

Assurance Argument

St. Olaf College - MN

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Criterion 1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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.

Argument

- 1. The current St. Olaf College mission statement was developed through community-wide consultation overseen by a representative task force, with final adoption by the Board of Regents.***

The [St. Olaf mission](#) is conveyed in a single sentence: *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 current statement was developed in 2015-16 through a process well-suited to the participatory culture of the college. At the start of the academic year, faculty and staff met in small groups to review readings on effective mission statements and discuss their perceptions of the college's existing statement, with a follow-up survey where they could share their views in writing. The February 2016 meeting of the Board of Regents included a colloquium on the college mission with the same readings, discussion questions, and follow-up request for written reflections.

The revision process also engaged a ten-member faculty-staff-student Task Force charged by the president with drafting a revised mission statement to be informed both by the resources provided to the community and by extensive community and Regent consultation. Over the course of several months, the Task Force elicited additional Regent, faculty, staff, and student feedback through several iterations of in-person community forums and written questionnaires.

Because the statement is an element of the College Bylaws ([Article I, Section 1.01](#)), the text is ultimately the responsibility of the Board of Regents. Consequently, the Task Force provided its final recommended text and rationale to the Nominating and Governance Committee of the Board of Regents, which then prepared a resolution to amend the Bylaws that was approved by the Board at its May 2016 meeting. The process concluded with a comprehensive [Mission Statement Task Force Report](#) to the Regents and the college community as a whole, summarizing the variety of perspectives offered on the college's previous mission statement, the rationale for each element of the final revised version, and the resources and consultations that contributed to the outcome.

2. The mission statement is less than seven years old, and conveys the distinctive character of the college's purposes and priorities.

As noted in 1.A.1, the current St. Olaf mission statement was adopted in May 2016. To foster community-wide understanding of the mission, particularly among prospective and new students and employees, the mission statement is accompanied by [The Mission in Practice](#), a brief explanation of each of its elements. The mission sets forth the college's primary purpose – to provide an excellent liberal arts education to undergraduate students that engages them with questions of faith, values, and vocation – and speaks to its distinctive character as an institution that is “nourished by Lutheran tradition.” Importantly, that tradition, deriving from the college's affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, undergirds all the other elements of the mission – not only the commitment to the examination of faith and values, but also to excellence in the liberal arts, to the pursuit of vocation, to inclusive community, and to global engagement.

[Faculty Manual 4.VI](#) (p. 49) indicates that the college's criteria for the hiring, renewal, reappointment, tenure, and promotion of faculty “are intended to reflect the identity and mission of St. Olaf as a liberal arts college of the Lutheran Church.” As indicated in the college's [Faculty Recruitment Guide](#) (p. 13), finalists for tenure-track positions must submit a written response to the college mission statement prior to their on-campus interviews, and are encouraged to confer with the Director of the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community for confidential guidance on their statements.

3. The mission statement clearly articulates the rigorous, comprehensive and holistic nature and scope of a St. Olaf education.

The mission statement is intentional in identifying undergraduate students as the college's principal constituents, leading as it does with “St. Olaf College challenges students to....” The nature of the educational experience it provides is signaled by the verbs in the statement – to *excel*, to *examine*, and to *explore* – as well as by the description of the context for that experience – *inclusive*, *community-based*, and *nourished* by a faith tradition that invites all members of the community to bring their whole, authentic selves to the educational enterprise. The mission statement also points to the broad scope of a St. Olaf education in its references to the *liberal arts*, *faith and values*, *vocation* (understood as embracing the whole of life, including, but not limited to, professional work), and *global engagement*.

4. *The college mission animates its academic programs, its multifaceted student support services, and its diverse enrollment profile.*

The description of the curriculum in the [college catalog](#) begins with the college mission statement. Early in the development of the new OLE Core general education curriculum, the faculty approved a [resolution](#) establishing a set of criteria that the new curriculum had to meet, one of which was support for the college mission. The resulting [OLE Core curriculum](#) engages students in the study of multiple disciplines (“liberal arts”); of religion and ethics (“faith and values”); of contexts and competencies for pursuing a purposeful life in community (“meaningful vocation”); and of power and race, global histories and societies, and world languages and culture (“inclusive [and] globally engaged”). Similarly, the college’s 45 majors for the B.A. degree and 5 majors for the B.M. degree are distributed across all the domains of knowledge typically associated with the liberal arts – fine arts, humanities, natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, and interdisciplinary programs.

The college’s comprehensive student support services are vital to the achievement of its mission for all students, advancing not only excellence in the liberal arts but also the college’s “inclusive, globally engaged community.” The Center for Advising and Academic Support ([CAAS](#)) provides a wide range of “services, programs, and resources for all St. Olaf students as they work to maximize their full academic potential.” These include academic coaching by professional staff, academic strategy workshops, peer tutoring, group study, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and specialized assistance with writing and speaking skills. The Center hosts the college’s [academic advising program](#), which provides assistance to both students and faculty advisors as students complete their academic requirements, explore and engage their majors, and develop their capacities for academic planning, adaption, and persistence, and lifelong learning. One of the specified [goals for academic advising](#) at St. Olaf is to foster students’ understanding of and reflection on the college mission statement. CAAS is home to St. Olaf’s [Disability and Access Services](#), fostering equitable and inclusive educational experiences for more than 800 students with temporary or permanent physical, learning, sensory, health, or psychological disabilities, and a new retention-focused federally funded TRIO program providing [Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities](#). CAAS also provides specialized [support for multilingual students](#) and their professors. Beyond CAAS, St. Olaf has long offered a federally funded [TRIO Student Support Services program](#) supporting the academic success of more than 180 first-generation and low-income students each year.

The college’s commitment to being an “inclusive, globally engaged community” is also evident in its [Incoming Cohort Profile](#) and [enrollment dashboard](#), which document the increase over the past decade in the percentage of Oles who are U.S. students of color or international students, from 22.8% in 2013 to 31.7% in 2022. The percentage of [first-generation students](#) has also increased over that same period, from 14.8% in 2013 to 20.0% in 2022.

5. *The college’s mission statement is incorporated in numerous public documents and websites.*

Among the goals of the 2016 mission statement revision was to express the mission in a single sentence that is easy to memorize and reprint in multiple locations. The college mission is the

first thing visitors encounter on the [About](#) page of the St. Olaf College website, where it is reproduced in full, accompanied by a link to the [Mission](#) page that includes the “Mission in Practice” statement described in 1.A.2. The [Outcomes](#) page, also featured in the About page, leads with the college mission, as does the [College-wide Goals for Student Learning \("STOGaols"\)](#) page. The college mission statement is also posted on the [home page of the Office of Human Resources](#). Finally, the college mission is prominently [displayed on a large wall](#) just outside the entry to the suite housing the college president, the provost and dean of the college, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment.

Many key college documents cite or reference the mission of the college and detail its implications for the college’s programs, services, activities, and values. The [St. Olaf Strategic Plan](#) references the college mission statement explicitly, and its contents reflect the college’s commitments to the liberal arts, inclusive community, global engagement, and discernment of vocation. Similarly, the college’s [commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) indicates that the commitment to inclusive community has been embedded in the college’s mission since its founding.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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.

Argument

1. St. Olaf's mission, curriculum, and institutional commitments demonstrate that the college serves the public interest.

Among St. Olaf's eight college-wide goals for student learning ([STOGGoals](#)) is "[responsible interpersonal, civic, and global engagement](#)," cultivated through both curricular and co-curricular experiences. The [OLE Experience in Practice](#), an OLE Core general education requirement, prompts students to "engage in work that integrates academic and experiential learning by applying classroom theories and ideas in a practical setting and/or drawing upon experiential learning to advance their understanding in an academic setting."

Many of the college's majors and concentrations also explicitly engage with and contribute to issues of public interest. Programs in [environmental studies](#) engage students in seeking "meaningful and just solutions to [environmental] problems." Students completing a major in [English](#) are expected to demonstrate "understanding of and engagement with the world around them resulting from their study of literature." The [biology](#) department provides "opportunities for service to others through off-campus programs, through the stewardship of our Natural Lands, and through outreach to local and regional schools." The [social work](#) major prepares students to "advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice." The [public affairs](#) conversation program fosters "the ability to engage in respectful disagreement about matters of public interest, particularly those that are controversial or reflect moral, economic, political or religious complexity."

Faculty are also expected to demonstrate commitment to the college's public obligations; the standards for faculty evaluation, as outlined in [Faculty Manual 4.VI.A](#) (p. 48), indicate that the 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."

Established in 2014, the St. Olaf [Institute for Freedom and Community](#) advances these goals as well. A fundamental aim of the Institute is to promote civil discourse within and beyond the college by exploring diverse ideas about politics, markets, and society. The Institute provides a program of academic coursework, public lectures and debates, scholarly and undergraduate

research, and internships for students. All its [public events](#) are streamed live and then available on demand on the college website, and many are rebroadcast on Minnesota Public Radio.

St. Olaf's commitment to [environmental sustainability](#) also exemplifies its contribution to the public good. The college has invested in community solar gardens and a wind turbine, enabling its electrical energy to be carbon neutral; restored wetlands, prairies, and forests in its [Natural Lands](#); established partnerships with local farmers and community organizations to source food that is grown locally and responsibly; and has met or exceeded numerous LEED and WELL Building Standard best practices in recent building renovations and new construction, including the [Ole Avenue student housing project](#).

2. The college's foremost responsibility is to provide a liberal arts education.

As indicated in the [College Bylaws, Article I](#) (p. 1), the purpose of the college is to provide higher education by offering programs of study in the liberal arts that lead to the Bachelor's degree. [Article II of the Articles of Incorporation](#) (p. 1) indicates that the college "shall operate a coeducational liberal arts college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America" and "shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary and educational purposes." [Article IV, Section 4.02](#) (p. 2) requires that the college "shall not directly or indirectly afford pecuniary gain, dividends or other pecuniary remuneration, incidentally or otherwise, to its Regents or officers, and no part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure directly or indirectly to the benefit of any private individual," except for payments for goods, services, or insurance. [Section 4.03](#) (p. 2) further states that the college will not "attempt to influence legislation by propaganda or otherwise" and will "neither directly nor indirectly participate in or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office." The college is also prohibited from issuing capital stock ([College Bylaws, Article VIII](#)), and thus does not generate financial returns for investors. The college enforces a conflict of financial interest policy, both for [employees](#) and for [Regents and officers of the college](#), to prevent expenditures that do not primarily support its educational programs.

3. St. Olaf is engaged with and responsive to its constituencies.

St. Olaf engages with several external constituencies and communities of interest, including alumni and parents; current and prospective employers of St. Olaf graduates; the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the City of Northfield and the larger Twin Cities metropolitan area; and groups and organizations seeking to use campus facilities.

[Alumni and Families](#) serves graduates of the college and families of current students by hosting [Reunion Weekends](#), [Homecoming and Family Weekend](#), regional alumni chapters, and other opportunities. The office collaborates with the Piper Center for Vocation and Career to offer [Ole Connect](#), a networking platform and jobs board for alumni, and [Alumni Career Services](#), offering resources and events that enable employers to recruit current students and alumni. The college also hosts a robust [Alumni and Family Travel](#) program featuring approximately 10-12 national and international tours annually, hosted by St. Olaf faculty and staff and open to both alumni and friends of the college.

St. Olaf serves the broader ELCA denomination through a variety of means. “Advancing a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21st century,” the college’s [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) “provides programming and guidance to [ELCA] congregations, as well as other denominations, faiths and higher education institutions.” The Lutheran Center provides thought leadership for communities of faith, particularly around issues of engagement, inclusion, and church identity in the digital age; it also hosts the biennial [Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#). In 2021 the Center launched a five-year, \$1 million [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., focused on individual and congregational thriving through vocational discernment. Additionally, the college archives its [daily chapel services](#) for on-demand streaming; provides space for church-related meetings and events; supports teaching and scholarship in theology and ethics; and links congregations to student ensembles to provide music for worship services.

St. Olaf supports an extensive program of [Academic Civic Engagement](#) (ACE) that reflects the institutional learning goal of “responsible interpersonal, civic, and global engagement,” providing students and faculty opportunities to connect coursework with civic engagement experiences in the local community. [ACE courses](#) span a broad array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs, engaging approximately 600 students and 50 community partners annually. Students study problems, raise awareness about issues central to the community, and contribute to ongoing programs supporting community development. By the time they graduate, 60% of St. Olaf students will have completed one or more ACE courses during their time on the Hill.

College staff work closely with community partners and businesses to facilitate other pathways for students to support their work, such as internships, federal community-based work study, and student volunteering. The college’s extensive, student-led [Volunteer Network](#) serves Northfield and other nearby communities by connecting individual students and student groups to nonprofit organizations. St. Olaf also serves the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area through its federally-funded [Upward Bound](#) and [Educational Talent Search](#) programs, serving high school and middle school students in the Twin Cities and surrounding communities.

The [Events Office](#) also serves the needs of local, regional, and national communities by sponsoring academic, athletic, and performing arts youth camps, as well as hosting numerous events and professional conferences each year.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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.

Argument

1. St. Olaf engages students in high-impact learning inside and outside the classroom, preparing them for public engagement and professional accomplishment.

The St. Olaf mission promises that students will "explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community." Priority I in the [Strategic Plan](#) commits the college to ensuring "robust and equitable engagement with high impact educational practices, both for students overall and for students from underrepresented groups." As indicated in our [Strategic Plan Outcome Report](#), for the past five years, approximately 85% of our students have completed one or more such experiences by the time they graduate, with the participation of students from underrepresented groups similar to that of all students (with some variation by type of experience). At the same time, 95% or more of our seniors have secured employment, pursued further education, and/or pursued full-time service within the first six months of graduation, again with outcomes that are similar across demographic groups.

Multiple programs support informed citizenship and workplace success, including [Academic Civic Engagement \[ACE\]](#), the [Institute for Freedom and Community](#), and the [Piper Center for Vocation and Career](#). More than 600 students annually complete an ACE course, engaging with over [50 community partners](#). During AY2021-22, 73% of our students engaged with the Piper Center through individualized appointments, event attendance, or both. The Institute engages students in study and dialogue about public affairs. Myriad student organizations allow students to develop skills for leadership, collaboration, and community-building.

Deep, contextualized knowledge about other cultures, essential to both public engagement and professional accomplishment, is integral to a St. Olaf education. The OLE Core curriculum requirements include proficiency in a world language and two multicultural studies courses. Numerous departments and programs offer majors and concentrations examining different forms of diversity, including Race, Ethnic, Gender and Sexuality Studies; Asian Studies; Africa and the African Diaspora; and Latin American Studies. St Olaf faculty annually lead approximately 30 off-campus programs, and there are [60 approved semester, year-long, or summer off-campus domestic and international studies programs](#) to help students learn about their place in the world. Over the five years prior to the onset of the global pandemic, an average

of three-quarters of each graduating class had studied off-campus prior to graduation, with nearly a third having participated in two or more programs. Across 18 years of inter-institutional data in the [IIE Open Doors Report](#), St. Olaf was #1 fifteen times among baccalaureate institutions in the number of students who study off campus, and was #2 in the remaining three years.

2. St. Olaf acts on its commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Priority III of the [Strategic Plan](#) calls for continued increases in the percentage of domestic students who are students of color; for 25% of new tenure-track faculty to be domestic persons of color; and for staff to reflect the diversity demographics of the College's hiring markets. As indicated in our [enrollment dashboard](#), domestic students of color comprised 15% of the total student population (16% of domestic students) in Fall 2013 and 22% of the total (24% of domestic students) in Fall 2022. Our [Strategic Plan Outcomes report](#) shows that since 2014, domestic faculty of color have comprised more than 25% of tenure-track faculty hires (on a rolling three-year average) for all but one three-year average, when it was 24%. It also shows that the percentage of newly-hired staff who are persons of color has doubled over the past eight years, from 12% in 2014 to 24% in 2021 (the most recent reporting date).

Actions to advance equity, inclusion, and anti-racism across all college operations are detailed and disseminated in the college's [DEI Theory of Transformation](#), described in more detail in our May 2022 [Quality Initiative Report](#). The Theory provides information about programs, resources, and activities in 12 different [DEI "action domains"](#) spanning teaching and learning, student activities, professional development, mentoring, financial resources, organizational infrastructure, and college policies.

St. Olaf's TRIO programs are of special significance in our DEI efforts. TRIO Student Support Services ([SSS](#)) support student retention and graduation for low-income, first-generation (LIFG) students. Its [Summer Bridge Program](#) provides scholarships and advising to 200 LIFG students to foster their success in college. Our newest program. The TRIO [McNair Scholars](#) program prepares underrepresented students for graduate and professional school, and two new [National Science Foundation scholarship programs](#) support underrepresented and financially challenged students pursuing degrees in [Data Science](#) and [Biology & Chemistry](#).

3. College policies, programs and practices reflect our values of respect and the embrace of difference.

The college's [Mission in Practice](#) statement declares that "excellence in the liberal arts is possible only when people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas come together in a spirit of mutual respect and inclusion." The college's vision for DEI articulates St. Olaf's commitment to be a "learning, residential and working environment in which all individuals are included, respected, valued and supported, and are fully able to achieve and contribute" and that "embraces the diversity of perspectives, faiths, political outlooks, identities and backgrounds essential to rigorous learning and the development of the whole person." Our [Title IX policy](#) and required trainings for all new students and employees are rooted in St. Olaf's commitments to dignity and respect.

Launched in 2018, the [Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion](#) provides [resources](#) and co-curricular support for domestic students of color and international students, hosting regular [events](#), advising 18 multicultural and identity [student organizations](#), and supporting [LGBTQIA+](#) students. The Taylor Center hosts two student residential spaces to "create intentional living/learning environments where students engage in dialogues and plan events around issues that support and celebrate different cultures and identities."

A new venue for engagement across diversity is St. Olaf's [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values and Community](#) with programming designed to encourage inter-religious exploration of faith, values and vocation. Its [mission statement](#) outlines an inclusive approach to building a spiritually engaged world. It offers a variety of [programming](#), supporting the First-Year Experience "Common Read" and the Student Interreligious Council. The Lutheran Center also funds the college's Associate Chaplains for Jewish and Muslim Life and Student Interfaith Fellows.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

The St. Olaf College mission is lucid, widely shared, and significant in the life and work of the institution.

- A. The mission statement is clear, current, and community-supported, and animates the college's programs, policies, and priorities.
- B. St. Olaf's commitment to the public good is demonstrated in its mission, learning goals, expectations for faculty, curriculum and co-curriculum, and responsiveness to its external constituencies.
- C. Through high-impact learning experiences within and beyond the college, and ongoing action to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, St. Olaf prepares students for local and global engagement and professional accomplishment.

Criterion 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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.

Argument

1. *The St. Olaf Board of Regents adopted the college's current mission statement in May 2016.*

The collaborative and community-wide process St. Olaf used to develop and adopt its revised mission statement is detailed in 1.A. The information resources provided to the St. Olaf community and to the Board, together with the transparent, open, iterative, and responsive nature of the mission development process, are examples of integrity in the college's operations.

2. *In its policy documents and its regular practices, St. Olaf demonstrates integrity across all its functions.*

Financial functions

- The St. Olaf College Bylaws set forth principles and assign responsibilities to the Board and administration to ensure that the college operates with integrity in its financial functions.
- [Audited financial statements](#) for fiscal years [2016-17](#), [2017-18](#), [2018-19](#), [2019-20](#) and [2020-21](#), are posted on the college's website. Statements posted include those for the college; financial statements and Federal awards; the Emeriti Retiree Health Plan; and a 403(b) plan.
- The college maintains a [policy of avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interests](#) with respect to its employees.
- [Conflict of Interest forms](#) for Regents and Officers are collected each year with [submissions](#) kept in the office of the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.
- For each Board of Regents meeting, the VP/CFO prepares a [Budget Report](#) that reviews key financial indicators and current budget planning. The Board [Finance](#), [Audit](#) and [Investment](#) Committees review key reports and indicators and report to the full Board during its [Corporate Sessions](#).

- A [Code of Conduct for Educational Loans](#) establishes policies and practices for all educational loan activities. All St. Olaf employees, contract employees, Officers, Regents, and other "agents" must comply with this code of conduct.
- The Financial Aid Office continually monitors indicators such as [student indebtedness](#).
- The college's consistently low student loan cohort default rates provide testimony that St. Olaf operates its financial aid office with integrity. The [default rates](#) for FY 2016, FY 2017 and FY2018 were 0.5%, 1.0% and 0.8%.
- The Advancement and Development offices follow the [principles of practice](#) promulgated by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

Academic functions

- The St. Olaf College Board of Regents has responsibility for “overseeing the academic integrity of the [college], through actions such as the appointment of the President, the awarding of tenure to faculty upon the nomination of the President, and the adoption and dissemination of policies setting forth the rights and obligations of the faculty. (College Bylaws, Article III, [Section 3.02](#)).
- The statement "[Academic Integrity at St. Olaf](#)" expresses the community's commitment to principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility, and establishes policies and procedures to address violations of these principles.
- An [honor system](#) policy has been in effect at St. Olaf College since 1911, governing all tests, quizzes, and examinations of any kind given in all college courses. The Student Honor Council has initial jurisdiction over all allegations of academic dishonesty arising from class examinations and primary jurisdiction over potential violations of the St. Olaf Code of Test Etiquette. ([Honor Council Constitution](#) and [By-Laws](#))
- The [College catalog](#) sets forth the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, academic regulations and procedures, and other statements of academic policies and requirements.
- The [Student Handbook](#) "contains the college's official statements on policy related to student life, academic and non-academic, at St. Olaf."
- The [Faculty Manual](#) "sets forth the rights of faculty members, and various obligations of faculty members to the college, and of the college to faculty members, through policies adopted by the Board of Regents pursuant to its responsibility under [section 3.02](#) of the college bylaws." The manual, which "is recognized as a contract between each faculty member and the college," includes [sections](#) (Table of Contents) on faculty governance and regulations, and faculty personnel policies and procedures, including those regarding [appointment](#) (p. 29), [evaluation](#) (p. 48), [tenure](#) (p. 46), and [promotion](#) (p. 54).
- The [Faculty Handbook](#) "provides members of the faculty [information](#) beyond that included in the *Faculty Manual* that is important for their work as teachers, advisers, and scholars." The Handbook also includes information about faculty benefits.
- The minutes of all faculty meetings and faculty committee meetings provide records of how policies are implemented and processes are followed. [Committee](#) minutes and the [minutes of the faculty meetings](#) are available to the St. Olaf community through non-public secure websites.
- The Registrar's Office assures compliance with various federal regulations including the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (1974).

