

# St. Olaf College - MN

HLC ID 1404

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OPEN PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review

Review Date: 11/7/2022

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## Context and Nature of Review

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### Review Date

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11/7/2022

### Review Type:

Reaffirmation Review

### Scope of Review

- Reaffirmation Review
- Federal Compliance (if applicable)
- On-site Visit
- Multi-campus Visit (if applicable)

*There are no forms assigned.*

## Institutional Context

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Located in Northfield, Minnesota, Saint Olaf's School, founded by Norwegian Lutheran immigrants and named for Olav II Haraldsson, king of Norway from 1016 until 1030, was founded in 1874 for the purpose of offering a program of liberal studies to students preparing for careers in business, politics, the clergy, and other professions. In 1886 the name was changed to St. Olaf College. According to the College's website, it remains dedicated to the standards set by its Norwegian immigrant founders and a College of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Today, St. Olaf College enrolls slightly more than 3000 students and offers two bachelor-level programs: bachelor of arts and bachelor of music. Its students can choose from over forty majors.

St. Olaf College's last comprehensive visit was in May 2013 when it opted for the Open Pathway. Its mid-cycle review took place in November 2016, with neither the comprehensive review nor mid-cycle review requiring commission follow-up.

## Interactions with Constituencies

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President

President's Leadership Team (11)

Assurance Argument authors (6)

Criteria 1 and 2 open forum (15)

Criteria 3 and 4 open forum (35)

Criterion 5 open forum (21)

General Education Focus area--first meeting (11)

General Education Focus area--second meeting (4)

Assessment Focus area--first meeting (11)

Assessment Focus area--second meeting (13)

Board of Regents Meeting (4 in person and 2 on phone call)

Drop-in sessions (3)

Student tour guides (2)

## **Additional Documents**

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College's website

IPEDS

Minnesota government website

# 1 - Mission

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

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

## Rating

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Met

## Rationale

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The mission of St. Olaf College provides guidance to all in the community as to the institution's core purpose:

*St. Olaf College challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.*

The mission of the College clearly articulates the chief aims and aspirations of the institution. A broad, participatory process across campus in 2015-16 led to the development of the mission, and the Board of Regents approved the statement at its May 2016 meeting. St. Olaf College fulfills its mission by ensuring that the strategic plan—most recently approved by the Board in 2020—reflects the core values of the College as expressed in the mission. The College Wide Goals for Student Learning—STOGoals—ensure that the mission is integrated fully into the experience of St. Olaf students. Both the mission and the STOGoals reflect the College's commitment to changing in response to today's students and today's society.

The development of a new general education program, OLE Core, is a substantial achievement, providing strong evidence of the College's commitment to achieving its mission in the context of an

ever-changing world. The community takes pride in the new program, and the team saw detailed awareness of the new program, including its rationale and its learning goals, across the campus. Board members were clearly conversant on the topic and had engaged in rich discussions of the new program at an appropriate governance level and the students the team spoke with understood the broad aims of the new program.

The College will need to structurally support faculty assessment work to ensure that OLE Core meets its ambitious goals for student learning. The STOGGoals, while not conflicting with OLE Core, appear to be operating on a separate track and may need to be re-considered as an expression of the core values of the College for which all constituencies are responsible.

Academic offerings and student support services are consistent with the stated mission of St. Olaf College. Academic programs cross the broad range of liberal arts disciplines, and faculty take pride in that breadth: one faculty member noted that the College has “courageously defended” disciplines that don’t attract students but that extend the liberal arts core and enable the institution to achieve its mission. The team encountered great pride in the liberal arts mission in every area of the campus.

The First-Year Experience introduces students to STOGGoals. Student Life extends the work of the academic program in helping to ensure that students achieve the STOGGoals. The institution has undertaken significant work to ensure appropriate support for its growing number of students from diverse backgrounds, as evidenced by the increasing resources to support these students. The St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources (SOAR) orients all students in their first year, preparing them for success at the College. Plans to continue the program into the second year are promising.

Enthusiasm for the St. Olaf mission is evident across campus and is a distinctive component of the College’s culture. Faculty and staff report frequent conversations about the mission, so much so that the frequency can be surprising to those new to the community. The mission is present in multiple places on the institution’s website and is fully integrated into planning documents and goals statements. On a walk through campus, one encounters the mission repeatedly, on doors and displays. As related by a Board of Regents member, the mission is printed on a placard at each regent’s seat in board meetings as a reminder of its central importance to their work.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The core identity of St. Olaf College is based in liberal arts education situated within the Lutheran tradition, with its commitment to learning across the disciplines as a response, even an obligation, to grace that has not been earned, but given. The College's emphasis on a Lutheran understanding of vocation ensures that all students are challenged to reflect on their relationship with others and with their communities in the course of their years at the College. The institution's governing documents make clear that education has primacy over all, stating that St. Olaf College "shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary and educational purposes."

Institutional learning goals are centered on the impact that St. Olaf graduates will have on the world. Among the College-wide goals for student learning (STOGGoals) is the goal of "responsible interpersonal, civic, and global engagement," which students accomplish through both curricular and co-curricular experiences.

St. Olaf College expects faculty to "serve as models of civic engagement, enhance public discourse, and promote the consideration of individual and departmental interests in the larger context of the College's mission." Departments across campus require students to engage with the local community. According to the argument statement and verified through discussions on campus, 60% of St. Olaf students will have completed one or more Academic Civic Engagement Courses during their years at the College, learning within the framework of community engagement. St. Olaf College serves the Twin Cities through its Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search programs, and it also serves the Northfield, MN community by providing an opportunity for high school honors students to take courses with College faculty and students on St. Olaf's campus.

The College aims to influence the divides in American society today, in part through the St. Olaf Institute for Freedom and Community. The Institute promotes civil discourse by hosting speakers and panels from a range of political and cultural beliefs, promoting conversation about hard matters before society. The Institute, for example, recently sponsored a Red/Blue Workshop that brought students of different political beliefs together to build relationships despite deep ideological

disagreement, in the process helping students to move past the impulse of stereotyped thinking about those across the political divide.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College aims to prepare graduates who will “explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition” in the words of the mission statement. STOGGoals—assessed in programs across the campus, both curricular and co-curricular—advance these central aims in myriad ways, encouraging students toward rich reflection on their meaning and purpose in the world. St. Olaf's commitment to the faith life of students is rare amongst mainstream Colleges today. In a time when many institutions have moved away from curricular requirements in religion, for example, St. Olaf faculty doubled down in the most recent general education curriculum, requiring multiple courses that engage students in study and reflection on religion, faith, values, vocation, and ethics.

The College has worked diligently to address concerns related to diversity, equity and inclusiveness. As seen from IPEDS data and the College's dashboard reports, the diversity of the student body has grown—over the past decade, for new incoming first-year students to the College, the percentage of U.S. students of color or international students has increased from 22.8% (2013) to 31.7% (2022) while the percentage of first-generation students has also increased, from 14.8% (2013) to 20% (2022). During this time, the College has devoted increasing resources to ensure the success of all students but especially those from diverse backgrounds. SOAR began as an effort to support student-athletes and now supports all students at St. Olaf College.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

### Rationale

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The mission of St. Olaf College articulates the essential aims and aspirations of the institution and is central to College culture. The mission is regularly reviewed by the College community, as evidenced by a campus-wide review in 2016, which led to the Board of Regents approval of the current mission statement in May of that year. St. Olaf publicly articulates its mission as well as the broad goals to accomplish it.

The College's core identity is based in its commitment to excellence in liberal arts education, the ongoing exploration of faith and values, and the exploration of vocation within an inclusive and global community. Faculty and staff proudly describe St. Olaf's 'third path' between a sectarian and non-sectarian identity. The College's mission affirms this choice in situating excellence in the liberal arts within, first, the Lutheran tradition that, as Darrell Jodock writes, has an "emphasis on undeserved grace, encourages a sense of wonder, awe, and gratitude" and, second, the Lutheran understanding of vocational reflection that finds individual meaning and purpose in the relationship one has with community and values most behaviors and choices that benefit community. St. Olaf thus engages students in the vital work of deep reflection on the ways in which, to echo Frederick Buechner, their particular gifts meet the needs of the world.

The College has worked diligently to address concerns related to diversity, equity and inclusiveness. As the diversity of the student body has grown, resources have increased correspondingly to ensure the success of all students but especially those from diverse backgrounds.

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

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

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The evidence presented in the assurance argument clearly reflects St. Olaf College's efforts toward establishing policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

According to the assurance argument and the Board of Regents Bylaws, St. Olaf College clearly defines the Board of Regents responsibilities of governance to the institution. St. Olaf College clearly communicates its mission, expectations, and processes of governance in various publications for faculty, staff, and students. The Code of Conduct defined in St. Olaf's Staff Handbook outlines the institution's commitment to honest, ethical, and moral standards of operation. Further, the St. Olaf Honor Code and Pledge demonstrates a collaborative effort between faculty and students to ensure adherence to honest and ethical principles. The assurance argument provides additional evidence of this pledge through the academic integrity statement, which identifies five fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

The institution identifies the responsibility and financial functions of the Board of Regents in the Board of Regents Bylaws. The audited documents reflected in the assurance argument demonstrate St. Olaf College's utilization of external constituencies to provide fair practices that support the College's financial functions. Financial statements were assessed by Baker Tilly and reviewed by the Board of Regents Finance, Audit, and Investment committees. Committee minutes presented in the assurance argument show evidence of a procedural effort toward appropriately reviewing the institution's financials and strategically utilizing these data to define future operating budgets.

The College reinforces its stance on ethical and moral standards in the Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks, as well as the Student Employment Handbook. Clear guidelines for prospective employees are outlined in the Background Check Policy. Further, students who work with minors or

who work with Residence Life or Public Safety may be subject to a background check. Members of the campus community are expected to act “legally and ethically” as defined in the Staff Handbook. Various training opportunities, provided for faculty and staff to properly supervise students and conduct workshops on sexual misconduct prevention, reinforce St. Olaf’s effort toward ensuring a fair and ethical campus environment. The institution utilizes an independent organization, the Campus Conduct Hotline, to report behaviors that may be “harmful, unethical, unlawful or other concerning activities occurring on campus.” Additional evidence of the College’s intentional effort toward equipping their faculty, staff, and students is the Anti-Racism Training facilitated by the Washington Consulting Group in February of 2021.

