campuses. The plan was organized around four pillars: expansion of the institution's geographic footprint; a 4-year graduation guarantee; a Bridge Program with local high schools; and international pathways programs.

The current Vice President for Enrollment Management is refining a strategic enrollment plan based on evidence of student interest, market demands, and regional needs.

9. The College will further implement a comprehensive plan for the organized, systematic, and sustainable assessment of institutional effectiveness that provides evidence that the College is using

assessment results for institutional improvement in meeting its mission and goals. This plan will build congruence with student learning outcomes assessment efforts.

Progress: A task force on institutional effectiveness was formed by the President in October 2017 to identify best practices in institutional effectiveness, propose an institutional effectiveness plan, and recommend a committee structure to oversee processes related to assessment, decision-making, and continuous improvement.

One of the task force's recommendations was to create a standing Institutional Effectiveness Committee. This recommendation was supported by the President, and such a committee became operational in academic year 2018-2019. Further, in 2019, the Dean of Assessment was promoted to a Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and became a member of the President's Cabinet.

The University has articulated clear expectations regarding the assessment of institutional and unit-level goals. These expectations are communicated in the *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness*, which is updated every August to ensure that it remains current. All areas of the University—academic departments, co-curricular and student support operations, and administrative units—are required to complete annual assessment reports and 5-year program reviews. Assessment processes in academic departments are reviewed by the Academic Assessment Committee. The Co-Curricular Assessment Committee reviews assessment plans and reports from the co-curricular and student support operations, and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee oversees assessment practices in administrative departments. All three assessment committees have appraised how well the University has achieved the goal of “organized, systematic, and sustainable assessment” by using a rubric adapted from the SUNY rubric for measuring institutional effectiveness. These assessment results have been included in the Institutional Effectiveness Committee's reports to the University President.

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee further examines the extent to which divisional and departmental plans integrate with the institution's plan. Progress on institutional goals is reported semi-annually (December and June), and the results are used for further planning, if warranted. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee has also assessed the process by which institutional policies and procedures are reviewed and updated; the University's committee structures; and the institution's assessment processes. Most recently, the committee, under the expert leadership of the Vice President for Enrollment Management, identified a new group of institutions to use when benchmarking performance indicators.

10. In concurrence with the self-study recommendation, the College will review its governance structures and processes, considering how best to support and enhance timely communication among all members and groups in the campus community, and provide a route to participate in shared governance and decision-making as appropriate. The review will examine the role of full-time and adjunct faculty, trustees, administrators, staff, and all students, including online and graduate students, in shared governance.

Progress: An assessment of the institution's governance structures and processes was not completed. Instead, the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 included as a tactic, “Arrive at a common understanding of ‘shared governance’ for the College by May 2021.”

A group consisting of the school deans and the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness/

Dean of Assessment drafted a definition of “shared governance” based on the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) definition of shared governance and the roles of key constituents. This document was reviewed by the President of the AAUP-UC in October 2021, who stated that the proposed definition "captures the AAUP's view on shared governance."

In November 2021, a definition of shared governance was sent to the Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate and shared electronically with faculty in each of the three schools. In spring 2022, the definition was shared with the full faculty as a resource to assist them in understanding what shared governance means and what informs the definition. This was regarded as especially important given a survey finding in April 2021 that 24% of full-time faculty indicated they didn’t know if their role in governance is informed by national standards, such as AAUP documents.

While the University’s governance structures and processes were not reviewed as per the visiting team’s recommendation, both the Board of Trustees and the faculty assess their role in governance on a regular cycle. The faculty assessed their role in governance in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2023, and the Board completed a self-assessment in 2017, 2021, and 2024.

Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

The self-study co-chairs initially identified institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study during Week II of the Self-Study Institute. These priorities were initially shared with the President and Provost, who modified them, making student success the focus of the institutional priorities. The priorities were then shared with the faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees.

Based on feedback from Dr. Ryan Hartnett, Vice President for Institutional Field Relations, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the institutional priorities were revised so that they specifically address the outcomes of the 2025-2026 Institutional Effectiveness Plan as well as the institution’s current, pressing challenges. These revised priorities were shared with the Board of Trustees in May 2025.

| Institutional Priority | Description |
|---|---|
| Relevance and distinctiveness of the University and its academic programs | <p>The Vice President for Enrollment Management indicated that Utica University is underperforming in the current market primarily because the institution has failed to distinguish itself and its programs from other similar institutions. Therefore, reflecting on how the University might differentiate itself and its programs is a priority of the self-study process and the 2025-2026 IEP.</p> <p>Systematic, ongoing assessments of educational effectiveness that are focused on continuous improvement (Standard V) should help demonstrate that the University’s academic offerings are relevant and provide insight into what makes each program distinct. This will support the work of the Vice President for Enrollment Management, who is developing an evidence-based enrollment management plan in support of the academic plan (2024-2025 IEP Goal 3).</p> <p>The majority of the University’s students are enrolled in professional or pre-professional programs, the content of which must remain current and relevant if the institution aims to attract students and graduate students with the knowledge, skills, and qualifications to be successful professionally. This aligns with the Institutional Effectiveness Plan’s objective, “Evaluate the compatibility</p> |