Personnel functions

- The college's [Mission Statement](#) and Staff Handbook [Code of Conduct](#) (p. 10) set forth the values and aspirations that guide all employees' work at St. Olaf.
- The [Staff Handbook](#) contains the basic guidelines, procedures, and benefits currently in effect at St. Olaf for staff.
- The [Faculty Manual](#) and the [Faculty Handbook](#) contain policies and procedures relating to faculty. The Manual states faculty member's ethical responsibilities and obligations in a section entitled "[Faculty Ethics](#) (p. 26)."
- The [Student Employment Handbook](#) sets forth policies and procedures relating to students employed by the college. The student employment section of the Human Resources website includes a link to this handbook. [Extensive training resources](#) are available to student work supervisors.
- The college participates in a [Campus Conduct Hotline](#). The Hotline is operated by an independent organization, which "enables employees or students to anonymously express any questions or concerns about possible violations of college policy or the law." If a call is received, the independent organization submits a summary to the President, the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, the Vice President and General Counsel and the chair of the Board of Regents Audit Committee.
- St. Olaf College is an equal opportunity employer, as stated clearly in both the [Staff Handbook](#) (p. 9) and the [Faculty Handbook](#).
- As a condition of employment, [background checks](#) are conducted before new employees begin their employment or before current employees begin a new position.
- [Training](#) on preventing sexual harassment, abuse and violence is required of all new employees.
- The college's Safety Committee has the [mission](#) of promoting a healthy and safe environment for working and learning at St. Olaf through making specific safety related [recommendations](#). Its [membership](#) represents a wide cross section of the St. Olaf Community.

Auxiliary functions

- Auxiliary functions at St. Olaf College exist primarily to support the highly-residential nature of the college. Over 90% of students live in residence halls on St. Olaf's campus. Auxiliary functions at St. Olaf include residence halls, food service, and the bookstore.
- Barnes & Noble College (BN College) manages the St Olaf College Bookstore, using the following practices to ensure operational integrity:
 - BN College publishes all ISBN and retail prices for textbooks and other required course materials, as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act.
 - BN College uses a third party vendor to review course packs for copyright compliance.
 - BN College is a member of the Fair Labor Association (FLA) and since 1998, has required all vendors who supply products to their stores to adopt the [FLA's Code of Conduct](#). All of the brands sold in our bookstores currently meet labor standards set by the Workers Rights Consortium (WCA), an independent labor rights monitoring organization.

- Since 1996, St. Olaf has contracted with Bon Appetit to provide food service to students. This contract is reviewed approximately every seven years.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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.

Argument

- 1. Accurate and comprehensive information about St. Olaf is provided on its institutional website, its primary mechanism for communication with students and the general public.*

Programs and requirements

The [Academic Catalog](#) is the primary resource for information about academic programs and the specific requirements for each program, as well as the overall graduation requirements. Students find requirements by following the links "The St. Olaf Curriculum, Graduation Requirements, and Degrees" and "Majors, Concentrations, Areas of Emphasis, and Teaching Certifications" under the drop-down for "The St. Olaf Curriculum." Students can also find requirements for majors, concentrations or areas of emphasis by each program listed under "Academic Departments and Programs." The link "Academic Regulations and Procedures" contains specific information about course credits, academic status, and grading rubrics. In addition, students can access information and tips about planning their academic program through the links on the [Academic Advising](#) website.

Prospective students find information about the programs of the college in several areas of the website. From the [Admissions Home Page](#) students can explore [majors and programs](#), learn about [clubs and organizations](#), browse [study abroad](#) programs and read about the [fine arts](#) programs.

In addition, St. Olaf provides three different ways to [visit the campus](#): in person, virtually, or through [Events Near You](#), by simply entering a zip code or US region. The [Admitted Student Day](#) program provides a comprehensive overview of the St. Olaf experience through Faculty roundtable discussions and panels on study abroad programs, music, athletics, internships, career planning, and health professions.

Faculty and staff

The [Academic Catalog](#) contains a link within its "People" section to the [Faculty Roster](#) of the college, which details the academic title of each faculty member, as well as the degrees each individual has earned and the institutions that granted their degrees. Each program's catalog page within the "Academic Programs" section of the website has a tab for listing all the faculty

teaching in that program, along with their area(s) of expertise. In addition, each academic program maintains its own website, linked from the Overview tab of the catalog listing, which contains a more detailed listing of faculty within the program, such as these examples from the [Biology](#) and [English](#) departments. And, finally, when accessing the [class schedules](#), either through the public portal or logged into the internal Student Information System, information about each faculty member is available by clicking on the name in the section listing. Student-facing offices often provide information about whom to contact for specific services, such as [this example](#) from the Registrar Office. Contact information for both faculty and staff is also available through the [online directory](#), searchable either by name or department/office.

Student costs

The [Admissions website](#) has an [Afford](#) link directly on the main page, where prospective students can easily see the overall cost of attendance. Links are also provided to the Financial Aid Office's [How to Apply](#) site and the [Net Price Calculator.](#), which also includes a link to [MyinTuition](#), providing a quick estimated range of possible aid scenarios at St. Olaf. For students needing more detailed information, student comprehensive fees, part-time and continuing student costs as well as additional fees are outlined on the [Student Accounts website](#). In addition, the [Affording St. Olaf](#) website describes the college's financial aid philosophy, outlines the various financial aid possibilities including current statistics about awards, and provides prospective students with links to the relevant forms and deadlines for application.

The Financial Aid Office includes a student's total cost of attendance in the financial aid awards mailed to prospective/first year students. The Business Office's Student Accounts Services clearly states credits and debits on [student billing](#) and requires all students to sign a [Financial Responsibility Agreement](#) each semester prior to registration, documenting their understanding of the financial obligation associated with registration at the college.

Governance structure

St. Olaf is a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). The college's relation to the ELCA is detailed in the [Articles of Incorporation](#) and the [College Bylaws](#), which are available on the [Board of Regents section](#) of the college website, as well as in the description of the college's [History and Heritage](#).

Accreditation

The [Accreditation](#) website prominently displays the Higher Learning Commission's Mark of Affiliation, as well as details about the accreditation criteria and the college's schedule in the accreditation cycle. In addition, the first item on the main page of the [Academic Catalog](#) indicates that St. Olaf is accredited by the HLC, with an external link to the current affiliation status. The "Memberships, Accreditations, Program Approvals, Organizations" link in the catalog contains a list of the ten academic programs within the college that are accredited or have received program approval by national associations.

2. Both participation data and assessment evidence demonstrate that St. Olaf promotes student learning and development through student research, community and global engagement, experiential learning, vocational exploration, and faith reflection.

St. Olaf's institutional-level learning goals, or "[StOGoals](#)," articulate the outcomes the college intends to foster through high-impact learning experiences in both the curriculum and co-curriculum. For example, the goal of "[Responsible Engagement](#)" encourages students to develop knowledge, skills, and commitments for enhancing the well-being of communities. The goals of "[Self Development](#)," "[Integration and Application](#)," and "[Vocational Discernment](#)" promote connection of intellectual and spiritual gifts, as well as experiential learning through research, internships, and other activities.

The college offers numerous opportunities for experiential learning in a wide variety of settings. The [Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#) (CURI) program helps students in all academic disciplines to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular subject by working closely with a St. Olaf faculty member in a research setting. The CURI summer undergraduate research program supports a [wide variety and substantial volume of collaborative projects](#) between students and faculty. These projects have resulted in [presentations, publications, awards, and fellowships](#) (p. 5) for students and faculty. Now in its twelfth year, CURI is undergoing a [self study and program review](#) which both draws upon the findings of its current [assessment practices](#) (p. 16) and plans to expand them.

The [Center for Interdisciplinary Research](#) (CIR) brings together students in statistics and data science, supervised by faculty in those fields, with domain experts conducting quantitative research in other academic departments and administrative offices across campus. Students [apply to become CIR Fellows](#). Once accepted, these students participate on research teams examining active research questions in [neuroscience, chemistry, political science, economics, education, psychology, health care, and many other areas](#). Additionally, they participate in a weekly seminar series designed to build collaborative research skills such as working in teams, consulting effectively, researching ethically, and communicating proficiently. Founded in 2004 and expanded in 2011 with the help of two consecutive NSF grants totaling \$2.9 million, the CIR is in its 18th year of providing statistics and data science students with training and experience conducting interdisciplinary research projects, and it has become a national model for undergraduate research. More than 300 students have been CIR Fellows, and more than 100 research projects have been completed with domain experts from all across campus. In turn, many of those students have continued on to careers or graduate programs in statistics and related fields, often citing their participation in the CIR as one of their central influences. On average, four to six students per year enter graduate programs in statistics or related fields.

[Academic Civic Engagement](#) (ACE, also known as service-learning or community-engaged learning) contributes to students' understanding of local communities, social systems, change, and action. In the most recent year, 39 courses (6% of all total courses offered) were designated as ACE and served a total of 732 students (25% of total student body). Over 60% of students will have taken an ACE course by the time they graduate. According to [participant data](#) gathered over the past eight years, ACE participants are similar to the overall student population with respect to racial identity and economic background, although female-identifying students are somewhat overrepresented. ACE students, faculty, and community partners are regularly

surveyed, and the program maintains a portfolio of selected student reflection artifacts, to evaluate what went well in the ACE component and how student experiences might be improved in the future. ACE will soon undergo its first 10-year program review process in conjunction with its umbrella office, the International and Off-Campus Studies office (recently renamed the Smith Center for Global Engagement.).

The discernment and pursuit of vocation is supported by the [Piper Center for Vocation and Career](#), which equips St. Olaf students with resources for reflection, self-development, and achievement of immediate and life-long career success. Home to a robust selection of programs and services for students and alumni, the Piper Center's [mission](#) is to help students identify their skills, abilities, interests, and values; relate their skills to a vocation; explore a variety of professional options; and develop a post-college plan. The professional staff and undergraduate peer advisors facilitate students' [career exploration](#) and development and help students identify [research, internship, and fellowship](#) opportunities on and off campus. Between June 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022, the Piper Center engaged 73% of current students through individual consultations, event attendance, or both, and distributed \$701,000 in funding to 280 students to support unpaid or underpaid internships or similar career experiences. In FY2020-21, 349 alumni completed 1,208 appointments with career coaches in the Piper Center.

St. Olaf's new OLE Core general education curriculum includes a new [Ole Experience in Practice](#) requirement, in which students integrate academic and experiential learning by applying classroom theories and ideas in a practical setting and/or drawing upon experiential learning to advance their understanding in an academic setting. Students may satisfy the requirement through either credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing experiences, which may include mentored undergraduate research, academic civic engagement, off-campus study, internships, field practicums, or other faculty-supervised high impact experiences. The intended learning outcomes of this component will be assessed through the college assessment cycle (see 4.B).

Co-curricular programming also provides numerous opportunities for exploring faith and values and engaging in holistic self-development. Consistent with its identity as a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, St. Olaf's [College Ministry](#) plays a central role in this part of the college mission, offering pastoral care, Sunday worship during the academic year, and a weekday chapel service. St. Olaf is also home to an ELCA student congregation, and students can serve as campus leaders on the [student congregational council](#). Students are also involved in a variety of other [student religious organizations](#), which offer spiritual enrichment and exploration of various faith traditions. In recent years, with funding from St. Olaf's Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community (see below), the College Ministry team has expanded to include an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life and an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life, both of whom have greatly enriched the religious community at St. Olaf.

Rooted in Lutheran tradition and engaging all traditions, St. Olaf's [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) advances a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21st century, fosters inter-religious engagement, nurtures vocational discernment, and provides national and global thought leadership. In collaboration with other Centers and offices, the Lutheran Center hosts speakers such as Eboo Patel, founder and President of Interfaith America; partners with the multi-faith College Ministry team to convene a Student Interreligious Council; sponsors 4-6 student Interfaith Fellows each year; coordinates community book reads, seminars, and

discussion groups that engage alumni as well as current students, faculty, and staff; and supports student internships in congregations and non-profit organizations. The Lutheran Center also provides professional development and lay leadership programming for faith communities, with associated experiential learning opportunities for students.

St. Olaf shares on its website numerous outcomes measures with regard to the above student experiences. Table 2.B-1 summarizes seniors' responses to questions on the frequency with which they engaged in various activities discussed above.

Table 2.B-1: Items from NSSE 2021	
<u>Items 11</u> (p. 31) and <u>16</u> (p. 38)	Percent*
Internship, clinical experience	65%
Faculty research	51%
Community service/volunteer work	37%
*Responses for seniors only. Percent includes respondents who indicated activity was <i>done</i> or <i>in progress</i> .	

Alumni results are consistent, and also affirm that participation in these educationally enriching activities makes a substantial contribution to their learning and development.

Table 2.B-2: Items from HEDS Alumni Survey 2021: 5-year out cohort		
Items 11 and 12	<u>Participation*</u> (p. 26)	<u>Contribution**</u> (p. 29)
Internships	52%	66%
Community service	62%	45%
Service organizations	55%	38%
Research with faculty	33%	56%
Religious groups	32%	35%
*Participation includes respondents who indicated participating at least <i>sometimes</i> .		
**Contribution includes respondents who indicated <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> .		

Engaging in an enriched educational environment contributes to student learning and development in several meaningful ways. Seniors reported, for example, that their experiences contributed *quite a bit* or *very much* to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in writing, speaking, thinking critically, and analyzation. Table 2.B-3 summarizes seniors' responses.

Table 2.B-3: Items from NSSE 2021	
Item 18 (p. 40)	Percent*
Writing clearly and effectively	86%
Speaking clearly and effectively	69%
Thinking critically and analytically	89%
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	60%
*Responses for seniors only. Percent includes respondents who indicated <i>quite a bit</i> or <i>very much</i> .	

In addition, alumni share that their St. Olaf experience helped them gain [financial independence](#) and [personal fulfillment](#). Co-curricular and complementary instructional programs are a robust and valued component of the enriched educational environment at St. Olaf College, and students are participating in a wide variety of activities, which is substantially enriching their intellectual and personal development.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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.

Argument

- 1. Individual Board member knowledge and skills, together with Board orientation, organization, and operations, enable the Board to make informed decisions and meet its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.*

The ability of the Board to make informed and appropriate decisions that advance the interests of the college begins with the characteristics of the individuals who are elected to serve as Regents. These characteristics are set forth in the Board's policy document [Commitments, Competencies, and Composition of the St. Olaf College Board of Regents](#). The Board seeks members who not only demonstrate commitment to the mission and values of the college but who also bring a variety of intellectual and personal traits necessary for effective governance, with a record of professional accomplishment and community leadership. In assessing prospective Regent candidates, the Board's Nominating and Governance Committee gives careful consideration to their substantive knowledge and leadership experience, to ensure that the Board has both the subject-matter expertise and strategic understanding necessary for effective higher education governance. Most [current Regents](#) have significant experience as executive leaders and members of other corporate and/or non-profit boards, and each Regent contributes in distinctive ways to the collective knowledge and skill of the Board.

New Regents are oriented to their governance responsibilities in a variety of ways. They are provided with experienced Regent mentors assigned by the Board Chair and guided by [mentoring guidelines](#) from the Board Nominating and Governance Committee. New Regents also participate in an [orientation session](#), normally during their first year on the Board, which focuses on Board member fiduciary responsibilities, the college's strategic priorities and financial position, and the distinctive nature of governance in higher education. They are provided a curated list of [internal and external information resources](#) to use throughout their time on the Board, including links to key sites and documents on the college website and access to

resources from the Association of Governing Boards, *Inside Higher Education*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The organization of the Board also supports informed and autonomous decision making and the discharge of the Board's legal obligations and fiduciary responsibilities of care, loyalty, and obedience. The Board's [ten standing committees](#) enable Board members to specialize in a variety of academic, financial, legal, and community life matters and to share their knowledge with other Board members through reporting and action recommendations. The [Audit Committee](#) assures the quality and integrity of the accounting, auditing, compliance, and reporting practices of the college. To enhance committee expertise in particular areas, the Board Chair may appoint non-Regents to serve on Board committees, though all Board committees must be chaired by a Regent.

The full Board meets three times annually, typically over a two-day period in October, February, and May. [Board meeting schedules](#) include plenary sessions, Corporate and Executive sessions of the Board, committee meetings, and periodic presentations and discussions with faculty, staff, and students. To inform their deliberations, Regents receive an electronic [Board Meeting Book](#) of materials prepared by members of the President's Leadership Team (PLT), including a [Report](#) from the Team; background information for plenary sessions; the Corporate Session agenda and resolutions; minutes of all sessions held during the previous Board meeting; and other materials relevant to the specific agenda for each Board meeting. The Board also receives a [Board Meeting Book Supplement](#) with recent agendas and minutes of all Board committees. The Board maintained these practices throughout most of the pandemic. The exception was an abbreviated Board meeting in May 2020, which was focused almost entirely on COVID-related issues; however, that shortened May meeting was supplemented by additional monthly meetings from April through September 2020.

The Board remains up-to-date on developments at the college throughout the year through monthly letters from the President and biweekly meetings between the President and the Board chair. The Board's education, deliberations, and actions are facilitated by the on-line platform BoardEffect, which includes current and archived materials for the full Board and individual committees, the Board calendar and directory, New Regent Orientation materials, and a resource library.

2. The deliberations of the Board, both in its committees and in its full Board sessions, are focused on issues of strategic significance and institutional advancement.

The [annual calendar of Board meeting topics and actions](#) indicates the wide variety of strategic and fiduciary issues regularly addressed by the Board. Recent plenary session examples include:

- [Student Housing Project Analysis and Update](#) (January 2020)
- [HLC Quality Initiative: Co-Creating an Inclusive Community project](#) (May 2021)
- [Report from the Board of Regents Visioning Task Force](#) (October 2021)
- [Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf](#) (February 2022)

The responsibilities of the Board's ten standing committees are strategic in nature and are specified in their respective [charters](#), reviewed annually by each committee and updated as

needed. During Board Corporate Sessions, the chairs of all standing committees report on their committee's work and present resolutions for Board action. Under the direction of the Board's Nominating and Governance Committee, the Board Secretary gathers post-meeting feedback from the Regents on the quality and impact of the meeting. A [three-year longitudinal summary of evaluation results](#) (October 2018 – February 2021), as well as all Board meeting evaluations since then, indicate 100% respondent agreement that Board meetings focus on agenda items of strategic importance and enable Regents to add value to the college.

3. Careful attention to the interests of internal and external constituencies in Board deliberations is facilitated by the composition of the Board, direct constituency engagement, and data-informed discussion.

The composition of the Board is attentive to the college's constituencies as a result of both the provisions of the college's governing documents and the purposefulness of Regent recruitment. A key external constituency is the denomination with which the college is affiliated, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). [Article III, Section 3.01 of the College Bylaws](#) (p. 2) stipulates that "The Board shall sustain and support the Lutheran tradition of St. Olaf College and its commitments to academic excellence, engagement with faith and values, vocational discernment, and religious inclusivity deriving from that tradition." [Section 3.03](#) (p. 2) requires that at least 40% of the Board's members must hold membership in the ELCA and that a majority must hold membership in either the ELCA or one of denominations with which the ELCA is in full communion. [Section 3.04](#) (p. 3) requires that at least one Regent shall be an ELCA bishop or other recognized ELCA leader.

Another key constituency is the college's alumni; [Article III, Section 3.06](#) (p. 4) requires the Board to include two Regents who are appointed to represent them, one of whom must have graduated within three years of the date of his or her appointment, and one of whom serves as liaison to the college's Alumni Board.

The Nominating and Governance Committee is responsible for establishing [recruitment priorities for the Board of Regents](#) and assessing candidate qualities against those priorities. The college maintains a [Board Profile](#) with key demographic data about current Regents to inform new Regent recruitment, with the goal of building a Board that reflects "the diverse population of students, families, and constituencies served by the college." As a result, consistent with St. Olaf's national student body and liberal arts curriculum, Regents pursue various professions, live in various parts of the United States, and are demographically diverse.

Board deliberations also include opportunities for engagement with faculty, staff, and students, as described in more detail in 5.B.2. Per the provisions of [Faculty Manual 3.V](#) (p. 22), a faculty-elected Faculty Representative and Faculty Representative-elect attend all Board meetings, as does a student-elected Student Observer to the Board of Regents; all three sit with various Board Committees as well. On-campus Board meetings typically include opportunities for the Regents to engage with current students and with faculty members from various departments and divisions, whether in committee or with the full Board. For example, during the October 2021 Board meeting, Regent/faculty/student discussion groups shared their responses to a Regent Task Force report articulating a vision for the college's next several years, and a [summary of discussion group feedback](#) was included in the meeting materials for the Board's subsequent

meeting. Several committees regularly include academic and administrative leaders in addition to the members of the President's Leadership Team in their meetings. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment and the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid attend Community Life Committee meetings; the College Controller attends Audit Committee meetings; the Assistant Vice President for Budget and Auxiliary Operations attends meetings of the Finance Committee; and the Associate Provost (a faculty member) attends on-campus meetings of the Academic Affairs Committee.

The Regents' deliberations are also thoroughly informed by institutional data, student learning assessment results, and other kinds of information about students, alumni, and employees. The current [strategic plan](#) includes specific metrics for the goals it identifies, and the Board receives annual [updates](#) on the implementation and outcomes of the plan which include data – often longitudinal – that speak directly to those metrics. The college also establishes and publicizes annual Board-approved [goals for the academic year](#) and reports to the Board on the [outcomes of the previous year's goals](#) at the Board's October meeting. The college's 2020-22 Quality Initiative resulted in new [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion data dashboards](#), developed in consultation with two Board committees, for annual Regent review and response. Each Board meeting book, in particular the [President's Leadership Team report](#), also provides substantial data pertinent to the college's internal and external constituencies.

4. The Board of Regents protects itself and the college from undue influence.

The college's governing documents include several provisions protecting the Board and the college from undue influence. The governing documents ensure an appropriate relationship between the college and the denomination with which it is affiliated, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The college's [Articles of Incorporation, Article V](#) (p. 2) establishes the membership of the college Corporation, which consists of the ELCA Church Council (governing board), the officers of the ELCA, the college President, and the members of the Board of Regents. The [College Bylaws, Article II](#) (p. 2) defines the quorum that must be present in order for a meeting of the Corporation to take any action (other than adjournment) as including at least 50% of the Regents, participating either in person or by means of remote communication.