St. Olaf College demonstrates a commitment to shared governance through various committees of faculty, staff, and students. The Faculty Governance Committee is an example of this collaboration and is designed to “organize and monitor faculty governance and represents the faculty to the administration and Board of Regents.” In addition, students are also charged with adjudicating allegations of academic dishonesty through the St. Olaf College Honor Council.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The evidence presented in the assurance argument demonstrates that St. Olaf College provides clear and complete information to its students and to the public.

Student academic and disciplinary policies and services are easily accessible in the Student Handbook and on St. Olaf's website. The Academic Advising website is another resource available to students to help them better understand and navigate their educational experiences. Prospective students are given many opportunities to become better acquainted with the campus environment and academic offerings through online virtual tour opportunities and events held at off-campus locations.

Additionally, the institution provides a variety of resources for current and prospective students to determine the overall cost of education and identify financial assistance. The Affording St. Olaf website provides a clear and informative resource for potential students as they navigate financial aid possibilities. Further, the College extends the value of financial responsibility to students through the Financial Responsibility Agreement that is signed prior to the start of each semester.

St. Olaf College clearly defines its affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) in the Articles of Incorporation and the College Bylaws. At least forty percent of the elected regents must be members of ELCA, and a majority of the elected regents must be either members of ELCA or another denomination with which the ELCA has established full communion. The College reinforces its longstanding relationship with the Lutheran Church and relationship with the ELCA on the College website. Further, the governance structure of St. Olaf College is clearly communicated through the Board of Regents section of the College website. Discussion with the Board affirmed a collaborative relationship with the ELCA, as demonstrated by the joint agreement to revise College Bylaws to be more inclusive within the Christian tradition as a way to diversify the current presidential search candidates.

St. Olaf identifies the Higher Learning Commission as the accrediting agency on the College website and in the College Catalog.

The institution recognizes the value of diverse learning experiences and defines these learning

opportunities as STOGGoals, focused on Self Development, Vocational Discernment, Critical Thinking, Integration and Application, Broad Knowledge, Specialized Knowledge, Communication and Collaboration, and Responsible Engagement. Further, faculty and staff were instrumental in developing the OLE Core Curriculum and felt a strong connection with the collaborative effort to create a robust program, according to discussions during meetings on campus. The Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry work demonstrates St. Olaf's intentional approach to supporting the student's academic progress through research. In addition, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research expands on research opportunities for those students in data science and statistics. Each of these programs highlight the value of faculty-student interaction as a key element in academic progress and overall development.

The Academic Civic Engagement (ACE) program is an example of St. Olaf's responsibility to the area communities and of how these experiences support student growth. ACE courses are woven through the curriculum and have engaged approximately 60% of students, according to the argument statement and verified while on campus. The Piper Center for Vocation and Career provides students with the necessary space to better understand how to use the liberal arts experience as a catalyst to navigating career-oriented skill sets.

St. Olaf College reinforces its faith-based affiliation with the Lutheran Church through various co-curricular experiences. Various faculty, staff, administrators, and Board members commented on St. Olaf's "open" approach to helping students better understand diverse beliefs and gain a well-rounded biblical worldview. The Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community reinforces this approach by providing national and global thought leadership. The Nourishing Vocation Project shows evidence of the institution's efforts toward engaging the surrounding community by providing educational opportunities for area congregations to better serve the gospel.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The Board of Regents demonstrates a commitment to upholding the mission of St. Olaf College. Board members expressed a clear understanding of institutional operations and supporting the College's leadership in pursuing high levels of engagement. The Board of Regents Bylaws provide clear policies and procedures to support College operations and strategic advancement. Discussions with various faculty and staff support the institution's defined governing structure as stated in the Bylaws. Board minutes reflect an intentional effort to focus on strategic direction and addressing high-level challenges that influence campus operations. The New Regent Orientation Meeting Book provides evidence of the Board's efforts to equip new members with the knowledge of the Board's essential fiduciary duties and leadership in strategic direction. In addition, new Regents are assigned a mentor to provide guidance and support during their first-year experience.

The Board of Regents' committee charters summarize the work of its ten committees to focus on strategic direction and identify best practices for decision making. The faculty, staff, and administrators of St. Olaf recognized these committees as part of the Board's governance structure and acknowledged campus community involvement with these committees during the HLC visit. Board members recognized the value of collaboration with the campus community and expressed their desire to remain mission-focused when making decisions. The Board reports reinforce this desire and accurately reflect the narrative expressed during the HLC visit. The President's Leadership Team expressed strong support of the President's leadership and Board's involvement with institutional decisions. Members of the Board and leadership team commented on the collaborative efforts necessary during the pandemic, complimenting the campus-wide effort.

According to the assurance argument, the Board is an active participant in the institution's internal and external constituencies and makes decisions based upon counsel from various advisory

committees. The most recent Board Report from October 12-14, 2022, provides an example of the Board's internal awareness of institutional strategic initiatives focused on academic excellence, community living, and fiscal responsibility. In addition, the Board and others acknowledged the importance of the ELCA as one of the main external influences on the mission and values of the College. Other external constituencies highlighted in the argument include St. Olaf alumni as active members of the Board of Regents and Alumni Board. The Regents are recruited by the Nominating and Governance Committee that accurately aligns its work with the mission, strategic vision, and values of the College. This representation was confirmed by the Board members present during the visit.

The Articles of Incorporation and Article XI of the Bylaws clearly define conflicts of interest for Regents and other key members involved in institutional affairs. Further overview and investigation of potential conflicts of interest are the purview of the Audit Committee. A Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Form is provided for review and signed each year by each Regent and each member of the President's Leadership Team.

The Board of Regents Bylaws clearly define the responsibilities of the governing body to provide oversight of institutional operations, allowing the President to exercise administrative duties. Further, the faculty at St. Olaf College have the primary responsibility to manage academic matters with the final approval granted to the President and the Board. The rights and responsibilities of the faculty are clearly defined in the Faculty Manual and accurately reflect the College bylaws.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Academic freedom is clearly communicated in the Faculty Manual and defined as “the rights of the teacher and of the student for freedom in learning.” Academic freedom is described in the Faculty Manual as a “free search for truth and its free expression” with “full” freedom to educate students. The Full-Time Faculty Appointments section of the Faculty Manual states an “understanding of the relationship of religion to learning” which does not align with the institution’s stance on Academic Freedom, something the College should consider aligning.

The Student Handbook accurately reflects St. Olaf College’s stance on academic freedom as expressed in the Faculty Manual. A student’s freedom of expression may be recognized to a “reasoned exception to the data or views offered.” However, the student is responsible to actively learn the material presented. Students who feel their academic freedom has been violated may seek to appeal such matters to the chair of the department, or the affiliated Associate Dean.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The Faculty Manual clearly defines the ethical responsibility of the educator including, but not limited to, professional conduct, conflict of interest, scholarly practices, social behavior, and civic duty. The office of the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer clearly defines the expectation of Conflict of Interest for College employees. Scholarly practices are guided by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and defined by the St. Olaf Statement of Ethical Principles, which summarizes the ethical practices of research involving individuals and the protection of said subjects. Further, Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training is required of faculty and staff investigators for all Type 2 and Type 3 projects. Campus facilities such as laboratories, art studios, and theater spaces align with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) guidelines and report necessary safety data sheets to ensure a safe and healthy campus community experience. In addition, vertebrate animal research is steered and reviewed by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, which follows the University of Minnesota guidelines and policies.

St. Olaf College students are also educated on ethical responsibility involving research. The Student Handbook defines dishonesty and the implications of plagiarism and falsification of information. The Handbook clearly identifies the punitive sanctions involved with such violations. Clear policies and procedures regarding academic dishonesty are supported by the reference librarians who spend a class period in First-Year Seminars to help students better understand the research process and become orientated to the physical space of the library. Students have opportunities to apply research through the Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry's (CURI) expansion to fine arts, humanities, natural and social science educational opportunities outside the classroom. Students are required to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research Training to assist with awareness and application of ethical principles in research activities.

Investigations of misconduct involving research and scholarship are clearly defined for faculty in the Faculty Handbook. Dismissal, sanctions, and termination procedures are evident in the Faculty Manual and specifically acknowledge "incompetence or dishonesty in teaching or research" as adequate causes for dismissal of a faculty member. In addition, St. Olaf College shows intentional

effort toward addressing integrity concerns regarding financial conflicts of interest The Associate Provost facilitates investigations of perceived conflicts of interests and determines the actions necessary in the event of a violation.

St. Olaf College also addresses the need to hold students to a high standard. All examinations ask students to sign the Honor Code and Pledge, acknowledging the ethical responsibility of the student to ensure the “longevity and efficacy” of St. Olaf’s educational experience. Faculty support this honor system with the option to file an Allegation of Academic Dishonesty form in the event of a potential academic violation. The Student Handbook and online publications support the procedural process involved in adjudicating allegations of research misconduct or academic dishonesty.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

### Rationale

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The evidence presented in the assurance argument indicates that St. Olaf College acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible. The leadership at the College values an inclusive governance model and actively involves members of the campus community throughout the process. St. Olaf College accurately communicates its mission, campus policies, procedures, and financial costs in written and online publications. No evidence suggests that the institution is operating with a lack of integrity in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions. The institution clearly communicates the value of academic integrity through various publications and responds with ethically sound practices and applications.