| | and currency of academic offerings with regional market demands.” Quality academic programs will not only attract students, but may improve the institution’s current yield rates, especially in those majors where there is high interest. |
|--|---|
| Institutional Priority | Description |
| Financial stability and the responsible stewardship of resources | <p>Utica University has experienced financial challenges in the post-Covid years. The 2024-2025 Institutional Effectiveness Plan was developed to support the President’s vision for a sustainable institution. The plan for 2025-2026—to re-envision the University and distinguish its offerings—likewise supports a financially stable institution, one poised not merely to survive but to thrive.</p> <p>Many of the tactics associated with the goal in the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (2024-2025) to “Achieve a sustainable financial model” were intended to ensure responsible stewardship of funds. These tactics included assessing the viability of additional locations, evaluating the return on investment of the University’s athletic programs, and implementing best practices for financial management.</p> <p>Planning priorities for 2025-2026 will direct the University’s leadership when it comes to making the kinds of decisions necessary for a viable and profitable future. One of the outcomes of the 2025-2025 IEP is to modify the University’s structures to support revised curricular offerings and enhanced student engagement. The self-study report, a reflective analysis of the University’s strengths and areas in need of improvement, will be instrumental in assisting the institution with future planning, specifically strategic planning.</p> |
| Institutional Priority | Description |
| Improved enrollments | <p>Utica University has witnessed sharp declines in its undergraduate enrollments, particularly on the main campus. Further, the institution has yet to achieve the retention target identified in the most recent strategic plan (82%) and by the University President (80%). The retention rates of students who identify as Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx are significantly lower than those of students who identify as White or Asian/Asian American.</p> <p>The 2025-2026 IE plan to re-envision the University’s academic offerings will undoubtedly include opportunities for students to engage in their majors sooner than they currently do and offer experiential learning that will attract and engage students. There is no shortage of research that suggests involving students early in their chosen program of study and providing hands-on learning increases persistence to graduation.</p> <p>Distinguishing the institution and its academic programs and better resourcing student success strategies (2024-2025 and 2025 – 2026 IEPs) should have a positive effect on enrollment. The self-study will provide the University’s stakeholders with the chance to analyze current practices and procedures and identify specific areas where continuous improvement is needed and possible.</p> |

The institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study map to the University's mission, as outlined in the following table:

| Elements of the Mission Statement | Priority 1: Relevance and distinctiveness of the University and its academic programs | Priority 2: Financial stability and the responsible stewardship of resources | Priority 3: Improved enrollments |
|---|--|---|---|
| Empowering learners to achieve their career goals | X | | X |
| Offering learners diverse, enriching experiences | X | X | X |
| Providing learners with outstanding educational opportunities | X | X | X |

The following table shows how the institutional priorities for the self-study align with the Middle States Standards of Accreditation, 14th edition.

| Standards for Accreditation | Priority 1: Relevance and distinctiveness of the University and its academic programs | Priority 2: Financial stability and the responsible stewardship of resources | Priority 3: Improved enrollments |
|---|--|---|---|
| I. Mission & Goals | x | x | |
| II. Ethics & Integrity | x | x | x |
| III. Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience | x | x | x |
| IV. Support of the Student Experience | x | x | x |
| V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment | x | | x |
| VI. Planning, Resources, & Institutional Improvement | x | x | x |
| VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration | x | x | x |

Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

Utica University has identified the following as desired outcomes from the self-study process:

1. Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Fourteenth Edition)* and provides evidence by Standard alignment with the *Evidence Expectations by Standard*.
2. Leverage periodic assessment through each standard, using assessment results for continuous improvement and innovation to ensure levels of quality for constituents and the attainment of the institution's priorities, mission, and goals.
3. Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process, including analysis of a range of data, including disaggregated data, to ensure students are appropriately served

and institutional mission and goals are met.

4. Articulate and promote the value of a Utica University education and degree credential in the current marketplace.

Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

The nine-person Steering Committee consists of the two co-chairs and the seven individuals who chair the seven working groups, each group dedicated to a specific accreditation standard.

The co-chairs are responsible for leading the self-study process, which includes monitoring progress on the self-study draft, communicating with the various constituent groups (Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni), finalizing the self-study report, and arranging for the accreditation team visit.

The co-chairs for the 2026-2027 self-study are Dr. Rachel Wolfe, Associate Professor of Theater and Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate (2024-2025), and Dr. Ann Damiano, Accreditation Liaison Officer and Senior Associate Provost.

General Charge for the Steering Committee

1. Become familiar with the Middle States Standards for Accreditation (14th ed.), the Requirements of Affiliation, and the criteria aligned with the Standards, most especially the Standard of the respective working group.
2. Understand the institutional priorities of self-study and the desired outcomes of the self-study process.
3. Assemble a working group of individuals who have the expertise and knowledge related to the Standard of the working group and its individual criteria.
4. Serve as chair of the working group assembled to address the assigned standard.
5. Become familiar with the institution's evidence and assessment information to ensure that the various elements required in the self-study are adequately addressed.
6. Meet regularly (at least monthly, more if needed) with members of the working group.
7. Meet monthly as the Steering Committee to ensure there is no duplication of effort, to report on progress with respect to the individual chapters, to review drafts of the self-study, and to receive updated communications from the co-chairs.
8. Maintain minutes of all meetings with the working group.
9. Ensure the timely completion of individual drafts for each standard.
10. Share drafts of each standard with the University community and solicit feedback.

Steering Committee Members

In addition to the self-study co-chairs, the following individuals constitute the membership of the Steering Committee:

Dr. Jason Denman, Professor of English; Dean, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences

Mr. Brian Picente, Operations Manager for Academic Affairs

Dr. Terri Provost, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Chair, Biology Department, Division of Natural

Sciences and Mathematics

Ms. Bethany Samuels, Dean of Student Success

Ms. Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice in Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Dr. Sharon Wise, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Dean, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, School of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Laurence Zoeckler, Professor of Education; Chair, Educator Preparation, School of Health Professions and Education

General Charge for All Working Groups

1. Become familiar with the Middle States Standards for Accreditation (14th ed.), the Requirements of Affiliation, and the criteria aligned with the Standards, most especially the standard of the working group.
2. Understand the institutional priorities for the self-study and the desired outcomes of the self-study process.
3. Articulate 2 to 3 Lines of Inquiry for each accreditation standard.
4. Become familiar with the institutional evidence and the required evidence for the standard to which they are assigned.
5. Identify any additional resources or information needed to address the standards.
6. Collaborate and confer with various offices or individuals relevant to the standard to which they have been assigned.
7. If necessary, administer surveys, formulate focus groups, conduct interviews, etc.
8. Meet all deadlines established by the co-chairs
9. Formulate a draft (10 -15 pages) that
 - describes how the working group addressed criteria with respect to the institutional priorities;
 - provides an analysis of how well the evidence indicates the University has met the standard;
 - responds to the lines of inquiry;
 - identifies where the institution is strong with respect to the standard and where it needs to improve;
 - make recommendations for improvement based on the criteria and related to the institutional priorities.
10. Submit a preliminary outline by May 1, 2025; an initial draft by October 10, 2025; a revised draft by February 20, 2026; and a final draft by April 24, 2026.
11. Participate in the team visit in November 2026.