The governing documents include provisions that mitigate potential conflicts of interest. [Article IV of the Articles of Incorporation](#) (p. 2) provides that, apart from compensation for goods and services, the college shall not afford pecuniary gain to its Regents, its officers, or any other private individual. [Article XI of the Bylaws](#) (p. 12) requires the Board to adopt a conflict of interest policy that applies to all Regents, officers, committee members, and key employees and that must be annually reviewed by each individual to whom it applies. Among the responsibilities of the Board's [Audit Committee](#) is oversight of "the process for identifying conflicts of interest and ensuring that related party matters for both Regents and employees are handled properly." All Regents and the members of the President's Leadership Team complete a [Disclosures and Conflict of Interest Form](#) every year, each of which is reviewed annually by the Board Audit Committee. The college also maintains and abides by a detailed [Gift Acceptance Policy](#), overseen and periodically reviewed by the Board Advancement and College Communications Committee. The policy is intended to ensure that "the entire philanthropic

process is mutually beneficial to St. Olaf College and the donor(s)” and that all gifts “are appropriate to the mission and needs of the college.”

5. *Both the governing documents of the college and the practices of the Board focus the Board’s work on oversight rather than day-to-day management of administrative and academic affairs.*

The responsibilities of the Board as outlined in the Bylaws are clearly focused on oversight rather than operational responsibilities. [Article III, Section 3.02](#) (p. 2) establishes that the Board "shall be responsible for overseeing the academic integrity" of the College, "through actions such as the appointment of the President, the awarding of tenure to faculty upon the nomination of the President, and the adoption and dissemination of policies setting forth the rights and obligations of the faculty." As set forth in [Article VI](#) (pp. 8-10), the day-to-day management of the college rests with the administrative and academic officers. The college president is specifically responsible for “management of the daily operations and business of the Corporation consistent with the policies established by the Board of Regents.” The president also recommends the appointment of the other administrative officers of the college and supervises their work. [Article VIII](#) (p. 11) provides that the faculty shall have primary responsibility for academic matters, with some powers and duties subject to final approval by the President and Board of Regents. The *Faculty Manual*, also subject to approval by the Board, further defines the rights and obligations of faculty members ([Section 1.I](#), p. 1) . As indicated in 2.C.2 and 5.A, the practices of the Board both as a whole and in its committees comport with these provisions of the college Bylaws.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

St. Olaf values the free search for and expression of truth as central to the common good and applicable to all teaching, learning, and scholarly and creative activities.

[*Faculty Manual 4.I.B*](#) (p. 25) preserves "the rights of the teacher and of the student for freedom in learning." The *Manual* further elaborates that it is the responsibility of all faculty members "to seek and to state the truth in [their] subjects as they see it," to maintain "an atmosphere of free and unhampered inquiry," and to foster "independence and originality of thought" among their students.

The student handbook ("[The Book](#)") states that "[s]tudents are free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled." The college believes that "student performance should be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards." It further states that if students believe they have been "subject to prejudice or capricious academic evaluation, they have the right to appeal to the chair of the department or to the Associate Dean of the Faculty of which the professor is a member." In cases where this is not satisfactory, students may appeal to the Dean of the College.

The pursuit of truth requires academic honesty and integrity, discussed in 2.E.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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.

Argument

1. *St. Olaf ensures the professionalism and regulatory, ethical, and fiscal integrity of research and scholarly practice through detailed institutional policies and clear structures and procedures for oversight.*

[Faculty Manual 4.I.C.1](#) (p. 26) emphasizes the obligation of faculty to "practice intellectual honesty" in their vocation as they "seek and...state the truth" in all aspects of their work with students, faculty and staff colleagues, their scholarly communities, and the public. The *Manual* further obligates faculty to avoid conflicts of interest that may hamper their freedom of inquiry and teaching; to protect the academic freedom of their students and colleagues; to avoid the exploitation of students; to acknowledge students' contributions to their own scholarly activities; to recognize their scholarly debts and benefactors; to judge the merit of others' scholarly work impartially; and to promote an atmosphere of free inquiry and the respect thereof in civil society. The [Faculty Handbook](#) (p. 7) contains information on copyright and fair use, providing guidance on the use of copyrighted works in teaching and scholarship.

The Office of the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) upholds the college's [conflicts of financial interest policy](#) for employees, covering both grant-funded research and other academic projects. These provisions require college employees to disclose financial conflicts of interest that may influence or impede their research at the time they apply for external funding. Before funding proposals are approved, researchers must certify that no financial conflicts of interest exist, or that safeguards are in place to prevent potential conflicts from influencing their research or scholarship. The Business Office and the Government, Foundation, and Corporate Relations Office (GFCR) monitor the financial activity of grants received by college researchers and provide guidance to ensure that grant expenditures comply with the policies of the college and sponsoring agencies.

In compliance with applicable laws and regulations, St. Olaf follows protocols designed to protect the safety of researchers and the rights and welfare of human and animal research participants. As described in more detail below, the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) reviews

research projects that study people to confirm that such investigations adhere to the “ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice.”

The [Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#) (EHS) establishes policies and procedures to ensure safe environments in laboratories, art studios, and theater spaces. EHS publishes the [Chemical Hygiene Plan and Laboratory Safety Manual](#), conveying rules, guidelines, and procedures for the safe operation of laboratories. EHS also maintains a repository of safety data sheets to inform researchers of the proper use of and risks associated with substances used in laboratories. In coordination with EHS, the [Art and Art History Department](#) and [Theater Department](#) provide their own safety manuals to ensure the proper handling of substances and use of equipment in their spaces.

The [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) (IACUC) reviews all applications to conduct research and treatment of live vertebrate animals according to the Animal Welfare Act (1966) and other applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. IACUC annually reviews laboratory protocols for the responsible care and use of animals, in accordance with the policies and guidelines issued by the University of Minnesota’s IACUC.

2. St. Olaf provides extensive training and guidance to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice.

The IRB website directs researchers to complete training and other requirements before their projects commence. All investigators of inquiry projects involving people (whether faculty, staff, or students, and whether or not their project requires IRB review), and the supervisors of student projects, are required to read the college's statement on [Ethical Principles, Practical Applications, and Investigator Obligations](#). Depending on the type of inquiry, researchers are required or encouraged to complete training in research ethics through the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI) and to submit an [ethics plan](#) for IRB review. IRB members are available to help researchers navigate IRB requirements and complete an ethics plan. GFCR offers additional support for sponsored projects.

Student researchers also receive ethics training and support from faculty mentors. The [Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#) (CURI) program, which supports mentored student research during the summer, requires all students to complete "[Responsible Conduct of Research](#)" training offered by CITI prior to beginning the program. Students participating in research funded by the National Science Foundation also complete the CITI course. Other students may be required or encouraged by their supervising faculty or sponsoring agencies to complete this training. The Office of EHS and the Chemical Hygiene Officer offer CURI students additional training on lab safety.

The Chemical Hygiene Officer (CHO) supports laboratory safety and compliance for researchers through operational audits, training, and onsite consultations. The CHO also maintains a comprehensive [website on all aspects of laboratory safety](#). Faculty and students who work with live animals must complete the IACUC Animal Use Tutorial.

3. *Students receive guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources in multiple forms and at multiple points throughout their education.*

The [Student Handbook](#) (“*The Book*”) explains the principles of academic integrity that the college expects students to observe. Students follow policies designed to create a climate of “intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research and service” based on mutual trust, fairness, respect and the free exchange of ideas. Faculty also support this climate as models and teachers of free inquiry and academic integrity.

In the [First-Year Seminar](#) (FYS), students are taught to “[i]dentify, evaluate, and utilize a variety of academic sources.” Research and Instruction Librarians introduce these skills in FYS and [provide consultations and instruction](#) in other courses on copyright and fair use, research data management, citations, and the responsible use of information resources, as well as online field-specific [research guides](#). Peer Writing Tutors educate students about the purpose of citations and the ways to avoid plagiarism during writing consultations. The Student Life Committee also maintains a [webpage of resources](#) to help students understand and avoid plagiarism.

The research training requirements described above guide students in research ethics. The college’s [policies and procedures for human subjects research projects](#) are designed to be educational as well as federally-compliant, and extend to projects that do not require review by the full IRB. Finally, courses in a variety of disciplines, particularly those introducing research practices in the field, include instruction in the ethics of research and information use.

4. *The college expects faculty, staff, and students to pursue their research and scholarship with honesty and integrity, and maintains procedures for investigating and adjudicating allegations of research misconduct or academic dishonesty.*

In compliance with 42 CFR 93 (Public Health Service Policies on Research Misconduct), the [Faculty Handbook](#) specifies the policy and procedures for addressing possible misconduct in research “supported by or for which support is requested from the Public Health Service (PHS).” [Faculty Manual 4.IX](#) (p. 64) indicates the causes for which a faculty member may be sanctioned by the college, including for “dishonesty in teaching or research,” and delineates the process by which such matters are investigated and resolved.

The CFO [delegates to the Associate Provost](#) (p. 4) the responsibility to review disclosures of conflicts of financial interest for grant-funded research and other academic projects. The Associate Provost determines if an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest exists and decides the actions necessary to address such conflicts.

The St. Olaf Honor System entrusts students to hold themselves and their peers accountable for their academic conduct on examinations. Students pledge to abide by the [Honor Code](#) during examinations. The [Honor Council](#) is the “student body charged with adjudicating allegations of academic dishonesty on examinations.” Besides Honor Code violations on examinations, [The Book](#) also lists other circumstances in which an instructor may file an Allegation of Academic Dishonesty Form – cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, multiple submission, and complicity in the academic dishonesty of other community members – and explains the process for addressing such allegations.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

St. Olaf College demonstrates consistent integrity in all aspects of its operations.

- A. The college's governing documents, administrative policies, reporting and review practices, and Board oversight practices ensure integrity in the college's financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions, extending to all members of the college community.
- B. The college provides accurate, up-to-date, and comprehensive information about its programs and requirements, faculty and staff, fees and expenses, institutional control, accreditation, and student learning experiences and outcomes.
- C. The college's governing documents, and the composition, structure and governance practices of the Board of Regents, ensure that the Board makes appropriately autonomous and informed decisions that comply with Board policies, advance the best interests of the college, and assure the institution's integrity.
- D. The *Faculty Manual* and the Student Handbook express the institution's commitments to freedom of inquiry and expression in research, teaching, and learning, and include specific protections for faculty and students in the exercise of that freedom.
- E. Responsible discovery and use of knowledge by all members of the St. Olaf community is assured through documents such as the *Faculty Manual* and the Student Handbook; policies such as those governing inquiries with human subjects and the St. Olaf Honor System; required training; widespread and effective ethics instruction; and effective oversight.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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).

Argument

- 1. The currency and rigor of courses and programs at St. Olaf are assured by extensive curriculum review processes within programs and departments, through the faculty governance system, and in regular and thoroughgoing program reviews.*

Responsibility for the currency and academic levels of courses throughout St. Olaf's curriculum is shared between individual programs and departments and two elected faculty committees, the [Curriculum Committee](#) (p. 11) and the [Assessment Committee](#) (p. 10). All new courses and substantive changes to programs, majors and general education requirements are subject to voting approval by the entire faculty of the college.

Peer review of courses and programs is carried out through the faculty Curriculum Committee, charged with responsibility for policies "that affect the curricular integrity of the college," and required to bring to the full faculty for vote "matters that are of importance to the faculty," including "significant changes to the academic information in the catalog" (*Faculty Manual* [3.IV.B.2.d](#) - p. 16). General graduation requirements, the General Education curriculum, individual courses, and requirements for a major or concentration are among such "significant changes," and any changes to these require a formal motion from the Committee and an affirmative vote by the faculty as a whole.

The Curriculum Committee brings a motion to the faculty to approve a new course only after the proposal has been reviewed and approved at multiple levels: by the department chair or program director, by the appropriate associate dean(s), by the New Proposals Subcommittee of the elected faculty Curriculum Committee (which includes a member of the Registrar's Office staff), and by

the full Curriculum Committee. A [new course proposal](#) must include a rationale for the addition of the course to the college curriculum, specifically addressing “the unique contribution of the course to the department/program” and “the unique contribution of the course to the overall college curriculum.” If the course is proposed for general education credit, the proposal must show how the course meets each of the guidelines for the specific GE (phasing out) or OLE Core requirement(s) for which the course is being proposed. The New Proposals Subcommittee not infrequently returns proposals to instructors and chairs with questions or requests for modification, and the full Curriculum Committee at times also requests changes. The faculty governance system is thus a critical vehicle for assuring the academic integrity, including the currency and appropriateness, of each course offered by the college.

Course descriptions and syllabi are key indicators of the currency and appropriateness of St. Olaf courses. The new course proposal includes style and content instructions for both the course descriptions that are published in the college catalog and the content of course syllabi or, in the event that the instructor has not yet prepared a syllabus for a proposed course, extended course descriptions. In addition to this guidance, the Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts provides [a comprehensive guide for syllabus preparation](#) that addresses both content and language issues conveying the college’s commitment to equitable, inclusive, and antiracist teaching and learning, and includes links to a variety of relevant college resources, such as the land acknowledgement, a recommended statement regarding ability, language about mental health, and more. The Division of Student Life has also prepared a [compendium of recommended syllabus statements](#) addressing a variety of topics, from academic integrity to confidential resources for students who may be experiencing bias, discrimination, or harassment.

The currency of individual courses is further assured by college policy concerning the length of time a course may continue to be "active" without actually being offered. According to [college policy governing dormant or expired courses](#), "Once approved, a course becomes a regular, self-renewing part of a department's curriculum, unless that course is not taught for four consecutive years. After four years of inactivity, a course is classified as 'dormant,' and cannot be taught unless re-approved by the Curriculum Committee. After eight consecutive years of inactivity, a course officially expires, and is no longer a curricular asset of any department." Re-approval by the Committee requires the preparation and review of a proposal and rationale for reinstatement that is very similar to the proposal and rationale required for an entirely new course.

Consideration of currency and appropriateness is not limited to individual courses. The currency and appropriateness of entire programs - a major, a concentration, a "conversation" (general education learning community) program, and the general education OLE Core curriculum as a whole - are also attributable in part to the faculty governance system. Proposals to [add a new major or concentration, or to change requirements for an existing major or concentration](#), like proposals for new courses, are brought by the Curriculum Committee to the full faculty for a vote only after an extensive prior review process. Changes to the portfolio of programs available through the Office of International and Off-Campus Studies (IOS), while not brought to the full faculty for a vote, are also reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and subject to its approval. The regular program review process, described in 4.A.1., also serves to sustain the currency and appropriateness of the academic programs of the college.

On occasion, the work of the Curriculum Committee is supplemented by a special task force. A particularly important recent example was the General Education Task Force [established by faculty vote on October 13, 2016](#). Over a period of three years, several iterations of this task force gradually crafted what is now known as the OLE Core general education curriculum. Task force members attended several national general education conferences, consulted with campus experts, and held numerous campus-wide forums inviting input from a wide cross section of the St. Olaf academic and student support communities. The OLE Core for the Bachelor of Arts degree was ratified by the faculty at its [November 7, 2019](#) meeting. Six months later, at its [May 7, 2020 meeting](#), the faculty approved OLE Core general education requirements for the Bachelor of Music degree. The new curricula apply to students entering the college under its 2021-22 catalog.

Formerly a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, the now fully independent Assessment Committee also plays a key role assuring the currency and level of student academic experiences. The Assessment Committee focuses on existing courses and programs of study. For both the OLE Core general education curriculum and program offerings by departments and programs of the college, the Assessment Committee supports the creation of required intended learning outcomes (ILOs) through active feedback on ILO proposals. Departments and programs are required to produce [decennial assessment plans](#) as part of their regular cycle of program reviews. These plans routinely include an examination of existing program ILOs to ensure currency and the examination of direct student artifacts to gather information on student mastery of both skills and content within the discipline at hand. The results of these assessment exercises are included in the departmental or program self-study documents which are shared with external reviewers, ensuring that the reviewers will be able to comment on both student competency and curricular currency.

A similar assessment process supports the OLE Core general education curriculum. The OLE Core is divided into [sixteen attributes](#), each of which has its own set of [intended learning outcomes](#) which have been approved by the college's faculty through a faculty-wide vote on a resolution brought to the faculty by the Curriculum Committee. The Assessment Committee is in the final stages of building a system by which every ILO of every attribute is rigorously [assessed at regular intervals](#), typically every three or four years. For each of these 50 distinct ILOs the precise method of assessment, direct examination of student artifacts, consideration of syllabi, etc., is determined by the Assessment Committee based on the nature of the specific ILO being considered. This assessment process guarantees that the courses meeting general education requirements are continuing to provide the experiences and expertise promised when those courses were originally approved by the Curriculum Committee.

As mentioned briefly above, St. Olaf assures the currency and appropriateness of the curriculum through a regular cycle of [program review](#) for all of its programs, involving an [extended self-study](#) and a campus visit by a team of external reviewers with curricular and programmatic expertise in the area being reviewed. These teams interview a wide range of campus constituencies and produce a report outlining program strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvements moving forward. The St. Olaf faculty in the program being reviewed are given an opportunity to respond, in writing, to the reviewers' report. Both reports are then forwarded to the appropriate Associate Dean and on to the full Deans Council and Provost. These program reviews typically follow a [ten year cycle](#); see 4.A.1 for additional detail.

Several St. Olaf programs are also [accredited or otherwise reviewed](#) by their respective professional associations, reviews that often include institutional-level evaluation as well as programmatic evaluation. The associations that regularly accredit, certify, or otherwise review St. Olaf programs are:

1. American Chemical Society
2. Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
3. Council on Social Work Education
4. National Association of Schools of Art and Design
5. National Association of Schools of Dance
6. National Association of Schools of Music
7. National Association of Schools of Theater
8. Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board

2. St. Olaf has articulated intended learning outcomes for both of its undergraduate degree programs at both the institutional and program level.

St. Olaf College offers only undergraduate programs, specifically a Bachelor of Music degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree. As detailed in 3.A.1 and 4.B.1, intended learning outcomes have been articulated for the institution as a whole, for each of the requirements in the college's OLE Core general education program, and for each academic program (major, concentration, Conversation, and other) offered by the college. In addition, the college provides [public access to all its institutional-level assessment results](#) and to [summaries of program-level and general education assessment results](#).

3. St. Olaf's faculty governance system, academic administrative practices, and assessment program assure consistency of program quality and learning goals across different locations and modes of delivery.

St. Olaf College is a single-campus institution where almost all courses are offered in a face-to-face manner. The COVID-19 emergency required the college to quickly shift to a full online delivery mode for the spring semester of 2020 and a mixture of online and in person classes during the 2020-21 academic year. The college returned to entirely in person classes during the fall term of 2021. The rise of the Omicron variant led the college to return to mostly online classes for the 2022 interim (January term). As described in our ongoing notifications to HLC during our temporary shift to on-line and, later, hybrid operations, we assured consistent quality by dramatically expanding instructional resources for online and hybrid teaching through our [Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts](#) and [Information Technology](#); by continued administration of course evaluations; and by maintaining our schedule of institutional-level and program-level assessment.

Apart from this very limited on-line learning opportunity, the principal area requiring oversight of the consistency of learning goals and quality is off-campus study. The college offers more than 120 domestic and international off campus programs of widely varying types during our [interim \(January\)](#) term as well as [semester and year long programs](#). As indicated in our [2020 senior class profile](#), nearly three-quarters of our students study off campus at least once prior to graduation.

Proposals for new St. Olaf off-campus courses and programs are subject to precisely the same standards and approval processes as new on-campus courses or programs. They must be reviewed and approved by the faculty Curriculum Committee and subsequently by action of the faculty as a whole, just like courses and programs offered on campus, whether taught by St. Olaf faculty or offered by a partner university or program.

Courses and programs offered off campus are also subject to a high level of continuous review to assure consistency of program goals and quality. St. Olaf maintains an [approved list of semester and year-long programs](#) that have been vetted by the Office of International and Off-Campus Studies (IOS) and the Curriculum Committee. New proposals may be initiated by the Director of IOS or by faculty members, and must be supported by at least one department or on-campus program as a valuable addition to the college's offerings. IOS submits a report to the Curriculum Committee and assigns a faculty advisor for the new program. Once initially approved, the program remains in pilot status until there is a record of student evaluations of the program, typically three years. If these reviews have been positive, IOS initiates a second report to have the program moved from pilot to permanent status. All "permanent" programs are thoroughly reviewed by the curriculum committee every eight to ten years, or sooner if there have been problems or changes that need to be examined.

Off-campus Interim courses follow a similar process of continuous review. New Interim programs require a course proposal following the same format as an on-campus course, supplemented by a course itinerary connecting the course proposal to the location(s) of study. In the case of faculty-led courses, the Interim instructors write a [detailed report](#) at the end of the month which is reviewed by the Director of IOS together with student evaluations. The faculty curriculum committee provides additional review as needed each time the Interim course is proposed to be repeated. Courses repeated after a lapse of four years or longer require a new course proposal.

Off-campus courses taught by St. Olaf faculty members that are proposed for general education credit must demonstrate their fidelity to the same guidelines that govern the OLE Core accreditation of on-campus courses and are reviewed in the same way as on-campus proposals. The decision to award GE credit to a course offered by a non-St. Olaf faculty member as part of an off-campus semester or year-long program has historically been made by the St. Olaf faculty program advisor using the same criteria for awarding such credits to on-campus courses. Beginning in the fall of 2022 this decision will be made by the college's Registrar's Office. IOS maintains a record of courses that have been previously approved for GE credit to assure consistency from year to year.

One collection of courses for which there is significant potential for variation are academic internships. These involve many different organizations, job responsibilities, and field supervisors. To address this challenge, St. Olaf requires faculty supervision and the use of an internship learning plan for [all internships that carry academic credit](#). These help to maintain consistency in the quality of the learning experience across a broad array of opportunities.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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.

Argument

1. *The breadth, depth, and content of the general education curriculum clearly reflect the college's mission-based commitments to exploration of the liberal arts and vocation, examination of faith and values, and engagement in an inclusive, globally engaged community. St. Olaf articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its general education program in multiple ways.*

St. Olaf offers two degree programs, a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Music (a professional music degree with approximately two-thirds of the coursework in music). The [B.A. program offers 45 majors, 22 concentrations, and 16 teaching certifications, while the B.M. offers five different majors](#). The B.A. degree, with its full complement of general education requirements, was awarded to 95% of the students in the graduating classes of 2017 to 2021. The remaining 5% earned the B.M., which requires students to complete the same breadth of requirements but not the same number. A small number of students earned both degrees. Students, faculty, advisors, and others can [compare the B.A and B.M. general education requirements](#) in the St. Olaf catalog.