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

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

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

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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A review of sample syllabi demonstrates instructional level of courses are appropriate for the degree programs offered and the institution's mission as a liberal arts College. For example, the syllabus for PHIL 233 on existentialism, requires traditional texts such as Sartre's *No Exit*, a typical introductory text to this subject. The course supports the attributes carried in the OLE Core Intended Learning Outcomes and the traditions of the College's mission by engaging students in "dialogue," introducing students to "universal concepts" while also supporting skill-based outcomes in interpretive reading. The assignments and assessment structure support these goals at the introductory level. CHEM 255/256 also supports the goals of the liberal arts by expecting students to be "multidimensional problem solvers" who "express understanding" and take "strategic risks" in workshop and presentation sessions as they learn about chemical instrumentation. This course syllabus integrates the supplemental instructional model in its syllabus. Music 236, a practicum course, upholds the liberal arts tradition by investigating "current issues in church music ministry" while teaching percussion and hand bell techniques. Students are evaluated on book reviews and worship planning as well as performance technique. While the courses that support the new general education curriculum have intended learning outcomes consistent with that curriculum on the syllabi, other course syllabi do not consistently have clearly articulated learning goals even though they are consistently supporting the College's mission and institutional learning outcomes. Internship courses for credit, which are coordinated through the Piper Center for Vocation and Experiential Learning, are supervised and evaluated through a learning plan that is overseen by faculty.

St. Olaf College assures the rigor and appropriate level of curriculum offerings through a program review and assessment process that is approved through faculty governance committees, with annual

reviews to the Provost. The extensive ten-year program review process melds the program self-study and external review process with a carefully delineated assessment process of intended learning outcomes (ILOs), thereby assuring that the learning outcomes are being assessed and programs are using this information to assure program quality. In conversations with faculty at the focus sessions on assessment and the new OLE Core General Education Curriculum, as well as the open forum for criteria 3 and 4, faculty clearly articulated how ILOs and the assessment process supported course development and approval, new program development, and new course proposals. In these same sessions, faculty articulated how assessment and other data could be used effectively to obtain resources and provide evidence of the value of their courses and programs to themselves and to others. As evidence of the importance faculty place on assessment of learning outcomes, faculty initiated and approved the establishment of an Assessment Committee as a separate committee in its governance structure that works in tandem with the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee's tools provided to faculty for program and course development ask for plans for assessment of ILOs as part of the process for approval. All program and course approvals require articulation of ILOs that echo or support the institutional goals. In this way, the consistency of the curriculum is maintained. Faculty and program leaders are provided with sufficient support to develop their assessment-driven curricular changes through the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IE-A) Office. Conversations with faculty throughout the review team visit demonstrated respect for the support provided by the IE-A Office. Faculty leaders on the Curriculum Committee reported that adjustments to ILOs were the most frequent curricular change made through assessment, showing that attention is being paid to the level of learning outcomes and suitability for level of courses within majors. The leaders and faculty at the open forum for criteria 3 and 4 confirmed that the curriculum is current in that significant numbers of new courses, approximately 25 in the last term alone, are being proposed and approved through the Curriculum Committee. A review of faculty meeting minutes of October 13, 2016 demonstrates the faculty initiative to update the General Education Curriculum, first established in 1990s. This vote led to three years of work for the General Education Task Force, which led to the adoption of a new general education curriculum, the OLE Core, approved by the faculty on November 7, 2019. Conversations with faculty during the review visit verified the faculty's commitment to and enthusiasm for the OLE Core, which they described as being more flexible, student-centered, and more relevant. The OLE Core goals were described by faculty as being the curricular articulation of the institutional goals. Faculty advisors also expressed at the site visit that the new general education curriculum was easier to explain to students, less cumbersome to complete (down to 14-17 courses vs. 22), and easier to align with students' interests. St. Olaf College's governance structure and administrative systems are designed to support a rigorous, responsive, and appropriate curriculum to support its institutional goals and mission.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Prior to the adoption in 2019 of St. Olaf College's current general education program, the OLE Core, the faculty voted on questions and principles to guide the development of the general education curriculum (OLE Core). According to faculty, these questions were designed to articulate the value of the College's liberal arts mission in terms that would improve collaboration among departments and programs, help students make connections among their courses, and improve communication with parents and the broader community about the value of the education St. Olaf College offers. The "open, linked, and enduring questions" that guided the curriculum development are broad as well as value-based to reflect the College's faith-based history as well as its liberal arts mission. Each course in the OLE Core has articulated intended learning outcomes that are skill-based to help students grow in their ability to address these big questions. Before proposing a detailed curriculum, the faculty agreed on principles that provided the structure for sustainability—such as the curriculum must be "resource sensitive" and be "forward looking" and would include the resources and faculty interests of current and future faculty by having sufficient "breadth." Student development was also considered through a commitment to developing student agency and an understanding of inclusivity and equity. These principles are evident in the final curriculum in requirements ranging from Power and Race, Ethical Reasoning in Context, and conversations across religious traditions as well as writing and speaking skills requirements, and breadth requirements in social science, science, and the humanities while also including an experiential requirement for students to demonstrate their "agency." The OLE Core was developed through a thoughtful, thorough, and strategic process that began with a set of principles and framework of values that reflect the College's mission.

The new First-Year Experience, as evidenced by materials in the assurance section and verified during discussions with both faculty and staff while on campus, provides the basis for communication of the OLE Core to students. In the First-Year Seminar, the principles of dialogue, examination of critical questions, appreciation of living and learning in a diverse community, and strategies for self-reflection reinforce the goals of the OLE Core. This seminar is accompanied by a peer mentor network and program that provides the support necessary for all students to engage confidently in the expectations of the general education curriculum. First-year students also take a Writing and Rhetoric course where these principles of the OLE Core are further developed through writing and collaboration skills. The assessment plan for the First-Year Experience will provide the feedback necessary to develop and improve communication strategies for the OLE Core. By the end of the First-Year Experience, it is expected that students are educated in the standards and expectations of the OLE Core. Both faculty and students are aware of and understand the OLE Core.

This new core curriculum will help the College address some of the outcomes of the Learning Goals Questionnaire which showed some minor weaknesses in students' exposure to diverse student community. The OLE Core will also draw on the outcomes of the College's Mellon Grant Initiative to address the need for more engaged conversation and sustained dialogue about issues of diversity and inclusion. The OLE Core, according to the College Catalog and affirmed during discussion while on campus, has a requirement on Power and Race that directly addresses equity issues in U.S. societies. Additionally, other core requirements have aspects of inclusivity embedded within their structure and ILOs. For example, the prior general education requirement of completion of a Biblical and Theological studies course focused on Christianity. The current OLE Core does not have this prior requirement, but does have a one-course requirement on Christian Theology in Dialogue that focuses on the exploration of comparative religious traditions and tools for discussing religion across differences. Similarly, for the Ethical Reasoning in Context requirement, faculty must show in their course proposals how they plan to engage in a range of perspectives that will expect students to "identify" their own ethical views at the introductory level and then "critique" them at the upper-level courses. The new First-Year Seminars require that students practice inclusive collaboration. Faculty during the site visit expressed enthusiasm for these changes as they allow for broader faculty participation and more engaging instructional design. In these ways, the St. Olaf College core curriculum supports global perspectives and inclusive learning to prepare its graduates for a multicultural world.

Students have many opportunities to engage in scholarship. Over a ten-year period, the College reports an average of 88 students and 37 faculty members collaborated on research through the Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry program annually. The College's website shows a sufficient variety of projects, presentations, publications, and awards. Students participate as fellows in the Center for Interdisciplinary Research, are supported by several major faculty grants in the STEM fields to attend professional conferences and to work on original lab-based research, and are supported through the Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry programs to work on research across the curriculum. Students are well-supported financially and equitably to engage in research through several grants and fellowships, some of which are specifically designed to support low-income students.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College has met high strategic goals for diversifying faculty and staff. According to the Strategic Plan 2021-22 Outcomes Report, St. Olaf has increased its hiring of domestic faculty of color three-fold over the past ten years, averaging 32% of all tenure-track faculty hires from Fall 2020 through Fall 2022. The Vice President for Equity and Inclusion meets regularly with each search committee to ensure that strategies for recruitment and retention of diverse faculty are prioritized. While the outcomes for staff hires have not been as strong, the College has met its goals in diversifying its staff through new hires, especially in 2019 and 2020, according to the Strategic Plan Outcomes Report. The College has the administration in place to improve these efforts through continued collaboration at the senior staff level by the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and the Vice President for Human Resources, according to the October 2021 comments on the Strategic Plan Outcomes Report. Given St. Olaf's location and student population, St. Olaf has made great strides in diversifying its total employee population to 16% domestic persons of color for a student population of 22% students of color, according to the DEI Dashboard, and has aspirational goals to increase the diversity of both faculty and staff populations that it continues to measure and support through the Strategic Plan.

According to available IPEDS data and noted in the assurance argument, St. Olaf College has



sufficient faculty and staff to support its mission and curriculum. Over the past five years, the College has reported a 12:1 student to faculty teaching ratio and also supports faculty for outside of classroom responsibilities through sufficient course releases (55 each year). The faculty are supported by department chairs, divisional deans, and an institutional research staff of four staff members. The Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts is run by faculty through this course release structure. At the site visit, faculty shared that they are paid sufficient stipends to engage in assessment training for development of rubrics and assessment of course artifacts to support course and institutional assessment requirements. These FTE for faculty responsibilities outside of the classroom have been maintained over a five-year period. St. Olaf College has a faculty culture of significant involvement through its governance structure, its assessment culture, and its curricular/co-curricular collaborations. During the site visit, the Provost shared a strategic staffing modeling plan that includes sufficient FTE to support the change to the new general education curriculum, including the addition of the First-Year Seminar requirement. St. Olaf College supports this faculty activity sufficiently for all the faculty's responsibilities.

St. Olaf College maintains continuity in its faculty to support the College's mission. Nearly 70% of the full-time faculty are tenured or tenure track according to the Faculty Profile Dashboard report. Maintaining a faculty core is essential for supporting the governance structure which includes faculty involvement from the curricular to the Board of Regents levels. All curricular decisions are made at faculty meetings where all full-time faculty vote. St. Olaf College includes term faculty with appointments greater than half-time in curricular decisions as they have voting privileges and can serve on committees. The College's faculty is both sufficient and stable to support its mission and curriculum.