Working groups must understand that the draft they complete will be edited in order to create a coherent self-study report that clearly addresses the standards, Requirements of Affiliation, institutional priorities, Line of Inquiry, and the outcomes of the self-study. Final edits will be made by the self-study co-chairs in consultation with the Steering Committee.

Specific Charges and Membership of the Working Groups

Working Group 1: Mission and Goals

Standard I: Mission 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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Membership

Chair: Dr. Jason Denman, Professor of English; Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences

Members:

Ms. Kelly Massoud, Game Manager Specialist; NCAA Compliance Assistant

Dr. Kelly Minerva, Associate Professor of English; Chair, Department of English, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Mr. Kyle Riecker, Coordinator of Education Partnerships and Clinical Practice, Office of Educator Prep, School of Health Professions and Education

Mr. Christopher Specht, Coordinator of Technical Support Services

Dr. Sukeena Stephens, Assistant Supervisory Air Marshal in Charge; Member of Alumni Council, Class of 1995

Specific Lines of Inquiry:

1. To what extent are the processes for the development, approval, and assessment of the institution’s mission and goals collaborative and inclusive?
2. To what extent are Utica University’s mission and goals focused on student success?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report:

Examples include:

- Membership of the Strategic Planning Committee (2019)
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (June 2020 to May 2023)
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommendation to Board of Trustees (May 2023)

- Institutional Effectiveness Plan (2024-2025)
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan project tracker
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan Executive Summaries (December 2024 & May 2025)
- President's Presentation on the Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Departmental and divisional maps to mission and strategic and/or institutional goals
- Board and Faculty Senate minutes indicating approval of mission statement
- Utica University's Institutional Learning Goals
- University Fact Book
- University Student Right to Know website
- Peer and aspirant institutions
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee's Reports to the President (2020-2024)
- Economic impact report (CICU)
- Recent Board resolutions
- Board of Trustee minutes
- University's definition of "student success" and metrics to measure it
- Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) Enrollment data
- Budget support for academic programs and programs supporting student success and student achievement

Anticipated collaborations

- Board of Trustees Members
- President's Cabinet
- Alumni Council
- Faculty Senate Executive Council
- Professional Staff Advisory Committee
- Student Government Association representatives

Working Group 2: Ethics and Integrity

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."

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership

Chair: Mr. Brian Picente, Operations Manager for Academic Affairs

Members:

Ms. Nina Gray, Assistant Director for Human Resources

Ms. Susan Johnson, Director of TRIO Student Support

Ms. Kira Maddox, Director for the Office of DEI & Belonging

Dr. Adam Pack, Distinguished Professor of Biology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Ms. Katie Spires, Coordinator of Library Services for Distance Education

Dr. Joshua White, Assistant Professor of Management and Data Science

Trustee (TBD)

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How effectively does the University comply with, vet, and assess its policies and procedures?
2. How well does the institution strategically address concerns related to campus climate?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Statement of Principles Regarding Expression on Campus
- University Stance Statement
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Trustees' Code of Ethics
- Copyright policy
- *Employee Handbook* (sections 306,501, 502, & 507)
- *Employee Code of Conduct*
- Title IX Compliance Documentation
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (May 2020 – May 2023)
- Sexual Assault Campus Climate survey results (2022 & 2024)
- Campus Climate Survey reports (2019 & 2023)
- Undergraduate and Graduate Withdrawals Survey Reports (2021 – 2024)
- Trend reports: Student Complaints, Bias Response Network, grievances
- Mandatory training on workplace behaviors
- Student satisfaction survey results (2021 & 2025)
- Report from the Task Force on Student Complaints (2023)
- Policies and procedures for Conflicts of Interest
- Policies and procedures for search committees
- Equal Opportunity Employment/Affirmative Action Statement

- Tenure and promotion procedures for faculty
- Employee exit survey data
- Employee Performance Review Template
- Calendar of Events: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Sections from self-study reports (administrative, academic, and co-curricular departments) related to support for diversity
- Faculty Diversity Plan (NYSED)
- Survey findings on institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (NSSE, Climate Surveys)
- DEI-designated courses-General Education
- Student learning assessment results-DEI goal
- Policy and procedures related to requesting accommodations (students, faculty, and staff)
- Student Right to Know web page
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Program-level handbooks
- Admissions information (undergraduate and graduate)
- Financial Aid information (web pages and catalogs)
- University Charter
- Statement of Accreditation
- Minutes from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee re committee reviews, policy and procedures review
- Minutes from the President's and Joint Cabinet re policy and procedure reviews
- Email communications from Senior Associate Provost re policy and procedure reviews
- Student headcounts at additional locations (Liverpool, NY; Latham, NY; and St. Petersburg, FL)
- Completed substantive changes for Miramar and St. Petersburg closures
- University Fact Book
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Human Resources
- Senior Associate Provost/Accreditation Liaison Officer
- AAUP-Utica (grievance officers)
- Dean of Students
- Office of the President
- Provost
- Faculty Affairs Committee
- School Deans
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Marketing and Communication
- Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions
- Office of the Registrar
- Director of Instructional Design