In Fall 2019, the St. Olaf faculty [approved](#) a new OLE (Open, Linked, Enduring) Core general education curriculum, which launched in Fall 2021. The general education revision continued St. Olaf's commitment as a four-year liberal arts college "nourished by Lutheran tradition," expanding and updating its general education offerings while reducing the total number of requirements. The OLE Core still incorporates studies in the fine arts, humanities, interdisciplinary and general studies, natural sciences and mathematics, and social sciences, but significantly expands the scope of and support for the first year experience, enhances examination of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and elevates experiential learning. A new, linked [first-year experience](#) pairs a [First-Year Seminar](#) with a course in [Writing & Rhetoric](#). A 10-

session, peer-led [St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources \(SOAR\)](#) tied to the first-year experience is intended to give all students an equitable starting place in their transition to college by demystifying the “hidden curriculum.”

The OLE Core also broadens the religion course requirements to better serve the [College’s mission](#) of encouraging students to “examine faith and values” by more intentionally emphasizing engagement with [religious traditions](#) beyond [Christianity](#). Additionally, the College’s commitments to equity, inclusion, and anti-racism are reflected in the new [Power and Race](#) OLE Core requirement, which examines the ways ideas about race, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities can contribute to inequities in U.S. society.

Another unique element added to the OLE Core is an [OLE Experience in Practice](#) experiential learning requirement, allowing students to apply their classroom learning and further develop their sense of vocation. This gives all students access to high-impact learning experiences such as study abroad, academic internships, Academic Civic Engagement courses, undergraduate research, and licensure or practicum programs. Students may also fulfill this requirement through approved experiences completed elsewhere.

The remaining Core requirements include [creativity](#), [active body](#), [natural](#) and [social sciences](#), [ethical](#) and [quantitative reasoning](#), [global histories and societies](#), [world languages](#), and further development of [writing skills](#), including a [Writing in the Major component](#). The OLE Core curriculum accounts for 12-17 of the 35 credits students need to graduate. Integration within the OLE Core curriculum and between general and specialized study is promoted through intentional “overlapping;” several courses may satisfy more than one OLE Core requirement, and many courses that satisfy requirements in various majors count towards the OLE Core as well.

The OLE Core requirements are established by the entire college faculty, and their integrity is assured by the work of the faculty-elected [Curriculum Committee](#). According to the [Faculty Manual](#) (p. 11), the purpose of the Curriculum Committee is “to oversee the curriculum of the College in light of its mission, aims, and objectives [and] to recommend to the faculty procedures and policies... subject to final review by the Board of Regents and the President.” Courses are approved for OLE Core credit by the Curriculum Committee, and course proposals must demonstrate how the proposed course meets each of the [guidelines and learning outcomes](#) for the relevant requirement. The committee provides substantial information to assist instructors in preparing proposals for OLE Core credit, a process which promotes alignment at the course level with the purposes, content, and intended outcomes of the curriculum. Each requirement includes a brief description, a statement of intended learning outcomes (ILOs), course guidelines, and interpretive comments from the St. Olaf Curriculum Committee. These materials are posted on the [college website](#), and they also appear in the [college catalog](#).

2. The OLE Core curriculum is grounded in a framework of “open, linked and enduring” questions, encouraging students to develop broad knowledge and skills aligned with the St. Olaf mission.

Revised over the course of several years, St. Olaf’s OLE Core curriculum reflects both the distinctive mission of the college and the broader goals of liberal learning at the undergraduate level as articulated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Each

of the OLE Core intended learning outcomes was developed by the faculty to advance one or more of the essential learning outcomes articulated by the AAC&U. Based on a set of questions that are "[open, linked and enduring](#)", the courses comprising the OLE Core curriculum impart broad knowledge, foster the acquisition of intellectual concepts, and develop skills and attitudes that St. Olaf faculty believe every graduate should possess. The college mission is reflected not only in the religion requirements ([RFV](#) and [CTD](#)) but also in the requirements focused on written and oral communication in English and world languages ([FYS](#), [WRR](#), [WLC](#)). The requirements are not departmental or disciplinary distribution requirements; rather, they are intended to introduce students to different domains of knowledge and to different ways of knowing, both of which often transcend disciplinary boundaries. Consequently, even though courses for some requirements are concentrated in specific departments (for example, nearly all the courses in Christian Theology in Dialogue are offered in the Religion Department), others, such as [Ethical Reasoning in Context](#) and [Global Histories and Societies](#), are offered in several different departments, and still others, such as Power and Race ([PAR](#)), are offered across the entire curriculum.

3. St. Olaf emphasizes the importance of a global perspective and an inclusive and respectful college community, and assessment results demonstrate that students engage in experiences that allow them to grow and develop in these areas.

St. Olaf's commitment to a globally engaged community is evident in the college mission statement and college-wide learning goals, the curriculum, and various co-curricular programs.

The mission statement is a public declaration of the college's values and goals, and the college-wide "[STOGGoals](#)" elaborate on the mission statement by articulating more specifically the skills, competencies, and dispositions that graduates of the college should possess. St. Olaf's commitment to diversity resonates in the STOGGoal that students will broaden their knowledge of human cultures and the natural world and that they will use tools and ideas from many fields of study to understand human experiences, natural phenomena, and the relationships among them. [Results](#) from the latest [Learning Goals Questionnaire \(LGQ\)](#) show that, on average, 80% of 2022 seniors reported that St. Olaf helped them develop these types of skills. Another STOGGoal is responsible engagement with peers, families, and communities. From the 2022 LGQ, an average of 66% of seniors reported development in these areas.

St. Olaf has also developed a [Plan for Equity and Inclusion](#) that aims to "develop and sustain an inclusive, culturally-competent community that intentionally engages, uplifts and celebrates all diversity." The plan includes emphases on training students to interact thoughtfully and respectfully with diverse members of the community; infusing the curriculum with opportunities to study and engage with social, political, religious, cultural, and other forms of diversity; and providing support for students to explore the complexity of their own identities in relation to those of others. On the curricular side, the OLE Core is infused with opportunities for students to develop a rigorous understanding of global diversity. In addition, the college received a [Mellon Foundation grant](#) for 2017-2021 that focused in large part on [diversifying the curriculum and strengthening inclusive pedagogy](#), and creating additional opportunities for students to engage with different perspectives within their fields of study.

The college has long been a national leader in engaging students in study abroad, with participation rates that have earned St. Olaf a #1 ranking among baccalaureate colleges in the Institute for International Education Open Doors Report for over a decade. The Office of International and Off-campus Studies ([IOS](#)) leads this effort, collaborating with faculty across campus to provide a wide variety of programs around the world that meet general education, major, concentration, and elective requirements. Between 2018-2020, St. Olaf offered [77 semester or year-long programs](#) and [46 Interim \(J-term\) programs](#). IOS helps manage off-campus logistics and course planning, organizes the [application processes](#), advises students on programs and requirements, and prepares students for departure and re-entry. Close to three-quarters of the Class of 2020 [participated in one or more off-campus study programs](#) (p. 2) over the course of their St. Olaf experience, and even with the pandemic disruption, 66% of the Class of 2021 participated in one or more such programs.

St. Olaf also provides on-campus co-curricular programming focused on human and cultural diversity. The recently-launched [Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion](#) serves students, staff, and faculty through a number of [programs](#), with a particular focus on serving BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and multicultural students, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students. For example, their [Beyond the Hill: Career and Identity Series](#) partners with St. Olaf's Piper Center for Vocation and Career to promote culturally responsive career development and networking with panel discussions, presentations, career fairs, and other events.

Additionally, the newly-established [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) provides support and programming for interreligious engagement. In the spring and fall of 2021, the Lutheran Center hosted two rounds of a seminar entitled [Interfaith Leadership for the 21st Century Workplace](#) to provide students, faculty, and staff with skills for effective and competent engagement within religiously diverse workplaces. The Lutheran Center website lists [additional programming](#) offered by the Center related to interfaith work.

A third center of gravity in this area is the [Institute for Freedom and Community](#) (IFC; see also 1.B and 1.C). The Institute's [programming](#) is wide-ranging, including public events that feature scholars and practitioners who can address controversial public issues and promote civil discourse in a democracy. The IFC also sponsors the [Public Affairs Conversation](#) (PACON), a recent addition to St. Olaf's signature learning community programs, which engage students and faculty in deep explorations across interconnected courses over multiple semesters. PACON features an interdisciplinary approach to American public policy that explores the "complex relationship between the moral, theoretical, and scientific dimensions of public affairs."

Results from the 2021 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) [Discussions with Diverse Others indicator](#) (p. 29) shows that seniors from the class of 2021 reported engaging in discussions with students from different backgrounds with relatively high frequency, as indicated in Table 3.B-1.

Table 3.B-1: Items from the 2021 NSSE	
NSSE Item 8	Had discussions Very Often or Often
a. People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	69%
b. People from an economic background other than your own	75%
c. People with religious beliefs other than your own	74%
d. People with political views other than your own	41%
<i>Note: This table reports data from the seniors' responses only.</i>	

Further, the majority of seniors indicated that their coursework emphasized engagement with cultural diversity and skills for working with others from different backgrounds, as shown in the 2021 NSSE [Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity](#) (p. 6) module data in Table 3.B-2.

Table 3.B-2: Items from the 2021 NSSE	
NSSE Inclusiveness & Engagement Module Item 1	Coursework emphasized Very much or Quite a bit
a. Developing the skills necessary to work effectively with people from various backgrounds	59%
b. Recognizing your own cultural norms and biases	64%
c. Sharing your own perspectives and experiences	74%
d. Exploring your own background through projects, assignments, or programs	55%
e. Learning about other cultures	65%
f. Discussing issues of equity or privilege	68%
g. Respecting the expression of diverse ideas	72%
<i>Note: This table reports data from the seniors' responses only.</i>	

The NSSE results indicate that students' activities provide opportunities to interact with the human and cultural diversity of the world. Students, faculty, and staff take part in experiences in which they exchange ideas and come to understand and value diverse human and cultural identities. Moreover, the exercise of intellectual inquiry around topics of politics, gender, race, and economics prepares students to apply and integrate broad learning and skills and make contributions of scholarship, creative work, and knowledge discovery collaboratively with faculty and peers.

4. *Supported by the college's mission and commitments, St. Olaf faculty and students contribute regularly to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge.*

Through its 55 departments and programs, the OLE Core curriculum, and co-curricular programs, students and faculty engage in intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, integration, and application of broad learning. Moreover, assessment findings indicate that these activities and experiences are developmentally significant, continuing to influence alumni into their early careers. The college's investment in intellectual inquiry and in knowledge and skill acquisition is demonstrated in the scholarship and creative work of students, faculty, and staff, both individually and in collaborations within and beyond the St. Olaf community. These contributions are evinced in grants, publications, presentations, music and theater performances, and collaborative research completed by faculty, staff, and students every year.

Faculty are guided in this process through department-created [statements of significant professional activity](#), available on the [Tenure and Promotion Committee website](#), as well as through the standards for faculty evaluation outlined in the [Faculty Manual](#) (p. 48). As outlined in these standards, faculty contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge through (a) instruction, collaborative research, service learning, academic advising as well as formal and informal mentoring that fosters student learning and development; (b) scholarly and/or artistic work, including disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, scholarship of teaching and learning, and applied scholarship; and (c) service and leadership, including but not limited to committee service, task force participation, and policy and program development and revision. Examples of these faculty contributions are manifest in grants awarded; books, articles, and other publications; performance recordings; exhibitions, concerts, and invited lectures; collaborative initiatives; and the successes achieved by St. Olaf students during college and beyond.

Performing and visual arts are integral to St. Olaf's mission as a liberal arts educational institution, and students and faculty make robust contributions to creative work and scholarship and knowledge discovery in the arts. The college calendar lists the many student recitals and exhibitions as well as guest performances for students, faculty, staff, and community members. The college also offers streaming and archiving of concerts and recitals. In addition to the performing arts, student participation in directed undergraduate research, independent research, and independent study projects has been substantial and consistent. Since 2016, 40-46% of all St. Olaf graduates [participated in independent research or independent study](#) (p. 3), including classes graduating during the two years affected by the COVID pandemic.

The [Center for Interdisciplinary Research \(CIR\)](#) and the [Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry \(CURI\)](#) programs provide opportunities for students to work with faculty across the college on a variety of research projects with varying levels of independence. From 2010-2021, an average of 88 students and 37 faculty mentors participated in the program per year; in the past five years, the average has been 97 students per year with the same average faculty numbers. [Other opportunities](#) available to faculty and students to work in collaboration include the Steen Fellowship, the Magnus the Good Fellowship, and several others linked to the healthcare field.

The quality and impact of the collaborative research projects is demonstrated in the co-authored papers, fellowships, and awards students and faculty receive for their work. St. Olaf posts

[descriptions of the projects and the presentations, publications, and awards](#) on the institutional website. Co-curricular programs, including the CIR, CURI, and Academic Civic Engagement, are discussed in detail in 2.B.

The scholarship, creative work and discoveries of St. Olaf faculty, staff, and students are supported by grants awarded competitively by national and regional funders. The college currently holds 45 active grants, 21 of them awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and the U.S Department of Education. St. Olaf faculty and staff have secured 154 grants since the 2016 fiscal year. The grants awarded between 2016 and now support ongoing and emerging projects conducted across the academic programs and offices of the college. These include student services, scholarships, teaching and learning, co-curricular activities, scholarly research, artistic activity, and professional development. Staff members in the Office of [Government, Foundation, and Corporate Relations](#) assist St. Olaf leaders, faculty, and staff to identify and pursue external funding opportunities and ensure that proposals are accurate and complete.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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.

Argument

- 1. St. Olaf has met its strategic plan goals for faculty and staff diversity and is making progress toward achieving its longer-term DEI aspirations.*

Priority III of the [St. Olaf Strategic Plan](#) (p. 2) is to "continue to increase the racial and cultural diversity of St. Olaf students, faculty, and staff," with Goal 3 addressing faculty diversity and Goal 4 addressing staff diversity. Although these goals have been met for both [faculty](#) (p. 9) and [staff](#) (p. 10), the college continues to strive to improve its diversity, as appropriate to its [mission](#) to be an "an inclusive, globally engaged community." Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [aspirations](#) established in Spring 2022 call for St. Olaf students, faculty, and staff to "reflect the diversity of the population of prospective students we seek to serve." As can be seen in the college's new [DEI Dashboards](#), we have not yet achieved this aspiration; 22% of our students identify as domestic persons of color, but only 19% of our instructional faculty and 14% of administration/staff share this identity. Nevertheless, the longitudinal data show sustained progress toward our larger aspirations; faculty of color comprised 13% of all instructional faculty in 2017 and 19% in 2021, and staff of color comprised 10% of all staff in 2017 and 14% in 2021.

2. *St. Olaf College maintains a sufficient number of accomplished and engaged faculty to sustain the high-quality educational experience it provides to its students.*

With a teaching full-time equivalence (FTE) of approximately 250 faculty, serving a student body FTE of approximately 3,000, the college has had an official [student-to-faculty ratio](#) of approximately 12:1 for at least the past five years. In addition, [data on faculty FTE attributed to activities other than teaching](#) shows that faculty engaged in directing student activities, academic program administration, and internally funded released time for professional development total an additional "non-classroom" faculty FTE of about 55 each year - clearly sufficient numbers for serving the needs of the college.

The [Faculty Profile dashboard](#) shows that approximately two-thirds of the total full-time faculty (68.3% in Fall 2021) are tenured or tenure-track, allowing for great continuity to carry out the various functions of the faculty. Governance decisions are made by the faculty as a whole, and [term faculty with appointments of half-time or greater have voting privileges](#) (p. 6). Term faculty are also [eligible to serve on most faculty committees](#) (p. 9), including those with oversight of the curriculum, assessment, and student life. As described in more detail in 4.B.3, widespread faculty involvement in assessment of student learning occurs at many levels, from the classroom, to department or program-level assessment, to college-wide assessments. The comprehensive engagement of faculty in these multiple roles ensures both continuity and sufficient numbers to carry out the work of the college.

3. *St. Olaf faculty members are highly-qualified, and institutional policies assure that they will remain so.*

Section 4.III of the *Faculty Manual* shows that academic credentials for both [full-time instructional staff](#) (p. 29) and [part-time tenure-track](#) (p. 31) hires are reviewed not only by department chairs recommending appointments, but by the appropriate Associate Dean(s) and the Dean of the College. Degrees or academic equivalents required for appointment to each academic rank are specified in *Faculty Manual* [4.IV.A](#), as well as for Teaching Specialists ([4.III.G](#), p. 34) and Special Appointments ([4.III.H](#), p. 36). As shown in the Fall 2021 Common Data Set section on [Instructional Faculty](#), 95% of full-time instructional faculty have completed the terminal degree in their field and an additional 4% have completed a master's degree. As can be seen from the institution's [Faculty Roster](#), faculty have completed degrees at top national universities, as well as quite a few international institutions.

4. *Continuing faculty are evaluated in clearly defined procedures, established in the St. Olaf Faculty Manual and in carefully developed administrative policies.*

The [faculty reviews website](#) provides detailed information about faculty evaluation in relation to different types of appointment:

- Faculty on the tenure-track receive annual written notice of reappointment or non-reappointment. In order to recommend either action to the Dean of the College, department chairs must consult with the individual being considered for reappointment, appropriate members of the department(s), and the Associate Dean(s). Recommendations must be supported by written evaluation based on the department(s) staffing plan and the

[Standards for Faculty Evaluation](#) (p. 48). In addition, tenure-track faculty receive [comprehensive reviews](#) (p. 39) near the end of their second and fourth probationary years. This review includes at least two written peer reviews of teaching, written recommendations from relevant department members and Associate Dean(s), and student reviews of teaching and advising.

- The college's post-tenure review process requires tenured faculty to conduct course evaluations within at least two student courses each year. During the fourth year after a sabbatical, each tenured faculty member will have a conversation with their department chair(s) and/or associate dean(s) about how the college might best support the faculty member's career objectives under a professional development plan ([Faculty Manual 4.VI.C.1, p. 52](#)).
- Special appointment faculty are evaluated in a process similar to a tenure review during the sixth year of full-time equivalent service, and every six years thereafter, according to ([Faculty Manual 4.III.H.6, p. 36](#)).
- Teaching specialists may be recommended by their department(s) for a 3-year contract renewal with a narrative report of the candidate's teaching, advising, and service to the College, which is written after consultation with tenured members of the department. Every six years the specialist will undergo a more comprehensive review, as described in ([Faculty Manual 4.III.G.7, p. 35](#)).
- Term faculty are evaluated on an annual basis, including course evaluations, classroom observations in the first, second, and fifth year, and the completion of an annual report, as per ([Faculty Manual 4.VI.C.2, p. 53](#)).

5. St. Olaf provides substantial support for and oversight of faculty development.

In addition to the post-tenure review process noted above, the college provides various resources to support faculty members as they teach, advise students, participate in the life of the college, and pursue their scholarly and creative work, as described on the Provost's [Resources for Faculty Professional Development](#) website. As described on that website, as well as in 3.B.4, the [Office of Government, Foundation, and Corporate Relations](#) assists faculty in securing external funding opportunities to support their professional development.

The Faculty Life Committee oversees a number of opportunities, including:

- [Professional Development Grants](#) of up to \$6000 to enable faculty to pursue scholarly, artistic, pedagogical and curricular projects and to disseminate the results.
- Institutional approval for [NEH Summer Stipends](#) proposals
- [Sabbatical](#) and [pre-tenure leaves](#) to acknowledge the need and desirability for each faculty member to have an opportunity at regular intervals for professional growth and renewal. The purpose of the sabbatical leave program is to strengthen the faculty by providing opportunity for faculty members to improve their competence as creative and interpretive teachers.

The Provost's Office also oversees several professional development accounts:

- Each member of the faculty with a tenured, tenure-track, or special appointment is granted up to \$1,500 each fiscal year for professional development support, including

scholarship or creative activity needs. These funds are managed through [individual professional activity and travel \(IPAT\) accounts](#).

- Term faculty, or faculty who have exhausted their IPAT accounts, are eligible to apply for [Faculty Travel](#) funds. These funds are intended to support faculty in the dissemination of their research or sharing of their professional expertise with colleagues at meetings of professional associations, or at workshops or institutes on a particular topic.
- Through the [Walter and Betty Stromseth Fund](#), the Provost can provide up to \$2,000 to support course development, workshops and training, and/or speakers addressing the ethical resources of the major religions for cooperatively addressing global issues of poverty, health care, and environmental preservation and to explore the challenges and opportunities of integrating cultural and religious pluralism.
- Additionally, the Provost can support up to four course releases annually from Course FTE Awards. The grants awarded for 2022-23 are dedicated to “[GE Excellence Through an Equity Lens](#).”
- Associate Deans have limited discretionary funds for extraordinary opportunities for faculty professional development that require funding beyond the above funding sources.

In addition, the college offers a variety of workshops, seminars, and conferences for faculty. The [Center for Integration in the Liberal Arts \(CILA\)](#) supports and encourages faculty development by nurturing public conversation and reflection on campus about teaching and learning. It promotes a culture of inquiry into student learning and fosters connections between scholarship/professional activity and development of pedagogy (e.g., scholarship of teaching and learning).

6. Faculty are readily accessible both to the students enrolled in their courses and to their advisees.

Faculty are [expected to maintain office hours](#) (p. 23) and post them publicly, in order to be readily available to their students and advisees. In addition to in-person meetings, students may contact faculty through e-mail or other virtual means. Students connect regularly with their advisors; they cannot register for courses without at least one advisory meeting and advisor approval of their registration plans. St. Olaf graduates express general satisfaction with the availability of instructors. In a 2021 administration of the [HEDS Alumni Survey](#) (p. 13), 91% of respondents from the Classes of 2015 and 2016 agreed that most faculty were willing to spend time outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to students.