St. Olaf College's faculty are highly qualified, and the College has policies in place to ensure this will remain the case. According to information provided in the assurance arguments as well as data available on IPEDS, 95% of the full-time teaching faculty hold terminal degrees in their fields, many from top-ranking graduate programs. Teaching specialists and Special Appointment faculty are held to similar qualifications as tenured-faculty in terms of classroom instruction as stated in the Faculty Manual. This faculty appointment structure supports a curriculum with some pre-professional programs in nursing, kinesiology, social work, and education. In departments and programs where appropriate, St. Olaf has professional association approval for its programs. St. Olaf's faculty staffing structure and qualifications of faculty are sufficient to maintain its curriculum.

The review system for St. Olaf College faculty is rigorous at the annual and tenure/promotion levels, according to the Faculty Manual and affirmed during discussions while on campus. Faculty are reviewed by both department chairs and associate deans as well as the Provost. Student course evaluations and randomized student survey data are used in the assessment process to minimize the bias embedded in course evaluations recognized by St. Olaf on its Comprehensive Reappointment Review webpage. As stated on the Comprehensive Reappointment Review webpage, student survey questions are developed on the department level but administered and analyzed by the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Office, maintaining objectivity in the review process. Reviews by chairs, other department faculty, and divisional deans reduce personal bias while maintaining a culture wherein specialists in the faculty member's field are the primary source of review. St. Olaf faculty have clear and transparent guidelines and expectations for faculty review at all levels, including special appointments and teaching specialists, all published and publicly accessible on their website. Students, staff, and community members, then, are also fully informed about the faculty review process. Tenure-track faculty have comprehensive written reviews at the end of their two probationary periods—end of second year and fourth years. These reviews are substantive written

reviews, match the promotion expectations for tenure, and involve multiple constituencies—students, department faculty, department chairs and divisional deans. Tenured faculty are also reviewed through course evaluations and their own professional development plan constructed in consultation with department and administrative leaders so that tenured faculty are also supported in their continual renewal and development. Special appointment and teaching specialist faculty follow a review process similar in structure and rigor as tenure-track faculty. St. Olaf through its policies and procedures supports the mission of the College by making direct connections between teaching/advising expectations and the College's mission. The STOG goals are reflected in the definitions for evaluation of teaching and advising provided on the Comprehensive Review website: assignments and classroom activity that support, guide, and challenge intellectual and personal development, moral/ethical discernment, dialogue and respectful debate, and commitment to meaningful action through thoughtful reflection. St. Olaf's faculty review processes and procedures support the faculty in meeting the institutional mission and goals.

St. Olaf College supports faculty development as teachers, advisors, members of the faculty governance structure, and as intellectuals and researchers, according to evidence included in the argument statement and verified through discussions. The Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts (CILA) provides support on instruction, beginning with the New Faculty seminar. CILA also provides support for advising with special sessions to support new and continuing development of advisors. To support faculty investment in an assessment culture that supports teaching and learning, CILA also has programs on how to collect meaningful feedback and data to make teaching adjustments and revisions. During a site visit meeting, the faculty leaders of CILA shared changes they made to the program this year based on faculty feedback to be more inclusive of staff with teaching roles (librarians and CAAS support staff), including changes in their program schedule and types of programs. CILA functions separately from the Associate Dean and chair structure to promote quality teaching and learning across campus outside of the role of assessors of faculty teaching competency. In addition to the sabbatical leave policy, the Provost's office supports course and instructional development through a number of specific annual grant opportunities. Each faculty member is provided a travel budget to attend conferences or other professional development opportunities without having to apply to the Provost for a specific grant. All faculty, including term faculty, can apply for additional travel funds through a specific process. Associate Deans also have funds available to support faculty in specific projects that extend beyond the annual guaranteed funding sources. The Faculty Life Committee oversees sabbatical and pre-tenure leave requests as well as oversees a substantive Professional Development Grant program for pedagogical and curricular projects. All faculty, including part-time and term faculty, are eligible to apply for these grants. Information about all opportunities is available to all faculty through the Provost's Resources for Professional Development website. Faculty who wish to pursue government or foundational grants to support their research have the resources of three full-time staff in the Office of Government, Foundation, and Corporate Relations. The website for this Office states that they have facilitated over 300 faculty research grants. The Faculty Life Committee provides resources solely through the faculty governance system, so that not all resources are controlled by the Office of the Provost. Several staff who have teaching or instructional support responsibilities, such as librarians and staff in the Center for Advising and Academic Support, shared at the site visit several opportunities to attend professional meetings and workshops annually with the support of the College. The resources to support faculty development and research are readily available, accessible, and inclusive of faculty appointment and area of scholarship, and serve faculty at all stages of their career, beginning with pre-tenure semester leaves.

Offices that provide student support are sufficiently staffed with well-qualified personnel. During the

site visit, staff from the CAAS shared their professional backgrounds, which included professional memberships, completed degrees or certifications in their fields, and years of professional experience within and outside of St. Olaf. Librarians and CAAS staff shared that they feel supported in their professional development in their departments. CAAS staff have specialties in English language development, writing pedagogies, working with first generation and low-income students, and experience with supplemental instruction. This diversity in professional backgrounds allows the support staff to work as a team within CAAS and continue to develop their own specialties to maintain the broadest possible support for the faculty and the student population. They manage a total of over 400 tutors across all instructional programs at the College. CAAS keeps comprehensive data on accessibility and effectiveness in terms of improvement in grades as well as retention and course completion rates showing high levels of success. In a meeting during the site visit, staff from CAAS shared that they have not had any faculty complaints or student complaints about the quality of tutoring they offer. However, they also do not have an assessment and development plan for their tutors, so the effectiveness of tutor training and processes is not yet assessed. CAAS staff are well-qualified, diverse in the specialties they bring to the team, effective, and highly utilized by faculty for instructional support.

CAAS and the Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts provide training and support for staff and faculty advisors. CAAS staff work with faculty to provide support for summer course registration and provide additional coaching to students in need of such support through its three TRIO-funded programs. Faculty who attended a focus group meeting on advising shared that they work as an advising team with staff from CAAS to provide holistic advising support that includes more than course selection advice, so that students are fully aware of the support services available to them for their academic success. This begins in the summer with the newly developed SOAR program where students find connections and belonging in learning communities that extend into a peer-advising program for their First-Year Experience courses: First-Year Seminar and Writing and Rhetoric courses. During the site visit, faculty who teach in these courses not only felt supported by CAAS and SOAR leadership but also by the training that the peer advisors had regarding all resources available at the College both in the curricular and co-curricular programs. Faculty shared confidence in a collaborative advising model that occurs in the new First-Year Experience program and are piloting various ways to integrate advising and academic engagement. Plans are underway for assessing and developing the First-Year Experience Program. A first look at SOAR outcomes provided in the SOAR Assessment Plan shows that the program is already making a difference in students' senses of community on campus. The supplemental instruction program has clear evidence of supporting retention and engagement of students from low-income backgrounds and domestic students of color. These outcomes have led to a recent expansion of CAAS staff so that these programs can continue to expand, develop, and use data to guide program change to help the College meet its ambitious retention goals articulated in the Board of Regents strategic plan, and the expectations articulated in the four-year plan for student development--For Every Ole—that is the work of a Presidential task force approved by the Board of Regents in May, 2022 and implemented in the Fall of 2022.

Academic support extends beyond the CAAS to the co-curricular programs. The Piper Center for Vocation and Career supports faculty in providing internships and workplace research opportunities for students to meet the OLE Core requirement on vocational discernment and experiential learning. Athletic coaches are reviewed on their support of the academic lives of their players through a survey of all student athletes at the end of each season. The Director of Athletics reports on the findings of this survey to the Board of Regents. The Student Life Division tracks the results of academic engagement during orientation and the first-year transition. During the site visit, leaders in student life shared that recent responses to analyzed data resulted in a new position in student life focusing

on transition outcomes, including academic outcomes. In addition, the Vice President for Student Life shared during the site visit that he recently recommended changes in the membership of the faculty Student Life Committee to include the Director of the CAAS so that academic success programs and concerns will remain at the forefront of discussions about student life programming. St. Olaf's faculty are supported by staff in meeting academic outcomes within their courses, in the OLE Core, and in meeting institutional goals.

While St. Olaf College does provide opportunities for faculty-guided student research, the HEDS Alumni Survey 2020-2021 Frequency and Indicator Report with a 21% overall response rate, shows that approximately 50% of St. Olaf alumni survey participants report "never" working with faculty on research at the College. Approximately 17% said that they were involved with faculty on research "rarely." While the Assurance Argument did report on student research, it did not report directly on the number of independent studies or independent research courses, which would directly indicate support of student-driven inquiry. However, a review of the website revealed that the College has multiple opportunities for summer research projects. In some cases, students are provided funding to work on inquiry projects in workplace settings in cohorts according to the Piper Center for Vocation and Career webpage.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Supported by evidence found in the assurance argument as well as many discussions in meeting on campus, it is clear that St. Olaf College supports a comprehensive and well-staffed Center for Advising and Academic Support (CAAS) that works with students beginning with the transition to the College through to graduation. While all students have access to all tutoring programs totaling over 400 peer advisors and tutors, CAAS has specific programs to support the students who historically have not been as well connected as other students to academic resources—students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, first generation students, and students with disabilities. A report from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment that reviews special initiatives for these groups by CAAS shows an impact on retention and other academic success outcomes. Recent expansion of programs, staff, and services further illustrates institutional confidence in the services that CAAS provides.