Working Group 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership

Chair: Dr. Terri Provost, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Chair, Department of Biology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Members:

M. Sam Berry-Sullivan, Librarian, Frank E. Gannett Memorial Library

Dr. Laurah Klepinger, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Doreen Rogers, Associate Professor of Nursing; Chair, Department of Nursing, School of Health Professions and Education

Ms. Lillian Shafer-Lahnum, Instructional Designer, Center for Faculty Excellence

Dr. Rob Swenszkowski, Professor of Practice, Criminal Justice, School of Business and Justice Studies

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. To what extent does Utica University design and deliver academic offerings, including the General Education Program, that promote learning and developing essential skills and knowledge that align with the University’s mission, the attainment of institutional learning goals, and student success?
2. To what extent does Utica University ensure sufficient resources to support faculty, staff, and students in designing and delivering student learning experiences, professional growth, and innovation in response to a changing higher education landscape?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Curriculum maps
- Time on task templates

- Template for curriculum proposals
- Process for curriculum review and approval
- 4-year plans of study (2020 – 2024)
- Enrollment data by program
- Trends analysis of data on academic progress by program
- Template for program reviews
- Program review schedule
- Self-study reports from academic departments/section(s) related to faculty and curriculum
- Standards from specialized accreditors
- Common Data Set—Faculty Information
- Human Resource data—faculty
- Faculty/instructional staff qualifications (titles, advanced degrees, teaching load, percentage with tenure, percentage tenure-track, percentage with terminal degrees)
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Program handbooks
- Syllabus requirements
- Samples of syllabi
- Summaries of Professional Activity (SOPAs)
- Student Opinion of Teaching template
- Survey data related to teaching effectiveness (NSSE, satisfaction surveys, climate surveys, withdrawing student surveys, alumni surveys)
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Promotion and tenure requirements and procedures
- Faculty *Curriculum Vitae*
- Faculty job postings
- Record of allocated funds from Faculty Resource Committee
- Utilization rates-Center for Faculty Excellence/ Instructional Design and Technology
- Listings of clinical and practicum placements and internships
- Assessments of fieldwork experiences
- Library resources: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System—Academic Libraries Survey)
- Template for the annual assessment report
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Annual assessment reports: Academic departments and co-curricular/student support operations
- Annual assessment report-Library
- Annual assessment reports from student support operations: Athletics, Registrar, Division of Student Success, Learning Services, and Peer Tutoring
- Institutional Learning Goals
- General Education plan of study
- General Education Assessment Plan
- General Education rubrics
- Direct assessments of student learning/General Education
- Indirect assessments of student learning/General Education (NSSE, alumni survey, graduates’

perceptions of educational gains)

- Analysis of student performance in General Education classes (percentage of failures, withdrawals)
- Student outcomes
- Alumni Survey (2023)
- Learning goals/Graduate programs
- Graduate capstone projects and research courses
- MOUs from Third-Party Providers
- Student satisfaction surveys (2021 & 2025)
- *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness*
- *Resource Guide for Assessment Plans & Annual Reports*
- *Guide to Academic Assessment*
- *Guide to Annual Assessment & Program Reviews: Co-Curricular and Non-Academic Departments*
- Reports from the Academic Assessment Committee to the Faculty Senate (2020-2024)
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Office of Student Success
- Office of the Registrar
- School Offices
- Human Resources
- Office of the Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Academic Assessment Committee
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee
- Faculty Resource Committee
- General Education Committee

Working Group 4: Support of the Student Experience

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.”

Related Institutional Priorities:

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources
Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership:

Chair: Ms. Bethany Samuels, Dean of Student Success

Members:

Mr. Greg Caloia, Director of the Center for Student Success

Ms. Marissa Hall, Executive Director of Student Living

Ms. Lauryn Moore, Associate Dean of Students & Campus Engagement

Ms. Jessica Nelson, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management

Ms. Dorothy Obernesser, Associate Professor of English, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Ms. Kristin St. Hilaire, Head Women's Lacrosse Coach; Assistant Director of Athletics

Ms. Sam Vincent, Success Coach, Center for Student Success

Ms. Mariah Kane, Director, Transfer Services

Student Rep (TBD)

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How well does the University identify, implement processes, and monitor retention to support students, particularly at-risk, historically marginalized, and/or transfer students?
2. How well do the University's academic support and co-curricular opportunities engage students and contribute to their success?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Admissions information (undergraduate and graduate)
- Admissions trends: Applicants, yield rates, enrollments
- Financial Aid information (web pages and catalogs)
- Eligibility requirements for TRIO, C-STEP, and the Higher Education Opportunity Program
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Registrar policies and procedures (e.g., FERPA, records retention, transcripts)
- Information Technology Policies and Procedures
- Student Support Questionnaire

- Annual assessment reports: Co-Curricular and Student Support Operations
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Surveys on assessment processes/culture
- Annual assessment report: Registrar
- External review report: Registrar
- Program review template: Co-Curricular and Student Support Operations
- Program review schedule
- Self-study reports from Co-curricular and Student Support Operations
- Template for the annual assessment report
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Annual reports from the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee (2018 – 2024)
- Student success metrics: GPA, retention rates, graduation rates
- Placement rates: developmental English and mathematics
- Data on student performance and progress in developmental math and English courses
- Survey findings regarding advisement and counseling (satisfaction surveys, withdrawing student survey, NSSE)
- Description of orientation program and post-assessment
- Policies related to registration, grading, graduation, academic standing, tuition refunds
- Appeals Process
- Student Right to Know web page
- University Fact Book
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan: 2024-2025
- Strategic Plan: Department of Athletics
- Athletics Policies and Procedures
- Student Athlete Handbook
- Student headcount and average GPA by athletic team
- Student Handbook
- Student Code of Conduct
- Constitution, Student Government Association
- Student Government Association Organizational Structure
- *Guide to institutional Effectiveness*
- *Resource Guide for Assessment Plans & Annual Reports*
- *Guide to Annual Assessment & Program Reviews: Co-Curricular and Non-Academic Departments*
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics
- Contracts and MOUs from Third-Party providers of student support services