7. Student support is provided by staff and faculty who are well-qualified, experienced, and current in their fields.

Academic advising and other academic support services (tutoring, writing and speaking help, study skills strategies, multilingual student support, and accommodations for students with disabilities) are all within St. Olaf's Center for Advising and Academic Support ([CAAS](#)). CAAS also houses the college's [TRIO Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities](#) program. All staff have a bachelor's degree; most have at least a master's degree in the area related to their responsibilities. All have considerable experience working with students in this capacity at St. Olaf and elsewhere. To the degree possible within the budget, staff participate

regularly in professional development. CAAS staff provide training for about 400 student employees, which is tailored specifically for their role as tutors, Supplemental Instruction (SI) leaders, St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources (SOAR) peer leaders, writing TAs, Speaking Space tutors, Conversation Partners and more.

All tenured, tenure-track, special appointment, and teaching specialist faculty after their first year of service are assigned academic advisees. Ongoing term faculty may also be assigned advisees, based on their experience and assumed future status with the college. St. Olaf also utilizes staff from TRIO Student Support Services, TRIO Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities, the Smith Center for Global Engagement, and Information Technology to advise students. All new faculty and staff advisors participate in a [three day training workshop](#) prior to the start of the academic year. New advisors have three additional workshops during the academic year and a [calendar](#) of important advising events. All advisors are invited to attend an [Advising Strategies: Tools and Tips for Registration and 4 Year Planning](#) presentation before fall registration for the spring semester. In addition, Academic Advising provides on its website an [Academic Advising Syllabus](#) and a [First Year Registration Guide](#) for students and advisors.

All [members of the Financial Aid Office](#) are required to have a minimum of a high school diploma. Financial Aid Counselors must have a minimum of one year of professional experience. Assistant Directors must also have a minimum of two years' financial aid or other relevant higher education experience and Associate Directors must have five or more years' of financial aid or other relevant higher education experience. Office staff meet weekly to review recent actions and prepare for upcoming events. They also maintain a separate weekly meeting that focuses on student financial aid appeals and requests for additional aid. The Director of Financial Aid also meets individually with all professional staff every other week. All financial aid staff are provided with appropriate training and professional development opportunities throughout the year (webinars, online resources, state and national conferences, etc.). All Assistant and Associate Directors subscribe to the Department of Education's Information for Financial Aid Professionals notification system as well as the National Association of Financial Aid Administrators daily notification system to ensure that staff are kept informed of regulatory changes. Staff are also provided with the appropriate hardware, software, and technical support to fulfill their roles in a highly regulated and compliance driven environment.

As a centrally located, high-traffic office, the Office of Student Activities is a key resource for all students on campus. Its programs and services are designed to complement the academic program and enhance the overall educational experience of students through the development of, exposure to, and participation in social, cultural, intellectual, recreational, wellness, and governance programs. The office strives to build community and develop leadership. [The office staff](#) directly advises all branches of the Student Government Association and the Programming Board, as well as informally advising more than 200 student organizations on campus. A Coordinator manages office operations and student organization financial and logistical procedures. An Assistant Director supervises student programmers and coordinates leadership development initiatives. A second Assistant Director is responsible for the administration of Buntrock Commons, which includes event, staff, and program supervision. The Director oversees all student orientation and transition efforts at the College and general student engagement practices across campus. All staff members are involved with a variety of associations, particularly related to careers in Student Activities (National Association of

Campus Activities) Student Unions (Association of College Unions International), and Orientation, Transition, and Retention (Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education). They participate in various professional development opportunities and attend conferences on behalf of the college in these areas.

One of the co-curricular activities for which St. Olaf is best known is its music ensembles. The conductors of these 15+ ensembles are very well qualified; several are world-renowned. They mentor and supervise numerous student-led ensembles as part of the student organizations office at the college. Most conductors are tenured faculty with ongoing support for their professional development as described above. In addition, music organizations are supported by [several administrators and staff members](#), who also bring a wealth of experience to their positions and support the 700+ students who participate in music at the college. Support of the ensembles includes training, mentoring and assisting student ensemble managers and student music librarians with their duties, organizing ensemble domestic and international tour logistics and concert promotion, facilitating 60+ on-campus performance concert logistics September-May, providing ensemble recordings to the students, marketing and selling ensemble recordings to the public through tour sales of CD's and digital distribution to major music services through Naxos, such as Spotify, Apple Music, and others. All music organization staff providing support to students in musical ensembles have at least a B.A. degree and considerable experience working with students in this capacity at St. Olaf and elsewhere, in addition to their previous employment with major professional musical organizations, the music touring and travel industry, and marketing.

The intercollegiate athletics program is also an integral part of the St. Olaf community. The college offers a broad-based program with 26 intercollegiate varsity sports and hosts approximately 150 games, meets and events each academic year. The [coaches, athletic training staff and administrators](#) are committed to providing an excellent experience for more than 500 student-athletes. Most head coaches and administrators hold a master's degree and bring extensive knowledge, experience and commitment to developing the whole student. Many coaches teach activity classes as a part of the college's general The Active Body: Moving Toward Health & Well-Being Requirement (ACB), while a few teach core courses in kinesiology. Administrators in the department support event management, media relations, marketing, student-athlete programming and professional development for staff and coaches.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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).

Argument

1. St. Olaf provides comprehensive, high-quality, and appropriate student support services.

Students navigating our educational programs are supported according to their needs by a comprehensive academic advising system, the [Center for Advising and Academic Support](#) (CAAS) and by additional support services (such as student retention programs; see 1.C.2 and 3.D.2). The Center for Advising and Academic Support is the primary hub for other student support services, including disability accommodations and access; writing development; English language proficiency for multilingual students; study skill enhancement; and subject matter proficiency. Students turn for academic support not only to their designated faculty advisor, but also to course instructors and department chairs, student peers (such as residence hall Junior Counselors and student tutors), and staff in support offices (such as CAAS, [Student Support Services](#) [SSS], and the [Piper Center for Vocation and Career](#)). Students also turn to the St. Olaf [Counseling Center](#), which "supports students in their academic pursuits and facilitates personal and interpersonal learning and growth." As detailed in 2.B.2, 3.C.7, and 3.D.2, these services are provided by staff and faculty who are well-qualified, experienced, and current in their fields.

2. Learning at St. Olaf is carefully sequenced and thoughtfully supported.

The St. Olaf curriculum is carefully scaffolded and integrated to help students move from a common First-Year Experience to the newly designed [OLE Core curriculum](#) (see 3.B.1-2) and to courses in specific majors. Courses in the OLE Core are offered across the curriculum and designed for all students, regardless of major; most OLE Core courses are set at Levels I (introductory) and II (intermediate), and are appropriate for first and second-year students. Certain skills, such as writing, are integrated into all levels of the curriculum: for example, most students begin with a first-year Writing and Rhetoric requirement (Writ 120), and continue their development in a required course carrying the Writing Across the Curriculum component and a required writing experience in every major (Writing in the Major).

Incoming first-year students take discipline-specific [placement exams](#) (in chemistry, math, computer science, writing, and several world languages) during the summer prior to registering for fall courses. These tests do not fulfill credit requirements. Most students who are interested in majoring in science, mathematics, or economics enter St. Olaf prepared to take Calculus I or more advanced mathematics courses. For those who need to take calculus but are not prepared to do so, the college offers one section per year of Math 119, Calculus I with Review, which focuses on functions and reviews algebra topics most relevant to calculus. Department/program policies concerning Advanced Placement exams are set once each year in the spring for the following academic year's matriculants. Typically, students who receive scores of 4 or 5 from AP, 5-7 on IB Higher Levels, or A* or A from CAL receive placement and/or credit (including general education credit) according to [advanced placement policies](#) set by the college's departments and programs. Language placement testing can allow students to bypass certain levels of the world language requirement (as specified in the OLE Core requirements).

All first-year students participate in [St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources](#) (SOAR) as part of the OLE Core. Integrated with the First Year Seminar (FYS 120) and Writing and Rhetoric (Writ 120) courses, SOAR provides students with an extended orientation to equip them with the knowledge and tools to be successful at St. Olaf. All first-year students are assigned to trained SOAR Peer Leaders who lead ten required sessions throughout the first year on topics such as reading and study skills, time management, accessing campus resources and reflecting on living in a college community. Attendance at the SOAR discussion sessions is required.

The Writing Program offers several courses to integrate writing support into the curriculum. Students whose admissions materials indicate that they may benefit from writing practice and support beyond required courses complete a writing placement survey as part of their online orientation. These students may place into designated writing-intensive sections of the required First-Year Seminar (FYS 120). International multilingual students find additional support in writing-intensive First-Year Seminar sections that guide them through U.S. academic conventions and discourses and help them to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Domestic students find support through writing-intensive First-Year Seminar sections emphasizing critical reading and the writing process. In addition to writing-intensive First-Year Seminars, some students enroll in a partial-credit writing course. Students in the SSS [Summer Bridge](#) program enroll in Writing 109, supplemental instruction in reading, writing, and critical thinking, which they take in conjunction with another designated course. Students who complete First-Year Seminar and seek sustained and individualized support while taking Writing and Rhetoric may enroll in Writing 108, which guides students through college transition and reading, writing, and speaking development. Students seeking additional writing support after completing Writing and Rhetoric, the required first-year writing course, may take Writing 211, Topics in Writing. Writing 211 offers advanced practice in critical reading and writing with emphasis on a particular discipline or topic. This course, offered during spring semester, is open to all students and enrolls 17 or fewer. Students who participate in SSS and S-STEM programs comprise approximately 75% of the course enrollment.

The [Center for Advising and Academic Support](#) (CAAS) provides a range of services, programs and resources for all St. Olaf students as they work to maximize their full academic potential. CAAS houses professional staff and over 400 specially-trained student employees. Together they provide students with academic coaching toward mastery of time management, note taking,

study strategies, reading for comprehension, and problem-solving. A combination of peer and professional tutoring services provide subject area tutoring and general and discipline-specific academic writing support for all students at the [Writing Desk](#). The [Supplemental Instruction](#) (SI) program supports approximately 1,100 unique students annually in historically difficult courses through 110+ course sections with a linked SI peer leader. Staff are trained in strategies to assist multilingual writers, under-prepared writers, and writers with disabilities. CAAS is also staffed by four [Disability and Access](#) Specialists, who begin their work with newly-admitted students by identifying specific barriers to academics, and determining appropriate accommodations, as well as helping them develop effective strategies for their learning style, and self-advocacy skills with their faculty and peers throughout their career at St. Olaf. During the academic year 2021-22, the Center for Advising and Academic Support, through all of its services, served 1884 individual St. Olaf students (approximately 65% of the student body).

First-generation students, low-income students and students with disabilities generally qualify for [Student Support Services](#) and other [TRIO](#) programming (e.g., [SSSD](#), [McNair Scholars Program](#)), funded by a combination of federal and college dollars. SSS students may attend a pre-matriculation [Summer Bridge Program](#) (supported through external grants and internal funds) designed to prepare approximately 40 students annually for college life. The academic core of the summer programming is comprised of a biology course, along with a supplementary writing course, which total 1.25 credits. Students are also introduced to college residential life, libraries, study skills and their work-study jobs. SSS services extend beyond the summer component and occur throughout the academic year for the duration of an SSS student's career at the college.

First-year SSS students meet every week with their SSS advisors and continue meeting regularly during subsequent years. SSS supports 172 students each year with advising and supplemental instruction, as well as cohort- and skill-building events. These activities advance the ends of improving student retention, promoting persistence to graduation, and building an institutional climate that provides academic, cultural, and personal support needed for collegiate success. Financial aid and career counseling, graduate school preparation, scholarships, student work opportunities and social events are also provided. The four-year graduation rate of SSS-served students has averaged 83.7% for the past three years, as compared to the 84.5% rate for the college as a whole during the same period.

The [TRIO McNair Scholars](#) Program is a graduate school preparatory program funded by the U.S. Department of Education since 1989; St. Olaf McNair was first funded in 2007. The federally mandated goal of McNair is to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who participate in undergraduate research, graduate with a B.A., and immediately enter and complete graduate school, with a specific focus on obtaining a Ph.D. The St. Olaf program serves approximately 28 undergraduate students each year. McNair Scholars receive assistance with internship placement, research experience, research writing, preparation for graduate school admissions tests, graduate school search and application assistance, and financial aid, fellowship, and scholarship application assistance. At least one-third of the McNair Scholars are from groups traditionally underrepresented in graduate programs and the professoriate (Native American, African American, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latinx students), and two-thirds meet federal low-income guidelines and are from a family in which neither parent graduated from a four-year post-secondary educational institution.

The St. Olaf TRIO McNair Scholars project advances the DEI priorities outlined in the college [Strategic Plan](#). Since the program began in 2007, 100% of Scholars have participated in undergraduate research and summer internships; 65% of St. Olaf McNair students have completed or enrolled in graduate school (45% Master's degree and 20% Ph.D. or M.D.); 75% of participants are both low-income and first-generation; and 84% are from underrepresented backgrounds (not including Asian American). An integral aspect of the McNair program is the [summer undergraduate research](#) component, in which each Scholar is paired with a St. Olaf faculty research mentor. Together they conduct summer research designed to prepare Scholars for rigorous graduate school research. Additionally, Scholars enroll in an intensive credit-bearing writing course in which they refine and develop academic research writing, literature review, and oral communication skills. Scholars present their research both at the end of the McNair summer and at local, regional, and national conferences, often with their research mentor.

Faculty have been aggressive in seeking external funding to support preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. For example, St. Olaf is currently an alliance partner in the NSF Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Partnership North Star STEM Alliance, which provides students of color with a cohort, support for research, and travel to professional conferences. In addition, the college has recently been awarded a \$900,000 National Science Foundation award to provide 85 annual scholarships for talented low-income STEM students.

3. St. Olaf offers a robust program of academic advising provided mainly by faculty.

The academic advising system at St. Olaf "encourages the integration of mind, body and spirit as students learn to create academic, career, and lifelong goals" ([advising syllabus](#)). This process, centered on the collaboration between students and faculty academic advisors, is designed to enable students to understand the purpose of a liberal arts education; understand the goals of the [St. Olaf mission statement](#); understand the objectives of the general education program; develop an academic plan and prioritize competing responsibilities (including personal interests, vocational preparation activities and co-curricular commitments); utilize campus resources effectively; assess interests and talents; build from knowledge and skills acquired prior to their St. Olaf College education; and develop a passion for life-long learning and service.

Incoming students meet with their academic advisors during New Student Orientation, and their first week is busy with faculty-hosted program-specific academic information. Specific roles and responsibilities for students and advisors are outlined on the [academic advising](#) website. The [Health Professions Committee](#) contributes to academic advising by providing one-on-one advising to pre-health (e.g., medicine, dentistry, allied and public health) students in order to help them map academic and co-curricular pre-requisites for professional schools onto their undergraduate course plan; students also gain [pre-health advising](#) through the Piper Center for Vocation and Career. Departments such as nursing, education and social work also have specific advising processes for guiding students through their accredited pre-professional programming.

4. Teaching and learning at St. Olaf are well-supported by its physical and technological resources, and will continue to be supported in the future as a result of careful planning.

St. Olaf College provides classrooms and laboratories that are adequate for the size of current classes, approximately 60% of which include fewer than 20 students and only 3% of which consist of 50+ students.

In addition to traditional classroom and lab facilities, the Fine Arts division (Art & Art History, Dance, Music and Theater) is supported by art, music, and dance studios, the Kelsey theater (348 seats), the Haugen theater (100 seats), the Flaten Art Museum, the Groot Student Gallery, Urness Recital Hall (300 seats), the Tormodsgaard-Bakken Recital Hall (115 seats), rehearsal rooms (choral, band and orchestra ensemble), practice rooms, the Halvorson Music Library and a costume/set construction shop. The music program also uses Boe Memorial Chapel and the Skoglund Auditorium for larger choir, band and orchestra performances.

Facilities and infrastructure in the Humanities (Classics, English, German, History, Norwegian, Philosophy, Religion and Romance Languages [French & Spanish]) also support various programs, including interdisciplinary majors (Ancient Studies, Medieval Studies), and the college's signature Enduring Questions conversation program. The Humanities division also provides resources in support of several OLE Core requirements (e.g. Religion, Faith and Values, Global Histories and Societies, Ethical Reasoning in Context). Tomson Hall, Rolvaag Library, Old Main and Holland Hall support the various departments and programs in the Humanities.

With facilities and resources throughout the campus, the Interdisciplinary and General Studies division includes four departments (Asian Studies, Environmental Studies, Russian Language & Area Studies, and the newly-created Race, Ethnic, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), numerous programs (e.g. Africa and the African Diaspora, Film and Media Studies, Latin American Studies, and Linguistic Studies) and several signature Conversations programs (American Conversation, Asian Conversations, Environmental Conversations, Race Matters, and the Public Affairs Conversation). The division also oversees resources in support of specific general education requirements (such as writing and the components of the First-Year Experience).

The Natural Sciences and Mathematics division (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, Physics and Psychology) also supports the [Center for Interdisciplinary Research](#) (CIR), a program that pairs statistics and data student fellows with faculty from across disciplines to provide data-informed solutions for research problems, and the Engineering Fellows program, which pairs students with faculty to solve engineering challenges related to research and teaching. The division also supports programs in Biomolecular Science, Engineering Studies, Mathematical Biology and Neuroscience, and two learning communities: Science Conversation and Integrated Introduction to Chemistry and Biology. Science education is supported by teaching laboratories for hands-on learning; faculty research spaces for professional activity and student-faculty collaboration; specialized discipline-specific equipment (e.g., parallel computing resources, microscope facilities, state-of-the-art chemical instrumentation); natural resources (e.g., 700 acres of prairie, woodland, and agricultural fields); and scientific collections (e.g., a 300-species greenhouse, 600 species of preserved vertebrates). Regents Hall of Natural Sciences, dedicated in 2008, houses inspiring and innovative learning

spaces explicitly designed to promote student-faculty interactions and an integrated approach to the study of the natural sciences and mathematics. It also houses a secure vivarium with animal housing and procedure spaces.

The Social Sciences (Economics, Education, Kinesiology, Nursing, Political Science, Sociology/Anthropology and Social Work & Family Studies) also supports two TRIO-funded college-preparatory programs: [Educational Talent Search](#) and [Upward Bound](#). The nursing and kinesiology programs utilize innovative classroom-laboratory spaces for clinical skills practice and testing, using resources such as mannequins/models for human-patient simulation, a metabolic cart, a hydrostatic weighing tank, and a Bod Pod. Holland Hall, Tomson Hall and Skoglund Athletic Center provide classroom, lab, activity and support spaces for the seven Social Sciences departments.

The [St. Olaf libraries](#) consist of Rølvaag Memorial Library and Halvorson Music Library. Together the libraries provide direct access to approximately 1.9 million books, over 500,000 media items, and 25,000 musical scores. Rølvaag Library is home to the [Digital Scholarship Center at St. Olaf](#) (DiSCO), a hub for research and creativity across the curriculum. A collaboration between librarians and instructional technologists, the DiSCO houses an active learning classroom; audio, video, and virtual reality studios; a maker space; and media production equipment. The libraries also provide students access to several distinctive collections, including medieval manuscripts and early Renaissance printings, the Bodman-Lang East Asian Collection, and extensive holdings of artists' books and Norwegian-American imprints. In Fall of 2022, rare materials will be relocated to a new, 4,500 square-foot vault. In 2023, [Special Collections](#) and [Archives](#) will move into a renovated research and teaching suite. Special Collections and Archives includes the Shaw-Olson Center for College History, which preserves and interprets the college's historical records and provides students, faculty, and staff with on-site and online access to archival resources and provides historical exhibits, campus talks, and assistance to local researchers. St. Olaf College is also home to the [Hong Kierkegaard Library](#), which houses the largest collection in the Western Hemisphere of works by and about the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. The library hosts regular symposia and individual research opportunities for Kierkegaard scholars from around the world. As of 2022, the Hong Kierkegaard Library was relocated to the newly-renovated Steensland Hall.

The St. Olaf Libraries have a long history of providing course-integrated instruction in information literacy. Currently, the libraries offer a well-established program of course-integrated research instruction, where [liaison librarians](#) work with their designated departments to deliver assignment-based research sessions. Liaisons work closely with each academic department on research instruction, assignment design, preparing new courses, and boosting library resources when needed. Instruction librarians teach approximately 275 instruction classes each year, with session enrollments typically exceeding 6000 students annually.

[Information Technology](#) (IT) supports the academic mission and the administrative functions of the college by providing a robust and stable campus infrastructure and helping faculty, staff, and students integrate effective technologies into their courses, research, and work. IT offers many different services and technology resources such as email, online course management (Moodle), website servers, class folders, online forms and surveys and diverse classroom technologies. The college has campus-wide internet connectivity through both wired and wireless networks, 75

computing labs in campus buildings and dormitories, and over 80 classrooms equipped with projectors, cameras, microphones, document cameras, and BluRay players. IT staff also assist faculty and staff with selecting computing equipment and software, maintain departmental labs and office equipment, and help in developing innovative teaching and research projects that integrate technology. Open six days/week, the IT Help Desk provides general computing support to students, faculty, and staff at its location in Rolvaag library.

Over the past fifteen years, St. Olaf facilities in support of the academic program have seen significant capital improvements, both in new and renovated spaces. These facilities include Holland Hall, Old Main, Regents Hall for Natural Sciences and Regents Hall for Mathematical Sciences, Rolvaag Library, Tomson Hall, Skifter Hall, Steensland Hall, and the Tweet Hall of Music. In 2017, a complete renovation of Holland Hall, redesigned for twenty-first century curriculum and pedagogy in Humanities and Social Sciences, was completed and reopened to seven academic departments (Economics, Environmental Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology/Anthropology, Social Work). In 2018, a newly-renovated Nursing wing was completed in Regents Hall of Natural Sciences. In 2022, Steensland Hall was reopened as the permanent home for the Hong Kierkegaard Library. See 5.C. for a detailed discussion of the college's [2016 Framework Plan](#), outlining the vision for capital and infrastructure development in support of the academic program of the college for the next twenty years.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

The rigor and consistency of a St. Olaf education is assured through its thoughtful curricular design, comprehensive and ongoing assessment and program review, extensive student support services, and highly qualified and deeply committed faculty and staff.