CAAS staff spans several important specialty areas for which the Office has primary responsibility while working with other areas of the College collaboratively to provide holistic student support. CAAS staffs an English language proficiency expert for St. Olaf's international student population and multilingual students and student success coaches with expertise in study skills instruction and motivation, along with experts in supplemental instruction across the disciplines taught at the College. CAAS also staffs a Director of the Writing Center who supports the multi-course, developmental writing curriculum in the new general education curriculum. Additionally, St. Olaf College is home to several TRIO-funded programs with staff specifically trained in providing first generation and low-income students academic and wrap-around support services. The new TRIO Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities program supplements the existing Disability and Access staff and services and includes student Peer leaders who can guide students who are already challenged to access the additional support that they need, including helping students advocate for themselves with faculty and staff. During the site visit, faculty said that they valued the

support of CAAS staff to help them advise more holistically and developmentally. As one faculty member put it, while advisors may go on leave, the advising support provided by staff in CAAS will always be there for these students, providing the continuity they need to achieve their academic goals and for the College to meet its ambitious retention goals. During summer advising and registration, CAAS staff members work with faculty-designed assessment surveys and tests/tools to engage students in picking the courses that best reflect their academic backgrounds. Some versions of “gateway” courses in writing, calculus, chemistry, and biology are specifically designed with embedded workshops and are carefully integrated with supplemental instruction opportunities. These courses do not slow progress in any major, rather they provide the necessary support to help some students catch up in the skills necessary for success in courses to follow. This developmental instructional model works, in part, because CAAS advisors and trained peer advisors are there to support course schedule decision-making. The College’s St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources program (SOAR) integrates understanding of the academic expectation and resources of the College with important personal and social development opportunities. This program, first piloted in the Athletic Department, and then expanded to serve all students at the College, is already showing positive results in the survey assessment. Faculty advisors are also available, starting with summer registration, but the College is working toward a model where students will find academic advising and support across campus, including librarians, athletic coaches, and Piper Center for Vocation and Career staff. The Board of Regents September 2021 Visioning Task Force Report has as its first priority the construction and assessment of a four-year advising model that integrates academic advising with all student resources. This is further developed in the For Every Ole plan written by senior leaders in academics and student life and endorsed by the Board of Regents. One key component of the plan is a fully articulated, collaborative advising model that can reach “every Ole.” All students will be academically supported by the full community with the CAAS staff and assessment framework guiding the development of advising capabilities in all offices and programs.

Faculty advisors alone hold responsibility for all advising within the majors and department chairs for certifying completion of majors, concentrations, and programs of study, but they are not alone in supporting the other goals for student development, including vocational discernment, self-assessment, goal setting, and resiliency skills. Faculty in the new First-Year Experience courses are piloting various ways to structure their courses and advising work to reflect the work of the CAAS staff and project SOAR. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment is in the process of developing an assessment plan for the First-Year Experience that will include assessment of this advising model. They have begun by clearly articulating the objectives and outcomes expected of faculty advisors in the Advising Syllabus. This document provides the outcomes structure for assessment of a new advising model. The document also aligns advising outcomes with the developmental goals outlined in the For Every Ole strategic document. St. Olaf College has the resources and has the planning in place to ensure that all students are participating equitably in its advising and academic support programs. The website will need to address changes to the advising model so that students, parents, and community members can be best informed about what to expect of advisors at the College. Another challenge will be upholding a collaborative advising model through effective reporting and communication systems. During the site visit, faculty and staff shared a first step in improving communication systems through revisions to the early alert process to support the new advising model and expectations.

St. Olaf College offers developmental courses and academic supports designed for its student population. One example of this is the design and implementation of the writing program. The program has both full-credit courses and partial-credit workshops taught in conjunction with full-credit writing courses to meet the needs of the College’s international, multilingual, and variously

prepared students without slowing progress to graduation. Internally developed assessments guide student placement in the various writing program offerings. The April 27, 2020, *To Include to Excel Report on Supporting Diverse Writers: Assessing Learning and Learning Outcomes in Writing 107 and 110* includes grade analysis and focus group summaries that show these introductory writing courses support success in subsequent writing courses. Grades in these introductory courses can then be reliably used to advise students into the spring writing offerings.

St. Olaf College's CAAS staffs hundreds of tutors who support hundreds of course sections either through individualized tutoring or in group tutoring (supplemental instruction (SI)) sessions. These tutors are all trained and supervised by professional staff in the CAAS. CAAS has a full-time professional coordinator of its SI program as well as a coordinator for the Writing Center. Additionally, St. Olaf College has four full-time disability and access specialists that ensure students have self-advocacy and learning style support in addition to learning accommodations throughout their academic careers. St. Olaf's students have sufficient and accessible resources for academic support outside of the classroom and beyond faculty office hours.

St. Olaf College provides special advising support for post-graduate programs in health care through its Pre-Health Studies program. The College Catalog provides specific advice as to which courses to take to prepare for various programs in addition to six specific faculty advisors, and directions for internship opportunities to prepare for application to medical programs. Students interested in preparing for these post-graduation programs have clear information, advising support, and available co-curricular programs.

According to evidence provided in the assurance argument and affirmed while on campus, approximately 170 first generation students each year are supported by credit-bearing summer bridge programs, one-on-one advising, including on-campus job and financial counseling, and access to academic tutoring support. Additional extensive grant-funded programs support post-graduate program preparation, research, and professional conference attendance targeted to support students of color and low-income students.

St. Olaf College has the resources and infrastructure to support teaching and learning. According to evidence found in the assurance argument and confirmed through discussions on campus and a campus tour, the libraries support traditional liberal arts primary research and the bachelor in music degree in music courses through its special collections and archives, such as medieval manuscripts and over 25,000 music scores, and supports creative learning and research opportunities through the Digital Scholarship Center which houses a maker space as well as video and virtual reality studios. A Center for Interdisciplinary Research provides student fellows in data management and statistical analysis who provide support for research projects across the curriculum. The Fine Arts division is supported with art, music, and dance studio spaces as well as a 100-seat theater, a museum, and a student gallery, and a 300-seat recital hall. The music program is further supported by access to the chapel and an auditorium-sized space for its larger performances. The faculty in the natural sciences have sufficient lab spaces and specialized equipment for student-faculty collaboration and individual faculty research. The pre-professional nursing and kinesiology programs have dedicated spaces and resources for clinical practice and simulations. The library staff members support course-integrated instruction through a department liaison model so that faculty have clearly delineated support for research instruction and course development. The students and faculty are supported by 75 computing labs in campus buildings and residence halls and 80 classrooms that are fully-equipped with the latest in academic technology—document cameras, digital projectors, and microphones. The information technology help desk supports students and faculty six days a week from a

centralized location in the Rolvaag Library. Instructional technology staff assist faculty in course development, research projects, and selecting and maintaining course equipment. Students and instructors have the classroom and staff resources to meet curricular and learning expectations.

Academic classrooms and facilities are appropriately updated. One major update was in 2017 when Holland Hall, home to the Humanities and Social Sciences, was expanded. Another was in 2018 to support a substantial enhancement to the Nursing wing of the Regents Hall of Natural Sciences. St. Olaf has a clearly articulated plan approved by the Board of Trustees—the *2016 Framework Plan*—to guide its capital and infrastructure investments over the next twenty years. St. Olaf College supports its curriculum and pre-professional programs fully through investments in infrastructure, facilities, and staff.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



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

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

### **Rationale**

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St. Olaf College offers a high quality education to its students. The general education curriculum aligns with the College's mission, strategic plan, and institutional learning and student development goals. As well, the College hires qualified faculty and staff support to help students fulfill their educational goals. There are assessment and policies in place to assure that high quality curricular delivery across curricular divisions and types of courses--from traditional to practicum courses. Co-curricular resources and programs support institutional outcomes and academic goals. Assessment planning, staff and activities support the faculty and staff in meeting their outcomes.

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

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

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The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College has an established practice of program review. Programs undergo a comprehensive self-study every ten years, which includes a site visit and evaluation by external reviewers. Discussions with the Provost during the site visit established that there was 100% compliance with programs completing reviews. Three pre-professional programs - Nursing, Education, and Social Work - and all four programs in the fine arts - Art/Art History, Dance, Music, and Theater - have external accreditation and follow the schedule required by their accreditors.

The new Decennial Assessment Cycle has combined the assessment cycle and the cycle of Program Review, so the external review happens in year ten, and then the next year, departments respond to the reviewers' recommendations and create initiatives to be completed during the next ten years. For example, the 2018 English Self-Study report included future plans of redesigning their gateway

course (English 185) to better reflect the curricular changes they made to their major and considering adding a capstone experience. The 2020 Great Conversations Self-Study proposed changing some of their course content to include less medieval and more early modern coverage as a response to student feedback (which was included in the data they analyzed for the self-study). Programs at St. Olaf regularly act on the information produced by their program review process according to the argument statement and affirmed during on-site discussions.

The results of program review at St. Olaf College are also regularly included in the budgeting and planning processes of the institution and reported up to the leadership level. As described by the Provost during the site visit, the results of program review that require resources from the budget, such as a piece of equipment or additional staffing, are used to inform new hires and purchases.

The assurance argument indicates that St. Olaf College evaluates all the credits that it transcripts. St. Olaf does not transfer credits for experiential learning, with detailed information on credits that are accepted in transfer from regionally accredited schools noted in the College Catalog, under the section "Transfer of Credit to St. Olaf College." The most recent College Catalog was also easily available online.

Information on policies about accepting credit in transfer was available in the section of the College Catalog entitled "Transfer of Credit to St. Olaf College." Evaluation and quality of the credit that St. Olaf transfers from other institutions is overseen by the Registrar's Office, specifically the Assistant Registrar working with the Registrar. In the case of international students, the institution only accepts credit from foreign institutions that have the equivalent of regional accreditation, and for consistency, all transfer credit is evaluated by the Assistant Registrar.

The College's faculty exercise authority over the prerequisites for courses, the rigor of courses, and expectations for student learning as outlined in the College Catalog. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for checking prerequisites for courses and rigor of courses. The Curriculum Committee must approve any changes, and during the site visit, it was confirmed that the actions and affirmative votes in Faculty Meetings are needed to approve courses. Student expectations for learning must be stated in the course proposal form. St. Olaf College does enroll some local honors program high school students in courses offered to St. Olaf students on the College campus. These courses, offered only on St. Olaf's campus by St. Olaf faculty, ensures that the learning outcomes, the rigor, and expectations for the high school students are identical to those for St. Olaf students, as both high school and College students are in the same course sections.