Anticipated collaborations

- Office of Student Living and Campus Engagement
- Transfer Services
- Center for Student Success
- Office of Admission/Enrollment Operations
- Retention Committee

- Department of Athletics
- Vice President of Division for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, & Student Transitions/Chief Diversity Officer
- Director, Office of Learning Services & Associate Dean for Student Success
- Director, TRIO Student Support Services
- Director of Opportunity Programs
- Financial Aid
- Director of Tutoring
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee

Working Group 5: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

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 institutions of higher education.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership

Chair: Ms. Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice in Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Members:

Ms. Amy Haver, Assistant Professor of Nursing, School of Health Professions and Education

Ms. Laura Salvaggio, Faculty Theater Director, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Kaylee Seddio, Associate Professor of Psychology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Specific Lines of Inquiry:

1. To what extent are assessment analyses and results used to improve educational effectiveness through informed changes to curriculum, instruction and delivery of degree programs?
2. To what extent do assessment results demonstrate the value of a Utica University degree?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Template for annual assessment reports
- Rubric for annual assessment reports
- Annual assessment reports from academic departments
- Curriculum maps
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs (academic programs)
- Syllabus requirements
- Samples of course syllabi
- Institutional learning goals
- Academic departmental web pages
- Reports from the Academic Assessment Committee to the Faculty Senate (2020-2024)
- Template for program reviews
- Self-study reports from academic departments
- Responses from the Academic Assessment Committee re self-study reports
- MOU from Provost completing program review process
- Assessments of program review process
- Surveys on assessment processes/culture
- Self-study reports for specialized accrediting bodies
- Academic Assessment web page
- *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness*
- *Guide to Academic Assessment*
- *Academic Assessment Committee Handbook*
- Assessment blog and reels
- Program dashboards: enrollment, retention, degree-completion
- Alumni surveys by programs
- Graduate-to-Be survey report
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Academic Assessment Committee
- School Deans
- Program directors & Department Chairs
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee

Working Group 6: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

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 missions and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership

Chair: Dr. Sharon Wise, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, School of Arts and Sciences

Members:

Ms. Carol Bates, Associate Director of Financial Planning and Analysis

Dr. Michelle Boucher, Professor of Chemistry; Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, School of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Rick Fenner, Professor of Economics; School of Business and Justice Studies

Ms. Kristin Phelps, Director of Human Resources

Trustee (TBD)

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How effectively does the institution align its strategic planning with resource allocation (both fiscal and human resources) to support continuous improvement and achieve its mission?
2. How effective and inclusive is the planning process, including consulting constituent expertise, making informed decisions, and communicating these decisions?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Annual assessment reports from administrative and other non-academic departments
- Minutes from President's and Joint Cabinet meetings
- Town Hall presentations
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan: 2024 - 2025
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee's Reports to the President (2020-2024)
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (2020-2023)
- Executive Summary Report: Institutional Effectiveness Plan (December 2024 and May 2025)
- Budget process
- Annual assessment report and plan: Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging and Student Transitions
- Amount of grant and budget support for DEI initiatives

- Departmental self-study reports (sections on resources)
- Proposals to the New York State Education Department
- Annual financial audits
- Budget reports to the Board of Trustees
- Endowment, grant procurement, gifts, and annual fund figures
- Organizational charts
- Organizational charts for Board of Trustees committees
- Facilities Campus Master Plan
- Capital Projects
- University Fact Book
- Enrollment data by academic program
- Financial data and analysis
- Human Resources Data
- Enrollment Management Plan
- Facilities and floor plans of additional locations
- Expense analysis
- Board resolutions
- Utica University Report to Bondholders
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- University President
- Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Vice President for Financial Affairs/Treasurer
- Human Resources staff
- Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Vice President for Facilities and Emergency Management
- Vice President for Integrated Information Technology Services
- Members, Board of Trustees

Working Group 7: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Standard 7: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

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

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Relevance and Distinctiveness of the University and Its Academic Programs

Priority 2: Financial Stability and the Responsible Stewardship of Resources

Priority 3: Improved Enrollments

Membership

Chair: Dr. Laurence Zoeckler, Professor of Education; Chair, Educator Preparation, School of Health Professions and Education

Members:

Dr. Thomas Crist, Distinguished Professor of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions and Education

Dr. Deanna Errico, Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions and Education

Mr. Mark Pilpczuk '88, Trustee

Dr. Xiao Xiao, Professor of Mathematics; Chair, Department of Mathematics, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, School of Arts and Sciences

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How well do the University's governance structures and procedures support/advance institutional improvement?
2. How well is shared governance understood at the institution?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study report

Examples include:

- Organizational charts
- Faculty Senate Bylaws
- Professional Staff Advisory Council Bylaws
- Board of Trustees Bylaws
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Student Government Association Constitution
- December 2021 Strategic Plan Status Report
- Organizational structure of Board of Trustees
- Board committee minutes
- Conflict of interest policy and procedures for Trustees
- Trustee qualifications
- Trustee selection process
- Trustee self-assessments (2021 & 2024)
- List of current Board members
- Curriculum *vitae* or biographies of Board members
- Assessments of faculty governance/Faculty Senate (2021 & 2023)
- Policies and procedures related to Presidential search and appointment

- Policies and procedures for Board evaluation of President
- Job descriptions: President, Provost, administrative leaders
- Curriculum *vitae*: President, Provost, administrative leaders
- Survey on assessment processes/culture: administrative units
- Annual assessment reports from administrative units
- Rubric for annual assessment reports from administrative units
- Program reviews from administrative units
- Institutional Effectiveness Reports to the President (2020 – 2024)
- University committees: Purpose and membership
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- University President
- University Provost
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chair, Board of Trustees
- Members, Trusteeship Committee
- University vice-presidents
- President's Cabinet
- School deans
- President of the AAUP-Utica
- Executive Officers of the Faculty Senate
- AAUP-Utica Grievance Officer
- Office of the Registrar
- Professional Staff Advisory Committee
- Student Government Association

Working Group 8: Evidence Inventory

Working Group 8 is responsible for organizing and managing the evidence needed for the self- study report. This includes assembling evidence for each Working Groups and uploading the required evidence to the Middle States portal for review by the visiting team.