- A.** Extensive faculty oversight, thoroughgoing program review, articulation of and fidelity to learning outcomes, and consistent assessment across different types of learning experiences assure the rigor and appropriateness of the college's degree programs.
- B.** Intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to a St. Olaf education, as demonstrated in its thoughtful and coherent General Education curriculum and demonstrated outcomes, and in the scholarly and creative accomplishments of its faculty, staff and students.
- C.** The excellence of St. Olaf's academic programs and student services is sustained by its highly-qualified, increasingly diverse, thoughtfully evaluated, professionally active, and readily accessible faculty and staff.
- D.** Learning is supported by comprehensive student support services, careful sequencing of learning experiences, attentive advising, effective instruction in research, and well-designed and maintained physical and technological resources.

Criterion 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

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.

Argument

1. Program reviews at St. Olaf are comprehensive, conducted regularly, and consequential.

St. Olaf has had a [program review process](#) in place for nearly 25 years. Every major, concentration, and conversation program, as well as other selected academic programs (such as International and Off-Campus Studies) undergoes a formal review once every ten years. Some programs also undergo review by a field-specific accrediting organization and adhere to a different review cycle. The program review process includes an extensive self-study; a site visit and evaluation report by two external reviewers selected by the Provost and Dean of the College in consultation with the relevant Associate Dean and department chair; review of the self-study and consultation with the external reviewers by the Associate Dean, the Provost, and the Deans Council; and a departmental response to the external reviewers' report. The [self-study guidelines](#) attend to program mission, history, and institutional context; resources; student learning and

development; faculty scholarly and artistic work; faculty service and leadership; and future plans. The program review process and self-study guidelines are established by the Provost, updated periodically in consultation with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment ([IE&A](#)).

Care is taken to align the annual reporting process with the program review process, so that each informs and supports the other and work is not replicated. The [IE&A website](#) provides dashboards with data filterable by department, program, and major. These dashboards include [faculty FTE](#), [course offerings and enrollments](#), [number of majors](#), and other program-level data. In addition, [annual data reports](#) are provided directly to chairs and program directors, rather than requiring them to assemble this information themselves. This affords them more time to review and reflect on the information and to observe trends over time in their program review self-studies.

Program reviews are routinely followed by action on the basis of findings. The Provost meets with the department chair/program director and the relevant Associate Dean prior to the preparation of the response to the written report of the external evaluators; the program's response then becomes an agenda item for subsequent departmental and administrative action. For example, the 2018 external review of the English department recommended that it increase support for creative writing, bringing it up to the level of support already provided for literary study. As a result of that recommendation, the department developed a separate creative writing major, approved by the faculty in 2021. In response to their 2016 self study, the Family Studies program revised their intended learning outcomes. The department also assessed the content of all its courses to ensure they complement but do not repeat each other, and reviewed each of the core courses' textbooks per the recommendations of the review. The 2021 external review of the Great Conversation program recommended that it reconsider its title, image, and curriculum in light of national critiques of "great books" programs. As a result, the program recast its curriculum as an examination of important moral, philosophical, and humanistic questions from a variety of perspectives, and renamed the program Enduring Questions. In response to their recent program reviews, which advocated for more resources and greater visibility given the number of majors and concentrators, in 2020-2021 the Race and Ethnic Studies program and Women's and Gender Studies (now Gender and Sexuality Studies) program worked together to create a new department - Race, Ethnic, Gender and Sexuality Studies. This new department was approved by the Board of Regents in May 2021 and officially launched in Fall 2022.

2/3. Student learning experiences that occur primarily outside St. Olaf are carefully evaluated for quality prior to transcription of credit.

[Policies governing the transcription of credit for transfer courses](#) are authorized by the faculty Curriculum Committee and described in detail in the college catalog. They include limits on the number of credits that can be transferred in (e.g., no more than 6 credits from pre-college transfer courses); high standards for pre-college work such as AP (a minimum score of 4 or 5, depending on the subject); stringent requirements concerning the credit-hour equivalency and institutional accreditation for coursework completed at other institutions; and clear parameters for the number and types of graduation requirements that can and cannot be satisfied by work completed outside of St. Olaf. Transfer courses must be completed with a final grade of C or higher, and an official transcript from the awarding institution is required. Petitions for transcription of credit are

evaluated against these standards by the Assistant Registrar and require detailed information about the course for which credit is being sought. In cases where a transfer credit may count toward a major, approval of the relevant department chair is requested. Once students have matriculated, they can transfer up to four additional credits earned from institutions other than St. Olaf. This limit does not apply to credits earned through approved off-campus programs; such credits are evaluated through the extensive approval process for off-campus courses and programs described in 3.A.3.

St. Olaf College only accepts transfer credits from domestic institutions that are regionally accredited or foreign institutions that are the equivalent of regionally accredited. St. Olaf does not accept credit from non-accredited institutions, whether domestic or international. If the transfer credits are from internships or other forms of prior learning, St. Olaf does not include those in the accepted credits for that student. Independent study and independent research courses from prior institutions, however, are accepted toward elective credits but cannot count toward Core or major requirements. In addition, each department/program chair may decide to accept transfer credit from a non-accredited institution toward the requirements for a major or concentration, but the credit would not be listed on the St. Olaf transcript or count toward overall degree requirements.

All transfer credit is evaluated by the Assistant Registrar, in consultation with the Registrar, to ensure consistency of interpretation and application throughout the institution. Any requests for exceptions to these policies are reviewed by the Registrar and by the Policy and Planning Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. Transfer policies undergo periodic review. All policies concerning transfer credits are communicated via the academic catalog and on the [Registrar's Office website](#).

4. Institutional authority over the quality and rigor of courses and programs and the qualifications of program faculty is maintained and exercised through the faculty governance system and the decision-making and budget authority of its academic leadership.

St. Olaf maintains high standards for student learning across the entire curriculum and throughout a student's undergraduate experience. The college tailors expectations for course content, the type of student work, and the amount of prior knowledge or experience required for success to the "level" of the course (I, II, or III). Per the [college catalog](#), "Level I courses, numbered 100 through 199, are for the most part introductory to a field or discipline. They exert a demand for only such depth of study, student responsibility, and independence commensurate with initial work at the college level. Level II courses, numbered 200 through 299, require student independence in the acquisition of material and mastery of techniques and methods above that demanded in level I courses. Level III courses, numbered 300 through 399, are usually confined to the major and demand control of methods as well as command of basic factual and theoretical knowledge appropriate to the discipline."

The rigor and level-appropriateness of courses is assured through the faculty governance system and the oversight provided by the Office of the Registrar (which has representation on the New Proposals and Continuing Programs Subcommittees of the Curriculum Committee). [Course proposals](#) must include either a sample syllabus or a detailed description of: a list of course

topics; a preliminary list of readings; anticipated use of class time (e.g., lectures, discussion, performance); potential assignments; and form of evaluation. The rigor of all courses is also assured by the expectation that for a 1.00 credit course, students will devote a minimum of 3 hours outside of class for every hour in class. This expectation is reiterated on the course proposal form and in the college catalog. Finally, the college has established clear and detailed descriptions of the levels of student performance associated with each letter grade used in the college marking and grade point system. These [grading benchmarks](#) are published in the college catalog and faculty are expected to refer to them when assigning grades.

Any prerequisites for a given course must be specified in the course proposal, so the appropriateness of each prerequisite is considered in the [Curriculum Committee's course proposal review and approval process](#). All prerequisites are explicitly stated in the course description published in the college catalog and identified during the registration process. Any changes in course prerequisites must be approved by the Curriculum Committee before any changes are made in the catalog or Student Information System.

The only type of dual credit program offered by St. Olaf is a high school honors program, in which high school seniors are permitted to register as non-residential special students for courses taught by St. Olaf faculty members on a space-available basis. Students may register for only one course per term. Approximately 15 high school seniors participate in the program each year. Students earn both high school and college credit for each course they complete, but they earn this credit only by completing courses taught by St. Olaf faculty, whose qualifications are established by the college through the normal position authorization, description, and recruitment process described above. The college does not maintain a separate pool of faculty who teach only in the high school honors program.

The structure of authority for determining the qualifications required for faculty positions in departments and programs is laid out in the St. Olaf *Faculty Manual*, in the College Bylaws, and in the assigned responsibilities of the academic leaders of the college set forth in the *Faculty Handbook*. *Faculty Manual 4.IV.A* (p. 42) identifies the qualifications associated with each faculty rank. The Bylaws indicate that the authority to establish faculty duties and rank is provisionally delegated to the President of the College by its Board of Regents ([Section 6.02](#); p. 9). The *Faculty Handbook* indicates that the [Dean of the College](#) is "responsible for working with the faculty in the development and proper conduct of the instructional program of the college including...the functioning of departments and divisions." The [Associate Deans of the five Faculties](#) are "to oversee hiring, tenure, promotion and evaluation procedures to insure consistent and rigorous application of standards and procedures."

These broad parameters of authority and responsibility are operationalized in the [guidelines for tenure-track faculty recruitment](#) established by the Provost. In the [proposal stage](#) (p. 3), requests for tenure-track positions are authorized by Deans Council, with the department chair working closely with their Associate Dean to develop the position description, using a [position announcement template](#) that requires both minimum and preferred qualifications. Prior to posting and recruitment, the final position announcement and the recruitment plan must be approved by the Associate Dean(s), the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, the Associate Provost, and the Provost. A similar structure of authority exists for establishing faculty qualifications for [full](#)

[time term appointments](#) (p. 29), [part time term appointments](#) (p. 33), [teaching specialists](#) (p. 34), and [special appointments](#) (p. 36).

St. Olaf College maintains an extensive infrastructure to support student learning, as described in 3.D.4. Institutional authority over these resources is through the academic leadership of the Provost, Deans Council, and department chairs and directors of other academic programs and services. Library and Information Technology Services ([LITS](#)) are led by the Chief Information Officer, who reports to the Provost. The Director of the Center for Advising and Academic Support ([CAAS](#)) reports directly to the Provost. In Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Associate Dean oversees access to facilities and resources, and exercises control over departmental capital budgets, keys, electronic key cards and all matters relating to the operations of the NSM programs and facilities. Because laboratory resources are available to only those students registered in a given course, the Registrar also influences access to resources, as does the chemical hygiene officer who ensures that students have been properly trained to [safely operate in the laboratory](#) settings in which they are engaged.

5. *St. Olaf maintains specialized accreditation in the arts and in its undergraduate pre-professional programs.*

The following St. Olaf programs are accredited by [specialized accrediting agencies](#):

- *Art/Art History* - The department is one of six Minnesota institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. The NASAD standards create a framework of basic competencies and operational conditions directly related to the fulfillment of institutional mission, goals, and objectives.
- *Dance* - The department is a charter member of the National Association of Schools of Dance and one of two NASD-accredited programs in the State of Minnesota. The accreditation process promotes regular and rigorous self-evaluation in relation to national standards, differentiating St. Olaf's program from other BA dance degrees in liberal arts institutions.
- *Education* - The department offers 16 different teaching licenses with continuing approval from the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.
- *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. The department is required to respond to every unmet standard before being re-accredited and to identify needed improvements. The accreditation process has resulted in improvements to the music degrees, including auditioning of majors and increasing the number of practice rooms.
- *Nursing* - The nursing program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education for baccalaureate nursing programs. Graduation from a Minnesota public or private post-secondary educational institution that is accredited by a regional or national accrediting association recognized by the US Department of Education is one criterion for eligibility to complete the licensure examination for registered nurses offered by the

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. Most graduate schools in nursing require that students graduate from an institution with a nursing program that is accredited by a regional or national accrediting association.

- *Social Work* - Accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is required for graduates with baccalaureate degrees in social work to be eligible to complete the American Association of Social Work Boards (AASWB) national examination for BSW-level licensure. Graduates are required by law to have a license to practice in nearly all states.
- *Theater* - Accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Theatre signifies the quality of both the Theater curriculum and its co-curricular programming. The NAST handbook requires member institutions to "consistently adhere to sound educational policies and practices." St. Olaf's program is one of three accredited in the state of Minnesota.

Among these programs offered by the college, only three -- Education, Nursing, and Social Work -- are required to maintain specialized accreditation for licensure purposes. All other specialized accreditation is voluntarily sought by individual departments to enhance and signify program quality. St. Olaf College is one of only two baccalaureate institutions nationwide that maintains accreditation in all four of the fine arts.

6. St. Olaf is vigorous in documenting and disseminating evidence of the success of its graduates.

Among our key institutional-level assessments are a locally-developed First Destination Survey, administered annually to the graduating class, and the HEDS Alumni Survey, administered every three years to alumni who graduated within the previous 5-6 years.

The First Destination Survey gathers data about students' employment, additional education, service work, and other activities for the year immediately following their graduation at St. Olaf. Launched at the April "Gradfest" event, students are invited to continue submitting their information throughout the first year following their graduation. Thanks to persistence in soliciting participation, 89% of the Class of 2021 provided information about their "first destination" following their graduation from St. Olaf. Findings show that within one year of graduation from St. Olaf, 95% were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service program. 75% of the respondents indicated employment or full time service as their primary activity, representing a broad array of sectors. The remaining 20%, who had identified further education as their primary activity, were enrolled in educational programs ranging from licensures and certificates to M.D. and Ph.D. programs. (The percentage of recent graduates pursuing graduate or professional education is likely to be higher than indicated in these results, because even if respondents are engaged in more than one activity, the survey asks them to identify only one as "primary.") Summary results are posted on the [IE&A website](#), and the Piper Center for Vocation and Career's [detailed, searchable database](#) (by major/concentration, location, and occupation or field of study) serves both current and prospective students interested in how St. Olaf graduates use their education to pursue [successful careers](#) or [additional education](#).

The HEDS Alumni Survey provides evidence not only of what our students do post-graduation, but also of their perceptions of the extent to which their St. Olaf experience prepared them for their lives after college. Our Spring 2021 [Alumni Survey results](#) (p. 9) show that 78% of respondents from the Classes of 2015-16 think their current job "uses skills [they] gained as an undergraduate," 68% are engaged in work related to their undergraduate major, and 78% find their present job meaningful. Seventy-nine percent of those in [graduate or professional school](#) (p. 33) report that their St. Olaf experience prepared them "quite a bit" or "very much" for their advanced studies, and 69% of those employed think St. Olaf prepared them "quite a bit" or "very much" for their [current career](#) (p. 33). This information is disseminated on the [IE&A website](#) and on the [St. Olaf "Outcomes" website](#). St. Olaf also regularly profiles alumni of the college, including [Alumni Award winners](#) and [features on alumni accomplishments](#).

The college also gathers data about its graduates from externally-maintained sources. Success indicators disseminated on its [Graduate and Professional School Outcomes](#) webpage include NSF's Survey of Earned Doctorates and Rhodes and Fulbright Scholars.

Finally, many departments and programs are enhancing their collaboration with IE&A to track the success of students served by their programs. These data are then put to use in program reviews, specialized accreditation, and advising.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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.

Argument

Assessment at St. Olaf College has long been known as [inquiry in support of student learning](#). Transparent, mission-driven, equitable, student-centered, faculty- and staff-supported, and utilization-focused, assessment informs the work of faculty, staff, administrative leaders, and the Board of Regents.

- 1. St. Olaf articulates learning outcomes for the academic and co-curricular divisions and effectively assesses the extent to which those goals are achieved.*

St. Olaf articulates student learning outcomes for its [OLE Core curriculum](#); its specialized studies in [majors, concentrations, conversations, and other academic programs](#); and institution-wide learning outcomes (colloquially known as the [STOGGoals](#)) meant to encompass the entire student experience inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, the Division of Student Life led each of its departments in developing learning outcomes in 2018-19.

St. Olaf has an established program of assessment embracing both curricular and co-curricular Intended Learning Outcomes ([ILOs](#)). The College administers institution-wide surveys on a regular basis to indirectly measure achievement of academic and co-curricular learning outcomes at the institutional level. These include national instruments such as the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) and the Higher Education Data Sharing ([HEDS](#)) [Alumni Survey](#), as well as the locally-developed [Learning Goals Questionnaire \(LGQ\)](#), which assesses student achievement of the "STOGGoals".

Through the 2018-19 academic year, assessment of academic learning outcomes followed a four-year cycle: 1) assessment of academic majors, 2) assessment of concentrations (interdisciplinary minors), 3) assessment of general education (GE) courses, and 4) an assessment "action year" using assessment results for improvement. As a result of an external [program review of assessment](#) in 2017-18 and [recommendations from external reviewers](#) (p. 9), academic departments and programs are embarking on a new [Decennial Assessment Cycle](#) that explicitly links assessment of student learning to the external program review cycle. Each department and program develops a 10-year assessment plan tailored to their learning outcomes and program goals (examples: [Biology](#), [Education](#), [Political Science](#)). This provides faculty with greater autonomy over assessment, rather than prescribing what must be assessed in a given year. It also

ties assessment findings directly to program review so that the two can more effectively inform each other. St. Olaf's faculty [Assessment Committee](#) oversees the Decennial Assessment Cycle, providing feedback and support to departments and programs as they develop and carry out their assessment plans.

The Assessment Committee developed a separate [cycle of assessment for the new OLE Core](#) general education curriculum (see 3.B for details on the OLE Core), and is currently working to pilot assessment methods. During the first year of course offerings in the new curriculum (2021-22), assessment focused on the First-Year Experience and the Social Sciences courses. A First-Year Experience Leadership Team of faculty and staff developed an [initial plan of assessment](#) for selected [learning outcomes associated with the First-Year Experience](#), with the remaining outcomes to be assessed in future years. The Assessment Committee developed a [common rubric](#) for the [Social Sciences ILOs](#) in consultation with faculty teaching Social Sciences courses. This common rubric was used by a panel of faculty in Summer 2022 to score a randomly selected set of student artifacts from 2021-22 Social Sciences courses and [provide evidence](#) of student achievement of the ILOs. These two projects will inform our plans for assessment of the OLE Core going forward.

The 2017-18 review of our assessment program has also resulted in improvements to our co-curricular assessment practices, particularly within the Division of Student Life. In consultation with divisional colleagues and the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment ([IE&A](#)) office, the Division of Student Life developed a coordinated, multi-year approach to build the division's assessment knowledge and skill capacity, develop an assessment cycle, and create a culture of assessment in all activities within the Division.

During the [first year of more formalized co-curricular assessment](#) in 2018-19, Student Life focused on creating a common assessment language, breaking down barriers to assessment and increasing assessment knowledge and skill for divisional leaders. Many divisional units assumed that assessment was a long, arduous process when in fact, most had significant assessment data at their fingertips. In 2019-20, Student Life focused on building upon the data each department had curated during the prior year. Each department was trained on how to develop student learning outcomes as well as how to create an [assessment plan](#). In response to the impact of the global pandemic and our national reckoning with racial injustice, the division focused its 2020-21 assessment efforts on wellness and on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism (DEIA) work. The division used their assessment skills to develop [DE&I Tactic reports](#) as well as DEI End of the Year Summary reports which included assessment plans for 2021-2022.

The Student Life Division covers many of our co-curricular areas. Additional offices, such as the Piper Center for Vocation and Career and the Center for Advising and Academic Support ([CAAS](#)), also frequently consult IE&A for assessment of their programs. For example, the Piper Center recently designed a new Ole Career Launcher program intended to give students greater access to hands-on experience and job skill-building on campus. Piper Center staff consulted with IE&A to begin an initial [draft assessment plan](#) and design a [survey](#) for the first session of the Career Launcher program. CAAS has most recently consulted with IE&A on assessment of the St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources ([SOAR](#)) program, a new co-curricular component of our OLE Core curriculum.

2. St. Olaf uses assessment findings to improve student learning.

Under the prior four-year assessment cycle, departments and programs completed [action reports](#) in Year Four, detailing how they planned to or were already responding to findings from prior assessments. [Examples of changes](#) (p. 4) made by departments and programs included redesigning assignments or course curricula, changing pathways or requirements for a major, revising programmatic learning outcomes, and altering assessment methods. With the new Decennial Cycle, we plan to incorporate similar types of questions when asking departments and programs to report on their assessment findings. Additionally, tying the assessment cycle more closely to the external program review process will allow assessment to take a larger role in informing broader programmatic changes. The Program Review Self-Study contains a section on “[Student learning and development](#)” (p. 3) which prompts departments and programs to report on their key assessment findings, actions taken or planned in response, and evaluation of their program’s strengths and limitations in light of their assessment evidence. Through their Decennial Assessment Plans, departments and programs are encouraged to incorporate processes for “closing the loop” on assessment by using assessment results to make changes and repeating assessment of student learning outcomes to determine whether such changes were effective.

Under the prior assessment model, faculty were asked to submit reports related to GE assessment that asked them, in part, to indicate what practices they might continue or changes they might make in response to the assessment results. For example, the [report on GE assessment in 2015-16](#) (p. 4) stated that many faculty planned to continue successful practices, while others provided examples of specific changes to course content, materials, and activities that they planned to make. However, it was difficult to utilize these assessment findings on a broader scale to make changes at the GE curriculum level given that faculty could choose which individual GE learning outcome to assess and how, something that we hope to remedy with new plans for assigning ILOs to faculty (described further below) and using common rubrics to assess student work.

For co-curricular assessment in Student Life, the primary use of assessment currently focuses on providing a foundation for department goals and informing future assessments. As a result of one-on-one consultations, divisional training and committee work, each department within Student Life developed an “Impact Report” (see for example the [report from Residence Life](#)) to use as a baseline for future assessment.

Finally, the College also uses assessment results at the institutional level to monitor progress toward goals established in the College's [strategic plan](#) and its [diversity, equity, and inclusion work](#). For example, results from [NSSE](#) are used to monitor St. Olaf's goals to ensure high-quality and equitable academic advising and to increase engagement in on-campus interactions among students from different backgrounds. As a result of our 2020-22 Quality Initiative, selected assessment results are included in our [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion dashboards](#), monitored by two Board committees and the College’s Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Institutional survey results are also regularly disseminated by the Assessment Committee, shared with the faculty, Board of Regents, and other divisions and leadership groups at the College to inform decision-making, as well as made publicly available on the [Assessment Committee’s website](#) and through our [IE&A website](#).

3. *St. Olaf's assessment processes follow best practices and engage a wide range of faculty and staff in assessing and using evidence of student learning.*

The Decennial Assessment Cycle encourages use of both direct and indirect assessment measures, and 53 of 55 departments and programs have submitted assessment plans to date or received extensions until after their upcoming program reviews. In the past, departments have also utilized external direct assessment methods such as the Major Field Test (utilized by our [Biology department](#)) and the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (utilized by our [German department](#)). As recommended by the peer review team for our 2016 Assurance Review, we expect these practices to continue; indeed, the German department has already written the OPI into their [Decennial Assessment Plan](#).