Faculty qualifications for various ranks and positions are articulated in section 4 of the Faculty Manual. According to the 2022-23 Faculty Recruitment Guide, the College conducts open national searches for all full-time faculty appointments, which are advertised in national higher education publications and appropriate specialized journals. Section 4 of the Faculty Manual states that "Credentials of the candidates selected by the department chair for consideration shall be reviewed by the Associate Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of the College."

St. Olaf College maintains voluntary specialized accreditation for four programs in the fine arts:

- *Art/Art History* - The department is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.
- *Dance* - The department is a charter member of the National Association of Schools of Dance.
- *Music* - The quality of both the B.A. music major and the five B.M. majors are assured in part

- by their accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music.
- *Theater* - Accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre.

St. Olaf College also has three programs which are required to have specialized accreditation for licensure:

- *Education* - The department offers 16 different teaching licenses with continuing approval from the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.
- *Nursing* - The nursing program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education for baccalaureate nursing programs.
- *Social Work* - The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has accredited the Social Work program.

All of these accreditations, according to the accreditation sites, are in good standing. In summary, St. Olaf College effectively maintains specialized accreditation for programs that require it.

St. Olaf College evaluates the success of its graduates. The College collects information from its graduates at two points—around graduation (over the course of six months during senior year and after graduation, surveying students in April and following up in the fall) and five to six years post-graduation. Results from the survey of the Class of 2021, with 89% of the class responding, indicate that 95% of respondents are employed or enrolled in post-secondary school.

In a post-graduation survey conducted in 2021, 68% of alumni indicated that their current job was related to their undergraduate major and 78% said their job “requires me to use skills I gained as an undergraduate.” The HEDS Alumni survey and NSSE survey results were available on the College’s Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment website.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College has developed effective processes for assessment of student learning, some that are still in the course of being implemented. Until Spring of 2019, the College followed a four-year cycle of assessment. Based in part on a Self-Study of Assessment in 2018 and faculty concerns, the College created an independent Assessment Committee that has elected faculty members (it was previously a sub-committee of the Curriculum Committee) and moved to a Decennial Assessment Cycle that started in 2021 and requires the completion of three extensive assessment projects in the ten-year period. Based on discussions with faculty during the site visit, this change to the Assessment Committee has been welcome and effective, as it is easier for the committee to meet in a more timely manner with more faculty invested in it. Tying assessment more closely to program review has hopefully streamlined these processes and connected them more clearly for faculty members. In addition to assessment instruments specific to its educational offerings and STOGGoals, such as the Learning Goals Questionnaire (LGQ), the College uses national instruments like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Higher Education Data Sharing Alumni Survey (HEDS). The College uses an appropriate variety of national and local assessment tools.

St. Olaf College has ILOs for each major, concentration, and conversation program, and these are readily available on the College's website. The Assessment Committee oversees the Decennial Assessment Cycle, which is part of each program's program review. Assessment of ILOs may take place at multiple points in the cycle. Although compliance with assessment by programs was only 61% according to the 2020 Assessment Report, discussions with the Provost during the site visit revealed the expectation that the new system will increase compliance as it is tied more closely to program review (for which there is 100% compliance).

St. Olaf College has broad, institution-wide student learning goals (STOGGoals) and more specific intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for general education (the OLE Core) and major programs. The new general education program, which was approved in 2019 and started in Fall 2021, has specific ILOs for each of the sixteen attributes, and the Assessment Committee has developed a specific cycle for assessment of the OLE Core curriculum, with the first year of reporting complete.

The 2018 Assessment Self-Study Report found that the College was primarily getting anecdotal and

informal assessment results from co-curricular programs and recommended changes. In 2019, the College developed a Co-Curricular Assessment Committee, chaired by the Assistant Director of Assessment, in order to help its co-curricular programs develop effective assessment processes and tools, and the Division of Student Life has developed specific ILOs and is collecting data to determine actual student learning. However, with HLC's modification of its criteria and the relatively new specific definition of "co-curricular," St. Olaf's definition of co-curricular as including many programs outside of academics is now much broader than that defined by HLC.

St. Olaf College has used the information from assessment to make improvements in the assessment process and student learning. For example, the 2019 Computer Science self-study explained that as a result of assessment (both of ILOs and student exit interviews), the program faculty changed their curricular prerequisites in order to better prepare students to take the algorithms course and cover more material when in the course. As a result of the change, student proficiency rose approximately 50%. The 2022 Political Science Self-Study articulates the use of assessment data to evaluate whether senior seminar papers showed students were able to critically analyze diversity, equity, and inclusion. They discovered that although 68% of senior papers addressed DEI issues, issues of gender and class were the least represented, prompting the Political Science program to consider offering more 200-level classes with those explicit themes so students can explore these issues before they are seniors. The institution also uses co-curricular assessment to make improvements. The Student Athlete Satisfaction Survey asks "My academic success is a priority for my head coach," measuring how athletic staff support student learning, and these results are regularly reported to the Board of Regents. During the site visit, conversations with the Director of Athletics revealed that the results of these surveys were used to add important personnel, like athletic trainers, and make improvements to facilities.

St. Olaf College is using well-documented curriculum assessment processes to anchor its assessment for academic programs and student outcomes. Strengths of the current assessment plan include the articulation of clear ILOs for every academic program and general education. When developing the assessment plan for the new OLE Core, the task force started with assessment and used the ILOs to help inform how courses fit into the general education program rather than starting with the courses and developing learning outcomes after the fact. The College is also using a mix of local and national assessment instruments for direct and indirect assessment. During the site visit, many faculty were able to explain their role in assessment and the processes that they had undergone in working to assess the new general education program. Staff members also mentioned the work they were doing to develop ILOs and measuring student outcomes in co-curricular programs. Both faculty and staff mentioned that they had professional development opportunities (either attending workshops and conferences at other institutions or participating in a summer workshop at the College) to learn more about assessment. The College's faculty and staff are involved in assessment activities that are consistent with good practice.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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The College's defined goal for first- to- second year retention is 95%. Given the long history of retention rates in the low 90%, this seems reasonable given the caliber of their students. According to the College's Strategic Plan, St. Olaf's goal for degree completion is a six-year completion rate of 90% and a four-year completion rate of 85%. While the College has met the four-year goal three times in the last decade, it has never met the current six-year completion goal. Based on discussions with the Board of Regents during the site visit, the College is mindful of the coming "demographic cliff" and is determined to prepare to enroll more students who may have traditionally struggled at St. Olaf. Therefore, they are also devoting more resources to retention and persistence and thinking carefully about how to maintain enrollments in the challenging geographic environment of the mid-west, as seen by the Board of Regents Task Force report on the *For Every Ole* effort. The following is included on the College's website to include this work: "a four-year plan to intentionally and fully focus on the whole person . . . with the clear outcome of higher retention and extraordinary student satisfaction. This focus for each student will include an integrated and holistic academic, personal and career-advising and mentoring system for every student." The College's goals are reasonable and appropriate.

Overall, St. Olaf College collects and displays retention, persistence, and graduation rates. These data are readily available on the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment page on the College's website. The College also collects these data on a weekly basis, as seen in its weekly report "Spring 2021 Census, End of Term Spring 2021 Re-enrolling Fall 2021 and New/Returned Fall 2021 (~weekly updates from end of spring term until Fall census)."

The College collects data from various sources to assist in making improvements. For example, student athletes complete a Student Athlete survey at the end of every season, and the results are compiled and presented to the Board of Regents in an annual report. As well, St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources (SOAR) participants are surveyed at the end of the program, and conversations with the Assistant Director of Institutional Research and Student Success during the site visit revealed that those surveys were used to add new topics and training materials to the program, which the College sees as instrumental for improving retention efforts.

The College has established committees and positions to analyze retention data. In 2018, the President's Leadership Team established a multi-office Retention and Student Success Committee, and through refocusing an existing position in IE&A, two positions have been created—Assistant Director of Institutional Research and Student Success and the Assistant Director for Retention and Student Success. In its Fall 2021 report, the Retention and Student Success Committee identified groups of students at risk--students from underrepresented groups; male students; students with high academic need and high financial need; and students who have "stopped out."—illustrating that the institution uses the data that it collects.

Using retention data, St. Olaf College has launched different initiatives to strengthen its efforts to retain students that the College has identified as retention risks. The College created a Retention task force in 2017, which became a permanent committee with cross-campus representation in 2018. The Retention and Student Success Committee report from January 31, 2022 outlined the shortage of staff dealing with students with disabilities—the caseload was 350 students with disabilities for every Disability and Access Professional. In response, the College hired more staff in the summer of 2022, demonstrating that they use the data they gather to make improvements. During the site visit, team members met with the new Director of Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities, who explained that he had been hired over the summer to help support students with disabilities.

Reports from 2018, 2021, and 2022 show the institution supporting several efforts to improve retention and graduation rates. The College has revised its New Student Orientation, added a new Sophomore Experience, and added the St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources (SOAR). The College has also made improvements to the orientation it provides for transfer students.

St. Olaf College utilizes IPEDS definitions to calculate retention, persistence, and completion rates. The Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Director also employs term-to-term tracking of students which helps with enrollment projections and registration.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

### Rationale

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Since the previous comprehensive accreditation visit, St. Olaf College has changed its assessment processes in order to align them more closely with program review. Departments across the institution use assessment data to assess student learning and strengthen programs. The College also regularly assesses the success of its graduates on both a departmental level and College-wide basis.

St. Olaf College evaluates all credit that it transcripts and has established policies that assure the quality of the credits accepted in transfer. The College, through its faculty-led Curriculum Committee and Faculty Meeting, exercises appropriate control over course content, prerequisites, rigor, faculty qualifications, and access to learning resources.

Several programs (Social Work, Nursing, and Education) maintain specialized accreditation required for licensure, and all are in good standing with their respective accrediting bodies. St. Olaf College regularly collects information and has standing goals on student retention, persistence, and completion due to its commitment to student success. The College has added or refocused positions in the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Office and Center for Advising and Academic Support in order to support retention efforts. The College is investing in efforts to improve its retention and completion rates.