Membership

Ann E. Damiano, Accreditation Liaison Officer and Senior Associate Provost

Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice, Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Kathleen Novak, Institutional Research Associate

Guidelines for Reporting

Each Working Group is responsible for ultimately completing a draft that addresses the Lines of Inquiry and criteria associated with the accreditation standard assigned to that group. This final draft should be

no more than 15 pages. The draft should be double-spaced, using the Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins.

Prior to completing the final draft, each Working Group is expected to produce the following deliverables:

| Deliverable | Due Date |
|--|-------------------|
| Outline of content for assigned standard | May 1, 2025 |
| Initial draft | October 10, 2025 |
| Revised draft | February 20, 2026 |
| Final draft | April 24, 2026 |

The outline does not have to be formal, but it should include the following details:

- How the working group will address the institutional priorities with respect to the accreditation criteria
- Evidence that indicates the extent to which the University adheres to each criterion related to the standard
- Evidence relevant to the Lines of Inquiry
- Identification of evidence still needed

The following guidelines are recommended for each draft:

- Overview: Provide a brief description of how the Working Group addressed the institutional priorities with respect to the standard and its individual criterion
- Analysis: Guided by the Lines of Inquiry, develop a descriptive analysis that illustrates how well Utica University meets each criterion associated with the respective accreditation Standard. This section constitutes the bulk of the draft. It must reference appropriate evidence that substantiates any and all claims made.
- Observations: Based on the descriptive analysis, enumerate the institution's strengths with respect to the Standard and identify areas for continuous improvement.
- Recommendations: Once the initial draft is written, the Working Group will identify recommendations pertinent to their respective standard. Such recommendations should inform how the University might address areas for improvement.

Each document should be uploaded by the Working Group's Chair into the Steering Committee's shared Google drive for review by the full Steering Committee. Working Groups must understand that portions of the content in their drafts may be edited out of the final self-study report by the Co-Chairs.

Determining the Final List of Recommendations

Each Working Group will identify recommendations for continuous improvement based on the evidence reviewed and the analysis provided in each chapter. These recommendations will be initially vetted by the Steering Committee. Recommendations endorsed by the Steering Committee will then be shared with members of the University's leadership team to ensure they are consistent with the institution's mission and goals and to make sure they can be resourced by the institution.

While not all recommendations made by the Working Groups will be included in the final self-study report, these recommendations will be compiled and referred to the appropriate operation or governance

body for appropriate review and consideration. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will be responsible for facilitating this process.

The recommendations included in the final self-study report will be shared with and used to inform the institution's next strategic plan or institutional effectiveness plan.

Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

Utica University's final self-study report will be organized into chapters by the individual Standards of Accreditation. The report will be organized using the following structure:

1. Table of Contents
2. Executive Summary
3. Institutional Overview
4. Standard I: Mission and Goals
5. Standard II: Ethics and Integrity
6. Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
7. Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience
8. Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment
9. Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
10. Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration
11. Looking Forward: Continuous Improvement

Self-Study Timeline

| Date | Activity/Task |
|-------------------------------|--|
| September 2024-November 2024 | Self-study co-chairs attend the 2024 Self-Study Institute. |
| October 2024-December 2024 | Steering Committee is formed; Working Groups are assembled |
| December 4, 2024 | Dr. Ryan Hartnett, Utica University's MSCHE liaison, hosts a post-SSI conference call to discuss next steps. |
| January – September 2025 | Evidence Inventory is assembled and organized. |
| January 27 – February 3, 2025 | Self-study design is shared with the University community for feedback and comment. |
| February 14, 2025 | Self-study design is submitted to the Middle States Commission |
| February – April 2025 | Working Groups meet, review evidence, and outline a response for their respective standard |
| April 8, 2025 | The University hosts Dr. Ryan Hartnett for a self-study preparation visit. |
| April 25, 2025 | Preliminary outlines due from each Working Group. |
| May 30, 2025 | Revised self-study design submitted to the Commission. |
| June 30, 2025 | Assuming the self-study design is accepted, Dr. Hartnett sends an approval letter to the University. |
| October 10, 2025 | The initial draft of each chapter is due from each Working Group. |
| October – November, 2025 | Drafts are posted for review and feedback; Working Groups hold in-person sessions to solicit feedback on drafts. |
| January-March 2026 | The Commission sends to Utica University's President a nomination for the team chair. |
| February 20, 2026 | Revised drafts are due from each Working Group. |

| Date | Activity/Task |
|--------------------------|---|
| April 24, 2026 | Working Groups submit final drafts. |
| April 30, 2026 | The University hosts the Team Chair's preliminary visit <i>by this date</i> . |
| May – August 2026 | Final edits are made to the self-study report. |
| September – October 2026 | The Commission sends the University the evaluation team roster and identifies the vice chair of the team. |
| September 2026 | The Board of Trustees endorses the Self-Study report. |
| September 2026 | The ALO uploads the final self-study report and all evidence 10 weeks prior to evaluation team visit. |
| September – October 2026 | The University prepares for the team visit. |
| October – November 2026 | The ALO uploads additional information requested by the evaluation team. |
| November 2026 | Visiting team meets with University personnel to verify contents of self-study report; Team chair uploads final report to MSCHE portal; University uploads response to the team report. |
| March 2027 | Commission meets to determine action. |

Communication Plan

Utica University is committed to ensuring that the University community remains well informed of the progress with and expectations regarding the self-study process. Further, the institution supports a process that is as inclusive and participatory as possible.