The [template provided to Student Life staff](#) to develop their assessment plans includes examples of good practice in developing learning outcomes and also allows staff to select either indirect or direct assessment methods. St. Olaf's institutional surveys (NSSE, HEDS Alumni, LGQ, and others) gather further indirect evidence of student learning, allowing for triangulation of longitudinal and "snapshot" information on student achievement of learning outcomes at all levels and across academic and co-curricular endeavors.

We utilized a "backwards design" approach to the OLE Core curriculum, where the ILOs articulated and approved by faculty informed the development of guidelines for approving courses to meet each requirement. This was a significant departure from our previous approach, where ILOs for the GE curriculum were articulated many years after it had been adopted. Additionally, the writing groups tasked with determining the ILOs for each OLE Core requirement were asked to consider feasibility of assessment when developing the ILO statements.

Consistent with the recommendations of the peer review team for our 2016 Assurance Review, we continue to develop better processes for direct assessment of general education courses. Previously, assessment of GE courses provided faculty with the freedom to select which ILO they wished to assess and their own method of assessment. While the emphasis on faculty autonomy was appreciated, it resulted in unbalanced assessment efforts across learning outcomes and difficulty summarizing findings across a myriad of assessment methods. [Our new process](#) randomly assigns one of the ILOs for the OLE Core attribute(s) being assessed to ensure a robust set of artifacts for each ILO. Faculty retain autonomy in designing the assignments or exams for measuring the OLE Core ILOs, while common rubrics enable assessment across the variety of courses fulfilling each requirement. Initial conversations around rubric development and scoring were informed by St. Olaf's recent participation in an American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)-led grant project related to their VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) initiative. Funding from this grant allowed for two Assessment Committee faculty members and our Assistant Director of Assessment to receive training on rubric scoring through the VALUE Institute (now the VALUE Scoring Collaborative). Additionally, several OLE Core requirements relate directly to outcomes covered by the VALUE rubrics; these existing rubrics will likely help inform the creation of our own common rubrics for relevant OLE Core areas in the future.

St. Olaf's assessment program is supported by a robust infrastructure of faculty and staff committees and offices. The Provost and Dean of the College provides support and resources for conducting academic assessment. A faculty-elected [Assessment Committee](#), established in the Spring of 2018, provides greater capacity for supporting academic assessment than the previous assessment sub-committee of the faculty Curriculum Committee. The Assessment Committee develops and improves upon assessment processes and advises departments and the wider faculty on best assessment practices. Committee membership includes a faculty Director of Assessment and a staff Assistant Director of Assessment. The faculty Director receives a small stipend for leading assessment efforts, and the staff Assistant Director is a full-time position dedicated to supporting both academic and co-curricular assessment at the College. Faculty elected to the other positions on the Committee rotate every two years, providing a means for different faculty to gain experience and expertise in leading assessment.

On the co-curricular side, a staff [Co-curricular Assessment Committee](#), launched in 2019-20 and led by the Assistant Director of Assessment, reviews assessment findings from co-curricular offices and programs (e.g., [preliminary findings](#) from the SOAR program). Finally, the IE&A Office manages the collection, reporting, analysis, and [dissemination of evidence](#); consults with and offers support to faculty and staff on assessment in their classrooms, departments, and programs; and provides relevant data on student learning to many stakeholders at the College, including the Board of Regents.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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.)

Argument

1. *The current [Strategic Plan](#) specifies goals for advancing retention and graduation rates that are challenging, yet realistic.*

The college's [first- to second-year retention rate](#) has been above 90% since 1998, reaching a peak of 94.3% in Fall 2011 for the cohort that entered in Fall 2010. The rate stayed between 92%-94% for several years, but beginning in Fall 2018, the retention rate dropped to 90.6% and has hovered below 91% for the past four years. Achieving the strategic plan goal of 95% will require intentional work with first-year students to reverse this trend, but is attainable. The [four-year graduation rate](#) had been above 80% since the graduating Class of 2005 until the Class of 2021 had an unexpected drop to 79.2%, likely due in part to the ongoing global pandemic. Although the graduating classes of 2012-2015 (entering Fall 2008-2011) achieved the strategic plan goal of 85%, or very nearly, the rate since then has declined. Similarly, those four classes were close to achieving the [six-year graduation rate](#) goal of 90%, but subsequent classes have not attained this. We believe these goals are all realistic, given the high caliber of our students and programs, and the concerted efforts underway to reverse these trends.

- 2/4. *St. Olaf has tracked retention, persistence and graduation rates using IPEDS methodology for over 30 years.*

Because the majority of the St. Olaf student body is a traditional population, the IPEDS definitions and methodology for tracking entering cohorts of full-time, first-time students is quite appropriate. Less than 5% of new students at St. Olaf have transferred into the college:

Year	New First-time	New Transfer	% Transfer
Fall 2017	786	25	3.1%
Fall 2018	809	29	3.5%
Fall 2019	806	22	2.7%
Fall 2020	729	23	3.1%
Fall 2021	755	38	4.8%

[Internally-designed reports](#) on first-year retention, continued cohort persistence through senior year, and four-, five- and six-year graduation rates have been on the public Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment ([IE&A](#)) website for at least twenty years. More recently, as reflection of best practice to disaggregate data and share it broadly, the IE&A staff have created interactive dashboards, where the user can explore [graduation](#) and [retention](#) rates by gender, race/ethnic/citizenship status, federal student aid category, and more.

In addition to the standard cohort tracking, the Director of IE&A prepares a weekly term-to-term tracking of all students. Since the above table shows the percentage of transfer students is increasing, we want to be sure we are tracking the success of all of our students. [This report](#) shows projected enrollment and actual registrations for all students in the Fall 2021 census each week after registration opened until the Spring 2022 census. A "success rate" tracks the percentage of all degree-seeking students who either completed a degree at the end of the fall semester, or are enrolled in the spring term. The second page of the report tracks this success rate over time. Similarly, [this report](#) shows the tracking from Spring 2021 to Fall 2021. These reports both show that the term-to-term success rate has declined during the global pandemic.

3. St. Olaf uses its data to identify and improve programs and processes in support of student persistence and degree completion.

In 2017-18 a Retention Task Force was convened, chaired by the then Director of Academic Support and Advising, and charged with developing specific goals for retention in line with Strategic Plan priorities. The task force reviewed work done by previous groups, as well as current data, to produce a [final report](#) with 8 specific goals. This report also identified a dozen retention-boosting strategies in development or pilot stage, as well as over a dozen more strategies for implementation. Many of these strategies are now in place or being further developed. In Fall 2018 the college's new Vice President for Student Life assumed leadership of the previous task force, forming a permanent Retention Committee, as recommended by the task force. The committee was comprised of staff from various areas of the college, as well as one faculty member. The committee spent a few months reviewing data, and in February 2019 made presentations to both the [Division of Student Life staff](#) and the full faculty at their monthly [Faculty Meeting](#). These presentations sparked much conversation and helped the college move forward on several initiatives.

Since that time, informed by the work of the committee, St. Olaf restructured one staff position and created a second position to focus efforts on student success and the use of data to inform these efforts. The IE&A [Assistant Director of Institutional Research and Student Success](#)

position was established in Summer 2019, responsible for "collaborat[ing] with the appropriate colleagues to use data to inform a student success strategic plan and goals, and disseminate information." A gift to the college helped fund a new position in the Center for Advising and Academic Support ([CAAS](#)) in Summer 2021. The new [Assistant Director for Retention and Student Success](#) "[uses] relevant data [to] envision and design holistic retention strategies to increase retention and graduation rates." These two staff members are part of the current cross-campus Retention and Student Success Committee, which is now led through the CAAS, but still reports to the Vice President for Student Life. With representation from the Academic, Student Life, Admissions, Advancement, and Mission divisions of the college, this committee reviews data and makes recommendations for new initiatives, or for improving existing programs and processes in support of student retention and success. As outlined in its [2021-22 Midyear Update](#), the work of this committee has supported a Sophomore Thriving initiative, revisions to New Student Orientation, and the successful pilot and move into the new curriculum of the St. Olaf Orientation to Academics and Resources ([SOAR](#)) program. All of this work flowed from the research and data analysis done by members of the retention committee.

Based on trends in the IE&A [graduation](#) and [retention](#) dashboards, as well as other analysis by IE&A, in Fall 2021 the Retention and Student Success Committee identified four student subgroups of particular concern: students from underrepresented groups; male students; students with high academic need and low financial need; and students who have "stopped out." The committee examined data on each of these groups, identified current strategies in place to assist these students, and made recommendations for new strategies and resources needed to improve their success. The committee's [final report](#) for the President's Leadership Team included five recommendations concerning strategies and resources needed for all students to receive personalized support throughout their time at St. Olaf, improving retention rates not only for the student groups analyzed in the report, but also for students overall. A number of these recommendations were funded and are now being implemented.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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.

Summary

St. Olaf sustains the quality of its curricular and co-curricular programs through its high-quality and utilization-focused approach to evaluation and assessment.

- A. The faculty governance system, committed administrative and academic leadership, and rigorous reporting, review, and outcomes dissemination ensure ongoing quality and continuous improvement in the college's educational programs.
- B. The college's program of assessment is guided by principles of good practice and includes comprehensive goals for student learning that embrace both curricular and co-curricular programs; multiple approaches to gathering evidence; broad and ongoing faculty and staff engagement; and regular use of findings for professional development and program improvement.
- C. The college regularly tracks retention and graduation rates and uses results to improve programs and processes that support persistence and completion.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

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.

Argument

1. St. Olaf's shared governance policies and practices promote broad engagement among its internal constituencies.

A variety of governing documents specify the ways that the Board of Regents, administrators, faculty, staff, and students participate in governance. The College's [Bylaws](#) describe the Board's role in governance, including its General Powers and Academic Powers ([Article III, Sections 3.01 and 3.02](#), p. 2), the size and composition of its membership ([Article III, Sections 3.03-3.06](#), p. 3), requirements for annual and regular meetings ([Article IV](#), p. 4), and the roles of Board officers ([Article V](#), p. 7) and committees ([Article VII](#), p. 10). As noted in 2.C.2, in [Regent evaluations of Board meetings and operations](#), the Regents express a high level of satisfaction with their participation in the governance of the college.

[Article VI](#) of the Bylaws (p. 11) describes the powers and responsibilities for the Officers of the Administration, including the President, the Chief Academic Officer, the Vice Presidents, and other officers. The President serves as chief executive officer of the college and is accountable to the Board of Regents for "the proper administration of all affairs, business and functions" of the college. The Chief Academic Officer is responsible for the supervision of the college's educational programs. The Vice Presidents and other officers have responsibilities specified by the President and the Board. The President is charged with bringing "communications to the Board from the officers or faculty, including, but not limited to, any formal resolution of the faculty requiring approval by the Board of Regents." Common examples of such resolutions include [revisions to the Faculty Manual](#), [approval of motions to graduate the senior class](#), and

[awarding of honorary degrees](#). Shortly after each Board meeting, the President provides a brief [written report](#) to all faculty and staff outlining meeting highlights and key decisions.

[Article VIII](#) of the Bylaws (p. 11) specifies the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the faculty, indicating that the faculty shares responsibility with the President and the Board of Regents for determining the “structure and procedures for faculty participation in institutional governance.” The Bylaws also provide for the faculty to “advise or make recommendations to the President, other officers of the Administration, or the Board of Regents on other matters in which the faculty have an interest.”

To facilitate faculty communication with the Board, [Faculty Manual 3.V.A](#) (p. 22) stipulates that the faculty elect a Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents each year. The Faculty Representative serves a year as Representative-elect before assuming the position of Representative. Both the Faculty Representative and the Representative-elect attend Board meetings, and the Faculty Representative provides a [report to the faculty](#) on the deliberations and actions of the Board after each meeting. All Board and Committee meeting materials are provided to both the Representative and Representative-elect via the BoardEffect platform. Most Board meetings also include an opportunity for Regents to hear directly from faculty on matters of current interest, whether through a written or oral report from the Faculty Representative or in small group discussions.

St. Olaf students participate in governance through the [Board of Regents Student Committee](#) (BORSC), one of six branches of the Student Government Association (SGA), chaired by an elected Board of Regents Student Observer. BORSC's role is to “examine and relay student concerns, perceptions, and interests to the governing body of St. Olaf” and “to represent student concerns regarding the long-range planning of the college, especially those aspects directly managed by the Board of Regents.” Like the Faculty Representatives, the Board of Regents Student Observer attends each Board meeting and accesses Board and committee meeting books through the BoardEffect platform. The two annual on-campus Board meetings (October and May) typically include an opportunity for the Board to engage with the Student Representative and other students, whether through a shared meal, small group discussions, a student-led presentation, or committee meetings.

2. The St. Olaf administration consistently practices data-informed decision making and communication to assure the well-being of the institution and its constituencies and advance the college mission.

The President’s Leadership Team (PLT) uses data to guide its decisions across a wide variety of college operations. Examples described in more detail in 5.C include:

- The 2017-19 [Strategic Resource Allocation Project](#), which convened faculty/staff working groups to examine revenues and expenses in every sector of the college’s work, and which resulted in [approved recommendations](#) yielding \$5.5 million in revenue enhancements and cost reductions
- The continued monitoring and adjustment of the Strategic Plan in response to [annual implementation and outcomes data](#)

- The annual cycle of establishing, implementing, and [reporting](#) on the achievement of institutional-level goals for the academic year, with outcomes from the prior year shaping each year's goals
- The preparation and use of the [2016 Facilities Framework Plan](#) outlining capital development options through the mid 2030s, which guides the development and implementation of the annually updated [Six-Year Physical Development Plan](#),
- The decennial cycle of [academic program reviews](#), the results of which are used in staff planning by Deans Council under the leadership of the Provost and Dean of the College.

Administrative attentiveness to data was vital to the many decisions made by the President's Leadership Team and the college's COVID Response Team (led by a PLT member) as the college navigated the global pandemic. For example, the [COVID-19 alert levels](#) the college established to determine institutional policies and practices relative to COVID case levels (such as the availability of in-person instruction, co-curricular programming and operations, campus dining protocols, masking and distancing requirements, remote work requirements, etc.) relied on a variety of data points, including:

- The percentage of on-campus students infected by COVID within a 14-day period
- The percentage of cases on campus where contacts cannot be identified
- The number of cases per 10,000 residents in the surrounding county
- The percentage of available isolation/quarantine beds for students

At the request of the leadership team, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IE&A) also developed and maintained a publicly available [COVID data dashboard](#), updated daily, with statistics on isolation, quarantine, the 14-day infection rate, case counts over the same period, and eventually, vaccination and booster rates for both students and employees. PLT consulted the dashboard regularly, and contracted with an external epidemiologist who provided advice and guidance on interpretation and application of both CDC and the Minnesota Department of Health recommended protocols. Finally, again at PTL's request, IE&A administered a variety of COVID-related surveys, including the [Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium's Fall 2020 COVID-19 surveys](#) gathering data on student, faculty, and staff experiences, perceptions, and needs during that unprecedented time, and [locally-designed questionnaires](#) to elicit student, faculty, and staff preferences regarding potential adjustments to the academic calendar and modes of instruction during Interim 2021. Data from these surveys weighed heavily in these critical decision areas. Overall, the leadership team's attentiveness to both internal and external data was key to the college's ability to achieve its first goal during the 2020-21 academic year: "Remain open on campus delivering hybrid learning for the entire academic year." As we reported to the Board of Regents, approximately 91% of our enrolled students returned to campus in Fall 2020, and 93% the following spring.

3. Faculty, staff, and students contribute to the development of the College's academic requirements, policies, and processes through the college's governance structures and in consultation with appropriate administrators.

A key collaborative structure fostering faculty and staff involvement in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes is the [Deans Council](#), consisting of the Provost, the Associate Provost, and the Associate Deans for each of the College's five academic divisions.

The Associate Deans are faculty members with released time from teaching, appointed by the Provost to three year terms which may be renewed once. The Associate Provost is also a faculty member with released time from teaching, appointed by the Provost to a continuing appointment. Meeting twice weekly during the academic year, Deans Council provides coordination and advice on academic matters of every kind; prior to each meeting, the Provost [shares the agenda for Deans Council meetings](#) with the faculty and academic staff. Once a month, the Council is joined by senior staff Directors of a variety of key academic offices, including the Office of the Registrar; the Center for Advising and Academic Support; Information Technology and the Libraries; the Smith Center for Global Engagement (formerly International and Off-Campus Studies); Student Support Services; and Government, Corporate, and Foundation Relations.

A second collaborative structure facilitating broad faculty and staff engagement in academic policy making is the [Academic Leadership Team](#), comprised of:

- Faculty department chairs and program directors
- Faculty chairs of elected committees
- Staff directors of other academic offices and units such as the libraries and IT; the Center for Advising and Academic Support; Student Support Services; Government, Foundation, and Corporate Relations; International and Off-campus Studies; and the Office of the Registrar
- Deans Council

Meeting six times during the academic year, the Academic Leadership Team provides “a venue for consultation and advice, including advising committee chairs, directors of academic offices, and the provost.”

A third structure facilitating broad involvement in academic policy matters is the faculty governance system. The monthly faculty meeting ([Faculty Manual 3.III](#), p. 7) acts on a variety of motions from elected faculty committees affecting academic requirements, policies, and programs. Examples include changes to the college’s graduation requirements, modifications of the requirements for a major or concentration, the addition of new programs in International and Off-Campus Studies, and the approval of new courses, including any General Education attributes. Decision-making at faculty meetings requires collaboration among faculty members and administrators in several respects. Those with voting franchise at faculty meetings include (1) all employees with academic rank who hold tenured full- or part time appointments, or full- or part time tenure-track appointments, or term appointments of one-half or more FTE, and (2) the President and Vice Presidents of the college ([Faculty Manual 3.I.A and 3.I.B](#), p. 6). The college president serves as chair of the faculty, ensures that academic matters requiring Board action are brought to the Board, and is responsible for assuring that “the components of the academic community have means of communicating with one another” ([College Bylaws, Article VI, Section 6.02](#), p. 8). Faculty meeting agendas are established through collaboration between the college president and the chairs of the elected faculty committees.

Key faculty committees with responsibility for the college’s academic requirements and procedures include the Curriculum Committee ([Faculty Manual 3.IV.B.2](#), p. 11) and the Assessment Committee ([Faculty Manual 3.IV.B.1](#), p. 10), both of which include *ex officio* staff

as well as student members appointed through the Student Government Association. The Curriculum Committee brings motions for faculty action on graduation requirements, academic programs, course offerings, intended learning outcomes, and other academic matters to the faculty as a whole. The Assessment Committee also advises the Curriculum Committee on curricular matters based on evidence of student learning.

The development, approval, and launch of the new OLE Core general education program exemplified effective academic collaboration among administrative leaders, faculty, staff, students, and Regents. Critical elements included:

- A faculty-student [General Education Task Force](#), convened by the Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary and General Studies, that coordinated research, discussion forums, parameter-setting, and implementation planning for approximately four years;
- Student forums inviting student input into the development of the new GE curriculum, culminating in a [resolution](#) passed by the Student Government Association executive team in April 2019 endorsing the direction of the new GE curriculum;
- A [student survey](#) conducted in Spring 2019 developed by a faculty-student research team;
- Numerous [special faculty meetings](#) during AY2018-19 and AY2019-20, in addition to the normal monthly meetings, to work on GE curriculum development;
- Periodic [plenary sessions](#) for the Board of Regents;
- Regent attendance at the [October 11, 2018 Special Faculty Meeting](#) devoted to discussion of the curricular revision;
- A [consulting group of staff leaders](#) of multiple “student-facing” offices, such as the Dean of Students Office, the Piper Center for Vocation and Career, the Registrar’s Office, Advising and Academic Support, the Libraries, and Information Technology;
- [Working groups](#) that included staff as well as faculty, responsible for proposing intended learning outcomes for the draft OLE Core requirements.

The curriculum was formally adopted in a two-stage process, with a [faculty vote approving the new requirements](#) in November 2019, followed by [Board of Regents approval](#) in January 2020.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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.

Argument

1. St. Olaf supports its operations with well-prepared operational staff and high-quality physical and technological infrastructure.

In 3.C.2, 3.C.3, 3.C.4, and 3.C.5 we describe the qualifications, staffing levels, ongoing professional development, and review procedures ensuring that both the quality and quantity of faculty members are appropriate to the college's excellent educational offerings. In 3.C.7 we provide similar information concerning staff who lead programs in advising and academic support, financial aid, student activities, music ensembles, and athletics. Overall, a total of 516 staff members develop and manage co-curricular programs, support academic programs and administrative functions, and provide leadership for the college. Staff [job descriptions](#) detail qualifications required for each position and are revised as necessary when a job search takes place. Many staff members, like those described in 3.C.7, hold advanced degrees beyond the minimum requirements in their job descriptions.

Various campus units provide training to support professional development for both faculty and staff. The [Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts](#) (see 3.C.5) provides opportunities for both faculty and staff to learn about and discuss innovations in teaching and learning. The St. Olaf Libraries provide workshops, learning communities, and [online resources](#) to help faculty and staff use the collections to support student learning. In Spring 2016 the Digital Scholarship Center at St. Olaf ([DiSCO](#)) opened in the library, supporting all aspects of digital scholarship by students, faculty and staff. Of particular significance over the past two years have been the resources supporting both fully remote and hybrid instruction provided by our [Instructional Technology](#) office and [CILA](#). Faculty, staff, and students all have access to LinkedIn Learning through the local public library for courses on software and other skills.

Consistent with [Strategic Plan Priority II.3](#), all employees are required to complete [training](#) for the prevention of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Consistent with [Priority V](#), the college has continued to expand professional development opportunities both overall and in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Examples of the former include the [Leadership to Legacy](#) leadership development program and a new supervisory training program to be launched in Fall 2022. Examples of the latter include campus-wide [anti-racism workshops](#) completed by

more than 700 faculty and staff in early 2021, and a wide variety of DEI workshops offered by the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, as described in our [May 2022 Quality Initiative Report](#).