## 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

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

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College participates in shared governance at all levels of the College, as evidenced by the Board of Regents Bylaws and the Faculty Manual and confirmed through discussions on campus. A recent alumnus/a serves on the Board of Regents as well as a representative from the Alumni Board and a current student. A faculty member is elected each year by the faculty to serve as the faculty liaison to the Board. In addition, the College's committee structure embeds shared governance. Of the seven major committees listed in the Faculty Manual (Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, Faculty Governance Committee, Faculty Life Committee, Student Life Committee, Faculty Review Committee, and Tenure and Promotion Committee), all but the Faculty Review Committee and the Tenure and Promotion Committee have membership from the faculty, administration, and students.

St. Olaf College uses evidence to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the work of the College, as evidenced by a myriad of documents and verified through discussion on campus. The *Strategic Resource Allocation Plan* was created by the President's Leadership Team and carried out by a variety of faculty/staff working groups. This work focused on examining the College's revenues and expenses patterns in detail, leading to the identification of \$5.5M of a combination of added revenue and cost savings. Each year the College's published *Strategic Plan Outcomes* report notes the goals, progress, and, as appropriate, comments in implementing the Strategic Plan. This document is used to track the progress on completion of the Strategic Plan elements and adjust

expectations and/or goals as needed or as makes sense based on the collected evidence. The *2016 Facilities Framework Plan*, described in detail in a 5.B. evidence statement, informs the *Physical Development Plan*, which is used to determine the use of available funds for physical plant support and enhancements. The academic program reviews are used by the Deans Council to inform the Staffing Plan.

According to the Board of Regents *Bylaws* and the *Faculty Manual* and verified through discussions on campus, several constituencies of the College contribute to the development of St. Olaf's academic requirements, policies and processes through the governance structure. The College's Deans Council, consisting of the Provost, Associate Provost, and five Associate Deans, meets twice a week to provide advice on and coordination of academic matters, with the outcomes of the meetings shared with faculty and academic staff. For one meeting each month, these meetings also include directors of various academic offices. In addition, the Academic Leadership team, comprised of academic program heads, chairs of elected committees, staff directors of academic offices, and Deans Council members, meets six times a year to coordinate efforts and provide consultation and advice. The monthly faculty meeting takes place where faculty vote on approving academic requirements and programs. Faculty meeting agendas are established through a collaboration between the President and the chairs of elected committees—which include the Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, Faculty Governance Committee, Student Life Committee, and Faculty Life Committee.

St. Olaf's mission states:

*St. Olaf College challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an exclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.*

The College's OLE Core curriculum includes required courses in Writing; Religious Faith and Values; Christian Theology in Dialogue, Power and Race, Global Histories and Societies, Natural Science, Social Sciences, Quantitative and Computational Reasoning, World Languages and Cultures, Creativity, Ethical Reasoning in Context, OLE Experiences in Practice, and Health and Wellbeing. All of these requirements can be tied back to the Mission statement. In addition, the College's strategic plan includes seven priorities, noted in an evidence statement found in 5.C, which also tie directly to the mission.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College's approach to reviewing its current infrastructure and creating plans to improve it provides an example that its resource base supports its educational offerings. In 2016, the College developed a master plan for its physical space called the *2016 Framework Plan*. This document was developed to analyze the existing campus, support the College's academic mission and strategic planning, provide an informed vision for future growth, use available funds to maintain and enhance the physical space, and enhance the campus sustainability initiatives, according to the planning objectives listed in the document and verified through discussions while on campus. The document informs the College's six-year physical development plans that propose the use of 2.5% of the unrestricted net operating income that the Board of Regents has approved to support capital improvement and projects. This thoughtful planning has led to new student housing in 2022, a 2019 ice arena, and major renovations to several academic and administrative buildings.

According to the argument statements and verified through discussions on campus, St. Olaf College's establishment and monitoring of its annual budget are well developed and effective. Each year the President's Leadership Team implements a planning model that uses both historical data and forecasting to recommend key budget parameters, such as tuition and fees, endowment spending rate, and wage increase pool, to the Board of Regents. This work guides the President's Leadership Team in developing the annual operating and capital spending budget plan, which is sent to the Board of Regents for approval.

The College monitors spending at the College according to the argument statements and verified during the campus visit. The Chief Financial Officer prepares monthly dashboards of revenue and expenditures by division and total year-to-date operating and revenue and expense reports for the Board. Quarterly reports are created for all budget managers that highlight variances between budget and actual amounts within their areas. Three times a year the budget managers submit written explanations of the variances that are reviewed by the Finance Office Staff.

St. Olaf College's fiscal allocations assure that its educational purposes can be achieved according to the argument statement and verified while on campus. The College has several years of strong and responsible fiscal management evidenced by its Moody's Investors Service ratings of A3 prior to 2002, A2 between 2002 and 2010, and A1 since 2010. As well the College's Financial Responsibility Composite Score has been above 1.5 since 2006-2007, and in the majority of these years (9 of 16) the College has achieved the highest possible score of 3.0. Finally, the Composite Financial Index for the College has been in the range of 5 to 10 for the last 22 years, with a score of 3 or greater considered in good standing by the Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission. To continue to assure financial strength, the College's endowment draw since 2004 has been 4.7% of the 16-quarter moving average.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College allocates its resources to align with its mission through strategic planning. The College's current Strategic Plan for 2020 through 2023 includes six priorities:

1. Ensure and sustain robust and equitable engagement with high impact educational practices, both for students overall and for students from underrepresented groups.
2. Enrich student experiences in co-curricular and residential life, both for students overall and for students from underrepresented groups.
3. Continue to increase the racial and cultural diversity of St. Olaf students, faculty, and staff.
4. Advance retention and graduation rates.
5. Enhance programs and processes for faculty and staff development.
6. Enhance fiscal sustainability.

All of these can either be linked directly back to the College's mission or to the need for fiscal security to carry out the College's mission. According to the argument statement and verified by the discussions on campus, annually the College presents an outcome report on the progress being made in implementing the plan that includes the goals of the plans, the metrics for measuring progress, and comments of clarification and/or continuing efforts. A complement to the strategic plan, the *2016 Framework Plan*, guides the physical development of the College's campus over the next several years. These two documents inform the budgeting process each year as well as the planned work of the Advancement Division.

St. Olaf College uses the evidence it collects and analyzes in planning and budgeting, as noted in the argument statements and verified while on campus. The results of the College's robust academic

program reviews are used to create improvement plans for the program, that often include budget implications, discussed with the Provost soon after the program review is complete. This information informs the Provost's decisions on departmental requests and requests for new tenure-track lines. Student surveys, program assessment data, and national assessments on high impact educational practices informed the inclusion of components in the Strategic Plan, which in turn has informed the work of the Advancement Division and budgeting, such as the work on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and soliciting funds to support student research and international studies.

St. Olaf College's planning processes include Board members, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and students. According to the argument statement and verified while on campus, the College's budgeting process begins with the work of the Budget Advisory Committee, whose membership includes three faculty, three staff, and one student as well as the Chief Financial Officer, Provost, Vice President for Human Resources, Vice President for Enrollment and College Relations, and the Assistant Vice President for Budgets and Auxiliary Operations. According to its charge, this committee advises the Chief Financial Officer and President's Leadership Team while facilitating discussion and communication among the faculty, staff and student constituencies regarding long-term financial planning. The committee reviews annual and long-term College budget projections while undertaking studies of St. Olaf's resource use. The final authority to approve the College's budget rests with the Board of Regents, that includes representatives from the faculty, the student body, and alumni.

The College has been forward thinking in understanding its current capacity and future threats and opportunities. In 2019, the College began to implement its *Strategic Resource Allocation Project*, developed by the President's Leadership Team with support of the Board of Regents to ensure that the College is aware of what the College's most important functions and activities are, whether or not these functions are properly resourced, and whether the College is utilizing its resources in the most strategic way to deliver on the College's mission. This work included a suggestion box for interested individuals to submit ideas to support the project. In addition, St. Olaf College helps its staff be attentive of current capacity and anticipate resource fluctuations. The College's Finance Office maintains the *Budget Manager Guide* for those at the school managing a budget. The parts of the 19-page guide include sections on Budget Basics, Budget Management, Use of the College's financial software, Cash management, processes for purchasing and cash disbursement, and budget resources.

The President's Leadership Team authors an *Enterprise Risk Management Report* each year that identifies, evaluates and prioritizes real and potential risks that could affect St. Olaf's operations, while developing the ability to manage risks at an acceptable level. The report retires risks that no longer seem to be threats while revising some risks and adding others. For example, in the 2021 report, employee dissatisfaction with compensation, flexibility, and/or work environment was relegated to a critical risk needing immediate attention. In part as a result of this realization, in the 2023-2024 academic year, full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty contracted course loads will be reduced from six to five courses according to the administrators the visiting reviewers spoke to on campus. As well, the College retired the risk of being unable to communicate timely and clearly in a crisis situation, since the College has now established relationships with external firms to assist when these situations present themselves and workshops have been added for College leaders to help prepare them to respond as needed.

The Board of Regents created a visioning task force that met over a year to do a SWOT analysis, resulting in the creation of a College vision and four commitments for the next several years, which complement the work of the strategic plan and include:

1. A four-year comprehensive advising/development plan for each student
2. An improved St. Olaf Culture
3. Empowerment of diversity, equity, and inclusion
4. Work to become an agile and focused St. Olaf

The Strategic Plan, developed to improve the College's operations and student outcomes, drives the work of the College and is implemented systematically. Each year members of the President's Leadership Team are assigned goals from the plan to work on and/or complete by working through the implementation activities developed annually. At the end of each year, the President prepares a report for the Board of Regents of the progress made in implementing the strategic plan and the work that remains unfinished.

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

### Rationale

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St. Olaf College has provided evidence to show that its resources, structures and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

The College's resource base provides support for its human resources and infrastructure, focusing on the learning of the students as defined by the mission of the College.