There are four main vehicles the University will use to communicate with the larger University community:

- Meetings with governance groups
- Self-Study website
- Open Forums
- Mixed media

Meetings with governance groups

Co-chair of the self-study, Dr. Rachel Wolfe, serves as the Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate. She includes a progress report on the self-study in her monthly reports to the Senate. Similarly, the School Deans agreed to dedicate time at monthly school meetings for faculty members to share feedback on the Self-Study Design and subsequent drafts of the self-study.

Self-Study Co-Chair and Accreditation Liaison Officer, Dr. Ann Damiano, reports progress to the University's leadership team at meetings of the Joint Cabinet. Likewise, she meets periodically with members of the Professional Staff Advisory Council to keep staff personnel informed and to solicit input. Assessment workshops for co-curricular and student support operations provide an additional opportunity to keep staff well informed.

Both Co-Chairs are responsible for informing the Board of Trustees on the accreditation process and progress being made by the institution. The Board will be kept updated through presentations and consent agendas.

In Fall 2026, as the self-study process nears completion, the Co-Chairs will meet with the Student Government Association regarding the accreditation process and report.

Self-Study Website

In January 2025, the University launched a website dedicated to the Middle States Self-Study. The website includes the priorities to be addressed in the self-study, the intended outcomes of the self-study, the list of Steering Committee members, and an abbreviated timeline for the self-study.

The draft of the Self-Study Design and drafts of the self-study report will be posted on the website, making them accessible to members of the University community. The website directs reviewers to a comment submission form, should they wish to give immediate written feedback. The Steering Committee Co-Chairs will monitor the feedback and share it with the appropriate members of the Steering Committee.

Open Forums

As noted on the self-study timeline, the Steering Committee will host a series of Open Forums where community members may provide feedback and input on the initial drafts of the self-study report. University members may also contact one or both of the Co-Chairs directly to share comments.

Following a review of the initial drafts, feedback can be given via the comment submission form on the website.

Mixed Media

Members of the Utica University community, particularly its students and alumni, will remain informed about the self-study process through multiple media methods. The student newspaper, the *Tangerine*, published a front-page article in October 2024 describing what accreditation is, why it is important, and what is required for reaccreditation. The Self-Study Co-Chairs will keep the *Tangerine's* editors up to date on progress with the self-study Report.

The Accreditation Liaison Officer will collaborate with members of the Marketing and Communications Division to ensure that, through social media and other forms of communication, alumni will be apprised of the process.

Specific Communication Strategies

The following table outlines what will be presented, to whom it will be presented, who the presenter(s) will be, and the approximate date of each presentation. Note that this plan is neither inclusive nor conclusive. Constituent groups, such as University alumni, will be kept informed about the accreditation and self-study process through presentations arranged by the Alumni Council and social media.

| Topic | Audience | Presenter | Date of Presentation |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Introduction to the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | October 2, 2024 |
| Organizational Meeting: Outlining Expectations for the Self-Study | Steering Committee | Drs. Rachel Wolfe & Ann Damiano | October 11, 2024 |

| Topic | Audience | Presenter | Date of Presentation |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Introduction to the Self-Study Process | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Kailea Murray | October 15, 2024 |
| Introduction to the Self-Study Process | Professional Staff Advisory Committee | Dr. Ann Damiano | October 16, 2024 |
| Utica University Prepares for Accreditation, <i>Tangerine</i> (student newspaper) | University community, but primarily students | <i>Tangerine</i> editor, Dr. Ann Damiano, interviewee | October 2024 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | November 6, 2024 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | December 4, 2024 |
| Middle States website launched | University community | Content Manager: Dr. Ann Damiano | January 2025 |
| Introduction to Accreditation and the Self-Study Process | Board of Trustees | Dr. Ann Damiano | January 16, 2025 |
| Invitation for Feedback on the Self-Study Design | University community, primarily faculty & staff | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | January 27, 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | February 5, 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | March 5, 2025 |
| Invitation to Dr. Ryan Harnett's Open Session | University community | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | March 20, 2025 |
| Accreditation and the Self-Study Process | Alumni Council | President Pfannestiel and Dr. Ann Damiano | April 12, 2025 (cancelled) |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | April 2, 2025 |
| The Accreditation Process & Update on Self-Study | Board of Trustees | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | May 7, 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | May 7, 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | June 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | September 3, 2025 |
| Invitation for Feedback on Initial Drafts | University community | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | September – November 2025 |
| Progress on the Self-Study | Board of Trustees | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: September-October 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | October 1, 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | October 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Professional Staff Advisory Committee | Dr. Ann Damiano | October 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | November 5, 2025 |
| Feedback to Working Groups | Working Groups | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | November 2025 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | December 3, 2025 |
| Progress on the Self-Study: Outlining Board Expectations | Board of Trustees | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: February 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | February 4, 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: March 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Professional Staff Advisory Committee | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: March 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | March 4, 2026 |

| Topic | Audience | Presenter | Date of Presentation |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Invitation to Open Forum with Team Chair | University community | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: March-April 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | April 1, 2026 |
| Progress on the Self-Study: Discoveries and Recommendations | Board of Trustees | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: May 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | May 6, 2026 |
| Updates on the Self-Study Process | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: June 2026 |
| The Self-Study Report: Discoveries and Recommendations | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | September 2, 2026 |
| The Self-Study Report: Discoveries and Recommendations | Students | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: September 2026 |
| The Self-Study Report: Discoveries and Recommendations | Joint Cabinet | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: September 2026 |
| The Self-Study Report: Discoveries and Recommendations | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: September 2026 |
| The Self-Study Report: Discoveries and Recommendations | Professional Staff Advisory Committee | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: September 2026 |
| Preparing for the Team Visit | Faculty | Dr. Rachel Wolfe | October 7, 2026 |
| Preparing for the Team Visit | Joint Cabinet | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: October 2026 |
| Preparing for the Team Visit | Co-curricular & student support personnel | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: October 2026 |
| Preparing for the Team Visit | Professional Staff Advisory Committee | Dr. Ann Damiano | TBD: October 2026 |
| Preparing for the Team Visit | Students | Drs. Rachel Wolfe and Ann Damiano | TBD: October 2026 |

Evaluation Team Profile

Team Chair

The team chair should come from a tuition-dependent institution of a size similar to Utica University. This person should have experience at a college or university that primarily serves first generation students, where approximately one-third of its traditional students are student-athletes, and where roughly 40% are Pell-eligible.