The college's physical infrastructure is guided by its [2016 Framework Plan](#) (see also 5.A and 5.C), which shapes annually-adjusted [Six-Year Physical Development Plans](#), supported by prudent budgeting for capital expenditures. For more than ten years, the Board of Regents has authorized the [transfer of 2.5% of unrestricted net operating income into the capital budget](#) to support the ongoing physical development of the campus (the amount was slightly lower for FY2019-20 due to the pandemic), with transfers totaling over \$30 million. These strategic practices have enabled both significant new construction and extensive renovation. Recent examples include the new student housing [Ole Avenue Project](#) (2022), a new [ice arena](#) (2019), and major renovations of the 1925 [Holland Hall academic building](#) and the 1902 [Steensland Hall library](#), the new home of the world-renowned [Hong Kierkegaard Collection and Center](#). A new [library vault](#) and transformed archive space are underway, along with a [new residence for future college presidents](#), updated classrooms and faculty and staff office spaces, and ongoing renovations to all of the residence halls. St. Olaf has also achieved [carbon-free electrical power](#).

With 30 full-time professionals and nearly 80 student employees, [Information Technology](#) (IT) provides computers, software, A/V technologies, telecommunications, and support services to the entire St. Olaf community. All campus computers connect to the campus network, the Internet, and Internet 2. All classrooms are equipped with projection systems, computers, and document cameras. The [Instructional Technology](#) unit supports new technology with training and technology consulting services.

Students have access to approximately 1000 computers in department and public labs. When the college pivoted temporarily to fully-remote instruction in Spring 2020, IT initiated a laptop loan service to students who did not otherwise have access to computing equipment. Since then, the service has been not only sustained but expanded, serving approximately 100 students per semester with 80 laptops circulating. Another 100 laptops are available for checkout through the Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion and the TRIO Student Support Services program.

2. The college's educational and strategic goals are mission-driven and appropriately resourced.

The college's [educational goals](#) and [Strategic Plan](#) all flow from the college's [mission](#). As demonstrated in Core Components 2, 3, and 4, the college organizes its curriculum, co-curriculum, fundraising, resource allocation, and other operations to achieve these commitments, and then measures results through evaluation, assessment, and outcomes reporting.

Three external financial indicators demonstrate that St. Olaf's resource base is sufficient to support both its current offerings and its continuous improvement. Its credit rating from Moody's Investors Service was [increased twice in the past twenty years](#), moving from A3 to A2 in 2002 and then from A2 to A1 in 2010. Moody's [confirmed the A1 rating in 2021](#) related to the issuance of the Series 2021 Revenue Bonds, indicating that "the college's sound fiscal management has underpinned very strong operating surpluses and cash flow margins, over many consecutive years."

A second indicator of financial health is the United States Department of Education's [Financial Responsibility Composite Score](#), calculated each year from datasets in the college's audited financial statements. A score of 1.5 or greater indicates that an institution is “financially responsible;” lower scores indicate that an institution is either “requiring monitoring” or “not responsible.” St. Olaf has [scored above 1.5 every year since FY2006-07](#), and for nine of those 16 years, has been assigned the highest score of 3.0.

The third external financial indicator, the [Composite Financial Index](#) (CFI) developed by Prager, Sealy & Co. LLC, is part of the Annual Institutional Update data institutions provide to the Higher Learning Commission. The CFI includes four core financial ratios: the primary reserve, net income, return on net assets, and viability. Its overall scale ranges from -4 to 10, and the HLC considers scores of 3.0 or greater to be "above the zone" for triggering additional review based on financial risk. St. Olaf's score has been in the range of 5 to 10 for every fiscal year since FY2009-10, indicating that the college is in a position not only to compete, but also to pursue selected new initiatives. The college's CFI and its four core financial ratios are included in the [year-end financial report to the Board of Regents Finance Committee](#) each October.

Two internal indicators have also shown continuous financial health: the college's year-to-year financial performance and the endowment spending rate. The college's [audited financial statements](#) show that over the last 20 years, the [change in unrestricted net assets from operating activities](#) as a percentage of unrestricted operating revenues has averaged +5.4%, from a low of +1.6% in 2003 to a high of +9.2% in 2011. The college's endowment spending rate since 2004 has been 4.7% of a sixteen-quarter moving average. The typical endowment spending rate for liberal arts colleges similar to St. Olaf is 5.0% of a twelve-quarter average. St. Olaf's conservative rate of 4.7%, consistent with its [investment policy and objectives](#), helps to smooth the endowment's contribution to the college's annual budget and to mitigate the impact of an investment loss should that occur.

Careful and collaborative processes of monitoring expenditures, described in 5.B.3 below, have allowed the college to continue its twenty-year pattern of concluding the fiscal year with its revenues exceeding its expenses. With the approval of the Board of Regents, the college then typically invests these revenues into the capital budget and into an unrestricted endowment.

3. The college's processes for establishing and monitoring the budget are comprehensive, consistent, and effective.

The President's Leadership Team (PLT) oversees the process of allocating resources in the annual budget, using a budget planning model maintained by the Finance Office that includes tuition, room and board charges, financial aid discount, wage and benefit costs, and capital spending costs. The model permits annual adjustments as needed to the key variables affecting the budget; maintains a record of historic trends; and enables the team to forecast future budget performance.

The Board of Regents establishes key budget parameters such as the comprehensive fee, the endowment spending rate, and wage pools for salary increases, based on recommendations from the President developed in consultation with PLT. The Board also approves the [annual operating and capital spending budget plan](#) developed by PLT in consultation with campus budget

managers, with a preliminary budget for the upcoming fiscal year approved in May, and the final budget approved in October once enrollment and net tuition revenue have been established. Every spring, all budget managers prepare a detailed budget request for their anticipated unit-level expenditures for the following fiscal year, which are then synthesized by Finance Office staff into the institutional budget recommendation to the Board. Unit-level budgets are uploaded to the college's financial information system, which supports both budget management at the unit level and budget oversight at the administrative level. The Vice President and Chief Financial Officer assures that the amounts submitted and loaded are consistent with the final operating and capital budget that the Board of Regents finalizes each October.

In the academic division, the Provost works with the Associate Provost and the Associate Deans for the five academic divisions to assure that the budget planning process reflects the resource needs of all academic units. The elected Faculty Life Committee is responsible for recommending faculty salary distribution formulas.

On a monthly basis, the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer monitors the college's total year-to-date operating revenue and expense and reports these to the President, who, in turn, provides a monthly update to the Board of Regents. The VP/CFO also prepares a [monthly dashboard of revenues and expenditures by division](#), with budget variances identified for each PLT member and periodically reviewed by the team as a whole. The Assistant Vice President for Budget and Auxiliary Operations provides quarterly budget reports to all budget managers, highlighting variances between budgeted and actual amounts under their control. Three times a year (August, December, and May), budget managers submit explanations for these variances, which are then reviewed by Finance Office staff.

4. St. Olaf's educational purposes are prioritized in the college's resource allocation process, and the extent of their achievement is publicly documented.

The college's budget preparation and management processes (5.B.3 above), the data-informed decision making of the college's leadership (5.A.2), and the college's integrated assessment, planning and resource allocation practices (5.C.1, 2, 4, and 5), ensure that the college's resources are deployed strategically to achieve its educational purposes. For example, student orientation and advising were prioritized in the building of the FY2022-23 budget, reallocating over \$750,000 of funding to provide additional staffing in these areas, as well as funding additional faculty to reduce class sizes, in order to ensure improved retention and student success. Consistent with patterns in previous years, 53% of the college's [overall expenditures in FY2021-22](#) went to its academic programs, and another 19% was allocated to student services.

The Office of the President and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IE&A) prioritize transparency about the extent to which the college accomplishes its goals for student learning and development. IE&A provides ready access both within and beyond the St. Olaf community to a wide variety of census, assessment, and strategic outcomes data. Examples include:

- Enrollment, retention, and other [student census data](#)
- Demographics, course enrollments, salary, FTE allocation and other [faculty and staff data](#)

- Graduation rates, majors, first destinations, and post-graduation perspectives through [alumni data](#)
- Results from indirect assessments and other [student survey data](#)
- A summary [Outcomes](#) webpage for prospective students and their families, including information relating to [employment](#), [graduate/professional school](#), and [financial independence](#)
- The new [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dashboards and Additional DEI Data](#) website, documenting the college's progress on its DEI goals

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

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.

Argument

- 1. The mission and priorities of the college are the fundamental drivers of its resource allocation.*

The [Office of the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer](#) aims to provide the “financial management and resource development necessary to support the mission of St. Olaf College.” Specific budgeting practices to achieve this aim are detailed in 5.B.3. The [Strategic Plan](#) begins with the college mission statement and expresses the college's current priorities for realizing that mission more fully. Both the college mission and the Strategic Plan shape the work of the St. Olaf [Advancement Division](#), which seeks to garner resources to support both excellence and equity in the student experience. Similarly, the [2016 Framework Plan](#) guiding the physical development of the campus through the mid-2030s aims to “support the academic mission and align with current planning,” with phasing of specific projects “based on Strategic Plan goals and objectives.”

- 2. Student learning assessment, operations evaluation, planning, and budgeting are closely aligned.*

Among the compelling features of the Strategic Plan is that its goals include specific metrics and timetables to evaluate progress. The metrics for [Priorities I.3 and III.2](#) reference results from the National Survey of Student Engagement. More generally, the Plan's emphasis on high impact educational practices is based in part on national assessment results demonstrating that such practices enhance both excellence and equity in student learning, and our expenditures in the academic program are aligned with this commitment. As indicated in our annual [Strategic Plan Outcomes reporting](#), the college increased participation in internships and undergraduate research opportunities by an average of nearly 11% from September 2016 - September 2021, despite the challenges posed by COVID. [For the Hill and Beyond](#), our seven-year, \$252 million

comprehensive campaign that concluded in May 2020, raised nearly \$45 million to advance high-impact learning, one of the four identified campaign priorities. The campaign raised over \$74 million in financial aid, increasing aid for off-campus study by nearly 240%. These new resources also increased endowed student research positions by nearly 140%, and significantly enhanced funding for learning community programs and internships. Our current [For Every Ole initiative](#) has earmarked \$1.5 million for additional investment over the next two years in a four-year mentoring and advising experience for every St. Olaf student. Thanks to our recently completed [Quality Initiative](#), we also feature assessment data from our National Survey of Student Engagement results and from our locally-developed [Learning Goals Questionnaire](#) in our new [DEI Dashboards and Additional Data](#), the findings of which will shape our DEI programming and expenditures.

The college's program evaluation and oversight practices also reflect linkage across assessment, evaluation, planning, and budgeting. An example at the operational level is the [academic program review process](#) described in 4.B., which includes both an evaluation by external reviewers and a departmental [self-study](#) that incorporates program-level assessment data, budget trend data, and a description of future plans. Following receipt of the external reviewers' report, members of the department or program meet with their associate dean and the Provost to discuss findings and improvement plans. The department self-study and external reviewers' report also are used to evaluate departmental requests for new tenure-track lines.

An example at the strategic level is the Board's use of assessment data in its oversight of academic quality, the student experience, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The [Board Academic Affairs Committee](#) reviews a [report on key institutional-level assessment findings](#) from the previous academic year in the fall, and a [report on general education and/or department-level assessment findings](#) in the spring. Both the [Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee](#) and the [Board Community Life Committee](#) provided feedback on the development of the college's assessment-informed [DEI Dashboards and Additional Data](#), and will use the results in overseeing the student experience and the college's ongoing work in becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

3. Planning at St. Olaf is broadly participatory and includes consultations with a variety of internal and external constituencies.

Examples of participatory institutional planning are numerous. The current [Strategic Plan](#) is based on a plan adopted by the Board of Regents in 2011 following a process that engaged Regents, faculty, staff, students and alumni through surveys, interviews, and small group discussions. A significant revision of the plan during the 2014-15 academic year began with faculty and staff small group discussions, followed by a campus-wide survey. Revisions since then, such as those [approved by the Board in October 2019](#), reflect the completion of some goals, updated metrics for others, and changing conditions for still others.

The budget development process is also transparent and broadly participatory. Each academic year begins with an [opening address by the president](#) to all faculty and staff that includes substantial information about college finances and implications for the budget. A faculty/staff/student [Budget Advisory Committee](#) provides budget advice and recommendations to the Vice President/CFO and the President's Leadership Team (PLT), and facilitates

collaboration among faculty, staff, and student constituencies concerning long-term financial planning. The Committee reviews annual and long-term College budget projections, undertakes studies of the College's resource use, and advises on budget policies, processes, and timelines, with meeting minutes posted on the college website.

From August 2017 through August 2019, under the leadership of the Vice President/CFO, the college completed a campus-wide [Strategic Resource Allocation Project](#) (SRAP), a comprehensive review of all the college's operations to ensure its fiscal and mission sustainability. The project was [prompted by financial projections](#) indicating that despite the college's careful stewardship and consistent history of strong net operating results, its expenditures would exceed its revenues beginning in FY2018-19. Convened by the VP/CFO, the SRAP Steering Committee included three other PLT members, the Faculty Governance Committee chair, the Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents, and two student representatives. [SRAP working groups](#) engaged an additional 15 faculty and 28 staff in coordinating instructional and non-instructional program reviews, reviewing financial aid and employee benefits, and developing actions recommendations across a broad swath of college functions. Every academic department and every staff office provided information about priorities, programs, expenditures, and revenues. An [online "suggestion box"](#) enabled any member of the community to contribute ideas for enhancing revenue, reducing expenditures, or both. Together, the working groups and broader community developed more than 100 recommendations that yielded an estimated [\\$5.5 million of additional revenues and cost savings](#).

Planning to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at St. Olaf is also highly participatory. The [Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) oversees the College's equity and inclusion planning, advising the President and PLT, connecting efforts across campus, and serving as a resource for academic and administrative departments. Its membership includes a mix of elected and appointed faculty, staff, students, PLT members, and alumni. The Council developed the college's [2019 Plan for Equity and Inclusion](#) following an inventory of DEI efforts across all units of the college, extensive consultation with the community as a whole, and meetings with alumni. As detailed in our [May 2022 Quality Initiative Report](#), our [Co-Creating an Inclusive Community initiative](#) engaged more than 1500 staff, faculty, and students in small group discussions led by trained peer facilitators in Spring 2021 to articulate their vision for "inclusive community" at St. Olaf and identify actions at every level of the college to help realize it. As described in 5.C.6, these planning efforts have stimulated individual, department/office-level, and institution-wide actions to help the college become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

4. Institutional planning includes careful analysis of both current capacity and potential revenue and enrollment fluctuations.

The implementation, monitoring, and periodic updating of the [Strategic Plan](#) is a prime example of dynamic and data-informed planning. Priority VI, "Enhance fiscal sustainability," includes provisions that optimize institutional capacity by constraining costs (VI.1) and maintaining balanced operating budgets (VI.2), and that mitigate potential revenue fluctuations by maximizing endowment returns (VI.3.1) and seeking to generate additional revenues (VI.3.2). Priority IV.1, focused on further enhancing retention rates, is a longstanding goal that has generated considerable analysis and action across multiple units of the college, as detailed in 4.C, because a high retention rate not only indicates mission fidelity and institutional effectiveness,

but also helps cushion the college against enrollment fluctuations. As indicated in 5.C.2, the President's Leadership Team provides regular [Strategic Plan Outcomes Reports](#) to the Board, including the most recent results for the metrics identified in the plan, and discussion of the actions the college has taken in relation to those results.

The college is assiduous in tracking and analyzing its enrollments as a key element in institutional planning. Every report from the President's Leadership Team to the Board of Regents, a standard element of the written materials for each Board meeting, includes a [progress report on enrollment outcomes](#) that tracks applications, yields, the characteristics of admitted and enrolled students, revenue results, and where available, comparison data with a variety of other institutions. These reports also include analysis of the factors that contributed to the outcomes being reported.

The college's commitment to growing its endowment, and its success in doing so, is also grounded in analysis of the college's current capacity and trends in enrollment and revenues. The value of the endowment on May 31, 2012 was \$329 million, and its earnings accounted for approximately 10% of the college's operating revenues. Over the next ten years, both the endowment and its contribution to college operations doubled, with its value reaching \$697 million as of May 31, 2022, and its earnings accounting for approximately 20% of operating revenues. [For the Hill and Beyond](#), the college's most recent comprehensive campaign (see 5.C.2) was also designed in part to protect the college from revenue fluctuations, a critical concern for tuition-dependent institutions. One of its four priorities was to enhance affordability, with [\\$74.6 million raised](#) against a goal of \$65 million in endowed funding for various forms of financial aid. Overall, 80% of the campaign's \$200 million goal targeted various forms of new endowment, and the [results](#) yielded a revenue increase of just over 60% from endowed funds that support operations.

Budget planning and implementation are also attentive to current capacity and help staff anticipate resource fluctuations. The online [Budget Manager Guide](#) maintained by the Finance Office provides detailed information to assist budget managers in submitting, executing, and monitoring their budgets, including recommendations on how to provide for uncertainties. It also includes an overview of the college's finances – revenue sources, expenditure categories, and long-term trends – and an explanation of the college's endowment goals and performance. As detailed in 5.B.3, budget reviews occur throughout the year on both a quarterly and monthly basis, involving direct budget managers, staff in the Finance Office, and senior leadership.

Planning within academic departments is similarly data-informed. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment provides [annual data and reports to academic department chairs and program directors](#) to enable them to monitor their faculty resources, courses, and student enrollments in comparison to the rest of the college. These data are used in department/programs' annual reports, as well as in the department/program reviews completed every ten years.

Finally, the [2016 Facilities Framework Plan](#) accommodates both current capacity and future uncertainties. The plan was designed “to be flexible by documenting solutions which can be mixed, matched, and implemented as funding opportunities arise rather than determining a single implementation strategy or defining a targeted phasing path.” The complete plan includes a comprehensive analysis of the existing campus (site, buildings, space needs, utilization), as well

as the key planning principle of the “practice [of] deliberate, iterative and annual scenario planning to stay current and nimble over the next few decades.” The Framework Plan serves as a foundation for the college’s annually updated [Six-Year Physical Development Plan](#), which is presented to the Board of Regents Buildings and Grounds and Finance Committees, included with the annual capital budget, and implemented according to the schedule laid out in the plan.

5. College planning practices anticipate a wide range of emerging trends and conditions.

St. Olaf is consistently attentive to ongoing technological, demographic, economic, and global trends in planning for its future. For example, the enrollment objectives specified each year as part of the college’s annual goals approved by the Board of Regents are shaped by research on changing demographics in the college’s markets and economic trends affecting the families of prospective students. Similarly, in preparing the annual [Enterprise Risk Management Report](#) to the Board’s Audit Committee, the President’s Leadership Team identifies and assesses a wide variety of external and internal factors that pose potential risks to the college’s operations and ensures that effective mitigation strategies are in place for each of them. Recent identified risks include technological (e.g., outdated software, cyber crime), demographic (enrollment decline), global (adverse global events), and economic (unstable labor market, inability to balance budget).

The September 2021 [Board of Regents Visioning Task Force Report](#), which launched the [For Every Ole](#) mentoring and advising initiative, a market research initiative, a class size reduction effort, and other responsive actions, also illustrates the college’s attentiveness to evolving external factors. The Task Force cited the following factors in its charges to the President’s Leadership Team:

- An anticipated decline in the number of high school graduates beginning in 2026, particularly in the Midwest;
- The explosion of educational alternatives facilitated by technological change
- The threats to fiscal sustainability posed by high tuition/high discount models in higher education
- Employer perspectives on the skills college graduates need in a global economy.

6. St. Olaf acts on its improvement plans.

St. Olaf uses the evidence it gathers to develop and implement plans that enhance its operations and student outcomes. We described in 5.C.2 the college’s systematic and ongoing analysis of [Strategic Plan outcomes](#) and the ways in which those outcomes drive both next steps in implementation and updates to the content of the plan itself. We take a similar approach to the college’s [annual goals](#) prepared by the President’s Leadership Team and approved by the Board of Regents at its October meeting. The goals include specific targets for enrollment; advancement; the college budget; diversity, equity, and inclusion; ongoing capital projects; the employee experience; and other high-priority initiatives for that year. These institutional-level goals in turn shape the individual [annual goals](#) of each member of the President’s Leadership Team. At the conclusion of the academic year, the President prepares a [report for the Board](#) on the extent to which each goal was achieved, and each PLT member prepares a report to the President on their individual goal outcomes. The institutional-level results shape the goals for

the next academic year, and the individual-level results are used in PLT member performance reviews and compensation decisions.

With respect to improving student outcomes, as detailed in 4.B.2 and 5.C.2, assessment results shape planning, action, and resource allocation to improve advising, curriculum, and pedagogy in majors and concentrations, in general education, and at the institutional level. The development and implementation of the [For Every Ole initiative](#) was informed in part by the first-to-second-year retention data in our annual strategic plan outcomes report, which continues to fall short of our strategic goals ([Priority IV.1](#)), and in part by [data documenting inclusion disparities](#) between students of color and students as a whole. For these reasons, one of the [goals of the initiative](#) is to “focus attention on implementation of the Retention and Success Committee’s recommended strategies for increasing retention, inclusion and belonging.”

As described in 4.B.3, in the development and implementation of the new [OLE Core general education curriculum](#), the college has set the stage to continue its practices in using evidence systematically to improve student outcomes. Very early in the design process, faculty and a number of staff in the academic division worked together to articulate the [intended learning outcomes of each OLE Core requirement](#), *before* developing the guidelines for course content and activities that accredited courses must meet, with the latter explicitly keyed to the former. With these statements in hand, the development of the content of the new OLE Core was accompanied from the beginning by the development of strategies to assess it. As a result, the [OLE Core assessment plan](#) was launched simultaneously with the OLE Core curriculum itself, with initial assessment activities [commencing in the first year of curriculum implementation](#). As noted in the plan, “The faculty voted to establish the OLE Core with an expected life of ten years, which is consequently the timeline for assessing all OLE Core ILOs.” The plan will enable the faculty to use results from the direct assessment of student work artifacts to determine whether and how to modify the OLE Core curriculum ten years after implementation.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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.

Summary

St. Olaf's fiscal, physical, and human resources, and its practices in planning and budgeting, support its current mission-inspired activities and are sufficient to enable the college to sustain and improve its programs in the future.

- A. The college's administrative leaders engage faculty, staff, and students in governance and academic decision making as appropriate to their roles, and use and share data to inform and improve the college's work and secure its future.
- B. The college's well-qualified faculty and staff, exceptional facilities and technological resources, mission-aligned priorities, financial health and strong fiscal management, and transparency ensure the current and future excellence of the college's educational offerings.
- C. The college's planning and improvement practices are mission-driven, evidence-informed, intentionally resourced, broadly participatory, attentive to uncertainties and emerging trends, and systematically implemented.