Its governance structure assures that decisions are made appropriately at the appropriate levels.

As well, it engages in systematic and integrated planning through strategic planning, reviewing funding allocations, and considering future opportunities and threats.

## FC - Federal Compliance

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### Rating

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Met

### Federal Compliance Filing Form

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- FedCompFiling\_2022\_StOlaf

### Rationale

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Federal Compliance Rationale Template

**Instructions:** When an evaluation that includes a Federal Compliance Review is released to the peer review team in the Assurance System, copy and paste the text below into the Rationale section of the Federal Compliance tab.

#### 1. ASSIGNMENT OF CREDITS, PROGRAM LENGTH AND TUITION

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

#### **Rationale:**

The federal definition of one semester credit hour of work consists of a total of 45 fifty-minute "hours" of work. The Carnegie model is to have one-third of this time (15 fifty-minute hours) scheduled for in class with the rest (30 fifty-minute hours) scheduled for out of class. This leads to a minimum of 180 fifty-minute units of work for a four semester hour course, or 150 hours, where one hour is 60 minutes. As well, at least 120 semester hours is the commonly held standard for completion of a baccalaureate degree.

According to the College Catalog and the College's website, students are required to complete at least 35 St. Olaf credits, where a St. Olaf credit is equivalent to four semester hours. In review of several syllabi and the class schedule published by the registrar's office, courses that earn one St. Olaf credit meet for 55 minutes three days a week for fourteen weeks. According to the course syllabus template and verified through discussions with the Provost, faculty, and students, students are expected to work three hours outside of class for every hour the class meets. Thus, to earn one St. Olaf credit, a student will typically be in class for 2310 minutes (14 weeks \* 3 meeting/week \* 55 minute/meeting) and work outside of class for 6930 minutes (2310 minutes\*3), for a total of 9240 minutes = 154 hours of work, equivalent to the standard of 150 hours. As well, at graduation a St. Olaf student will have completed 140 semester hours (35\*4) of work, which exceeds the minimum standard of 120 semester hours by 20 semester hours.

St. Olaf allows students to earn academic credit for internships. Students may earn 1.0, 0.5, or 0.25

St. Olaf credits. A 1.0 credit internship requires a minimum of 160 hours of work, a 0.5 credit internship requires a minimum of 100 hours of work, and a 0.25 credit internship requires a minimum of 65 hours of work. These requirements meet or exceed the minutes required by the federal definition of the credit hour. A review of seven internship agreements indicated that St. Olaf College closely follows established policy.

In the federal compliance filing, St. Olaf College did not describe any process used to verify the length of the academic period and compliance with credit hour requirements through course schedule, but this information was found in evidence supplied for Criterion 3 and verified while on campus.

## **1. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR HANDLING STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

### **Rationale:**

The St. Olaf student handbook, "The Book," provides students with contact information for the Dean of Students Office on the "Reporting Concerns or Complaints" section of the College website. Students are provided with the appropriate contact information to file internal complaints in the areas of health/safety/emergency concerns, work-study personnel issues, academic concerns, disability/accessibility complaints, faculty related complaints, and complaints related to legal compliance. Additionally, the College provides instructions for reporting sexual harassment/misconduct and incidents of Race/Ethnic Bias. The College has a non-retaliation policy and provides individuals that do not feel comfortable filing a complaint internally with a confidential hotline so that complaints can be expressed anonymously. As a part of this process, complainants are provided with a mechanism to anonymously receive the College's response to the complaint.

## **1. PUBLICATION OF TRANSFER POLICIES**

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

### **Rationale:**

The College publishes its transfer policies and outlines the process through the Academic Catalog and College website. The policy outlines the conversion of semester or quarter credits to St. Olaf credits, grade requirements, maximum number of transfer credits, and credits excluded from transfer for new first-year students, new transfer students, and continuing students. The online catalog also provides students with a link to the Transfer Credit Approval Form. The Registrar's Office website provides students with further details regarding St. Olaf's transfer policy. These resources explain the College's decision-making process for credit transfer decisions and provide students with an appeal process should a disagreement regarding transfer of credit arise. Although the Federal Compliance response from St. Olaf states it does not have any articulation agreements, the agreement it has with Carleton College to take courses at the other campus should be considered one. This agreement meets all the necessary standards and the only difference in it and having students transfer courses in from Carleton is that the courses taken can be counted towards full-time status.

## 1. PRACTICES FOR VERIFICATION OF STUDENT IDENTITY

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

**Rationale:**

As a response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, St. Olaf offered distance education courses but has since returned to a face-to-face schedule. Moodle, the College's LMS uses two-factor authentication to verify user identity. Students do not incur any costs related to the verification of student identity.

## 1. PROTECTION OF STUDENT PRIVACY

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

**Rationale:**

St. Olaf has comprehensive policies and procedures that ensure student privacy. The College Privacy Statement clearly explains the types of personal data collected by the College, how the data is used, and the retention period for student data. The Registrar's Office section of the College website informs students of their rights under FERPA. St. Olaf classifies data into three categories: high risk, medium risk, and low risk and has a plan, "Securing College Data," accessible through the Information Technology section of the College website to assure that all data is secure. The College provides FERPA training for all employees.

## 1. PUBLICATION OF STUDENT OUTCOME DATA

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

**Rationale:**

St. Olaf publishes student outcome data primarily through the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment section of the College website. Published data include graduation rates, retention rates, and the first primary activity of graduates. Graduation and retention data can be disaggregated by racial/ethnic/citizenship group, income, first-generation status, federal aid group, and sex. Graduate data can be disaggregated by major, year of graduation, and domestic/international student status. The graduate data also includes the top employers for all majors and can be filtered to specific majors. The College also publishes its graduates' pass rates for the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams, and the NCLEX-RN pass rates for nursing students can be found in the Minnesota Board of Nursing annual reports.

## 1. STANDING WITH STATE AND OTHER ACCREDITORS

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

**Rationale:**

St. Olaf is accredited with various specialized and professional accreditors. A review of each accreditor's website revealed that St. Olaf is in good standing with each accreditor.

**1. RECRUITING, ADMISSIONS AND RELATED INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES**

**Conclusion** (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.):

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

**Rationale:**

St. Olaf's code of conduct is published in the Staff Handbook. The code of conduct emphasizes the importance of communicating accurately and avoiding the communication of false information. Admissions and financial aid personnel are members of national organizations and follow associated ethical guidelines. The admissions and financial aid web pages are easy to navigate and provide clear concise information. St. Olaf provides considerable training for individuals whose job duties involve direct contact with prospective students. The College website also clearly outlines the application process and deadlines. A review of St. Olaf's employee directory indicated that recruiters and admissions personnel have appropriate job titles. A link to the College's privacy policy is available on the homepage. Prospective students can unsubscribe to recruiting emails through a link provided in the emails. Enrollment staff remove students from contact lists upon request. The Financial Aid section of the College website provides details on withdrawal deadlines and refund guidelines, as well as, the return of Title IV Federal Student Aid.

**APPENDIX A: TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

Complete this section **only if** the institution has submitted an Appendix A. Review any negative actions taken against the institution since HLC's last Federal Compliance review and identify any implications for the institution's current compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements. Provide a detailed rationale for any Core Components identified as Met with Concerns or Not Met.

**Rationale:**

**MANDATORY REPORTING: FRAUD, ABUSE OR FAILING TO MEET TITLE IV RESPONSIBILITIES**

Federal regulations require HLC to notify the U.S. Department of Education related to the following item. Do not skip this section.

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that (i) the institution is failing to meet its Title IV, Higher Education Act program responsibilities (if the institution participates in Title IV, HEA programs) or (ii) that the institution may be engaged in fraud or abuse?

**Answer** (Choose one response and delete the other):

No

**Rationale** (If the team responded “Yes,” explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.):

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

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended*

## Review Dashboard

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

## Review Summary

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### Conclusion

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St. Olaf College has met all core components of all five criteria.

St. Olaf College's mission is clear and articulated publicly both on campus and online, and the mission guides the operations of the College.

The College provides a quality education to its students.

St. Olaf College has demonstrated responsibility for the quality of its programs, learning environments and services provided to help students learn, and it evaluates their effectiveness.

St. Olaf College's resources, structures, process and planning support the work to fulfill the College mission, keep strong educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

The team recommends that St. Olaf College be eligible to choose its pathway.

### Overall Recommendations

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#### Criteria For Accreditation

Met

#### Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

#### Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to choose

#### Federal Compliance

Met

*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*





## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** St. Olaf College, Minnesota

**TYPE OF REVIEW:** Open Pathway - Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:**

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 11/07/2022 11/08/2022

☐ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

### Accreditation Status

Control: Private NFP

**Recommended Change: No change**

Degrees Awarded: Bachelors

**Recommended Change: No change**

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2012 - 2013

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2022 - 2023

**Recommended Change: 2032 - 2033**

### Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Bachelor's

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): Associate's, Master's, Specialist, Doctoral

The institution is limited to offer the following program(s), within the approved program levels listed above: Course offerings at the Master's level are limited to five courses or twenty semester hours a year

**Recommended Change: No change**

Additional Locations:



## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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Prior HLC approval required.

### **Recommended Change: No change**

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approval for distance education is limited to courses. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

### **Recommended Change: No change**

Accreditation:

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### **Accreditation Events**

Accreditation Pathway:

Open Pathway

### **Recommended Change: No change**

Upcoming Events: **No change**

**(No Upcoming Events)**

### **Monitoring**

Upcoming Events: No change

**(No Upcoming Events)**

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### **Institutional Data**



## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

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**Educational Programs****Recommended  
Change: No  
change****Undergraduate**

Associate Degrees 0

Baccalaureate  
Degrees 51**Graduate**

Master's Degrees 0

Specialist Degrees 0

Doctoral Degrees 0

**Certificates** 0**Extended Operations****Active Branch Campuses**

(NONE)

**Recommended Change: No change**

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**Active Additional Locations**

(NONE)

**Recommended Change: No change**

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**Contractual Arrangements**

(NONE)

**Recommended Change: No change**