Further, the team chair should be familiar with a comprehensive university that offers both liberal arts and professional/pre-professional degree programs; that awards both undergraduate and graduate degrees; and that has extension sites and distance education offerings.

Utica University prefers that the team chair is currently serving as a President.

Team Members

Ideally, team members would come from institutions similar to Utica University with respect to size and academic offerings. Team members should have expertise in the following areas: student success, especially with respect to students from marginalized groups; distance education and off-site education; programmatic accreditation; enrollment; academic portfolios; and governance.

Peer Institutions

Utica University's current peer and aspirant groups were determined prior to the previous self-study. At

that time, the institution was expanding its online offerings and geographic footprint. The University's change in planning priorities warranted a change of peer and aspirant institutions. Therefore, during the spring 2025 semester, the University's Institutional Effectiveness Committee, under the expert leadership of the Vice President for Enrollment Management and using IPEDS data, identified and ranked the variables to be used to select new peer and aspirant institutions. The committee will present these lists to the Board of Trustees for their approval at the first Board meeting in September 2025.

Using IPEDS data such as Carnegie Classification, academic offerings, enrollment data, admissions data, race/ethnicity of enrolled students, retention and graduation rates, number of Pell Grant recipients, average net price, endowment assets, athletic offerings, and faculty and staff resources, the committee selected the following peer and aspirant groups:

Peer Group

Daemen University

Bellarmino University

LaSalle University

Manhattanville College

Aurora University

Immaculata University

Rivier University

Regis University

Rockhurst University

Marymount University

Wilkes University

Walsh University

Robert Morris University

Molloy College

Gannon University

University of Indianapolis

Aspirant Group

Marywood University

DeSales University

St. John Fisher University

Saint Francis University

Moravian University

Salve Regina University

Competitor Groups

Using Clearinghouse Data, the committee further identified its competitor group. This group has been divided into public institutions and private institutions, but the greatest competition comes from the institutions that are part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system.

Public:

SUNY University at Albany

SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College

SUNY University at Brockport

SUNY University at Buffalo

SUNY College at Cortland

SUNY Oswego

SUNY Oneonta

SUNY Polytechnic Institute

SUNY Onondaga Community College

SUNY College at Potsdam

Private:

Mercy University

St. John Fisher University

Le Moyne College

Siena College

Hartwick College

Ithaca College

Russell Sage College

Nazareth College

Syracuse University

Annual Institutional Update Indicators and Metrics

Institutional data included in the self-study report will come from Institutional Research. This is to ensure the reliability of the data as well as to preserve the integrity of the data. The Required Evidence Inventory provides guidance on which indicators and metrics are relevant to individual standards.

The Annual Institutional Update Indicators and Metrics will be addressed in the chapters dedicated to specific standards, as indicated in the following table.

| AIU Indicators and Metrics | Standards |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Student Achievement | Standard I, Standard III, Standard IV, Standard V, |
| Annual Enrollment | Standard I, Standard II, Standard IV, |
| Financial Health | Standard I, Standard VI |
| Federal Financial Responsibility | Standard VI |

Managing the Evidence Inventory

Even prior to preparing for the self-study, Utica University's three assessment committees managed an evidence inventory for the accreditation standards relevant to their work. For example, the Academic Assessment Committee identified the documents, processes, and procedures for specific criteria related to Standard III and for all the criteria associated with Standard V. The Co-Curricular Assessment Committee monitored the evidence related to Standard IV and some of the criteria under Standard V, and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee completed the inventory for Standards I, II, VI, and VII. Each committee provided an updated evidence inventory periodically through its annual reporting process.

For the self-study, the evidence inventory will be managed by the Senior Associate Provost, the Institutional Research Associate, and a member of the Academic Assessment Committee.

The evidence is stored in a shared Google drive labeled "Middle States Evidence Inventory." Within this shared drive are individual folders for each of the seven accreditation standards.



Middle States Evidence I... ▾

2 people

Type ▾

People ▾

Modified ▾

Source ▾

Name ↑

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD I

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD II

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD III

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD IV

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD V

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD VI

📁 Middle States Self-Study STD VII

The evidence is organized by individual criterion; additional evidence relevant to the standard has been uploaded into a folder named “Other Evidence.” The following image captures the evidence inventory for Standard I:

Middle States Evidence... > Middle States Self-Stud... ▾

Type ▾

People ▾

Modified ▾

Source ▾

Name ↑

📁 Criteria 1 a & b

📁 Criteria 2 a - e

📁 Criteria 3

📁 Criteria 4

📁 Criteria 5 a - c

📁 Criteria 6

📁 Criteria 7

📁 Criteria 8

📁 Other Evidence

A Master Evidence Inventory Listing has been uploaded to the shared drive. Each accreditation standard has a designated worksheet that lists the name of the document and the criteria it aligns to. Each document title is linked to the specific document in the evidence inventory. Once a document is uploaded to the evidence folder, the title is added to the Master Evidence Inventory List and linked to the uploaded document.

As the self-study is being prepared, the contents of the Evidence Inventory will be reviewed, curated, and updated as appropriate.