

Knox College - IL

HLC ID 1109

OPEN PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review

Review Date: 1/27/2020

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

1/27/2020

Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

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

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

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

Scope of Review

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

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Founded more than two decades before the civil war by Presbyterian and Congregational anti-slavery advocates, Knox College continues to be well-known for its educational quality as well as its inclusion and access initiatives. Today, more than one-third of the U.S. citizens/permanent residents are students of color, 17 percent are international, and 32 percent are Pell eligible. Both the Assurance Report from 2009 and the current report with its accompanying evidence show that Knox has persisted through a long series of financial challenges. In addition, the past decade has brought increasing turbulence throughout higher education as well as several changes in key leadership positions at the College. Even with these challenges, the 2020 Assurance Review provides strong evidence of significant institutional accomplishments since the last review. It is the goal of this visiting team that we contribute meaningfully to the President's introductory comment - that "the peer review process by the Higher Learning Commission will provide the College with significant guidance for the future so that we can provide a Knox education for generations to come." Knox College has been continuously accredited since 1913.

Interactions with Constituencies

President

Provost & Dean of the College

Vice President for Finance & Administrative Services

Vice President for Student Development

Vice President & Chief Information Officer

Vice President for Advancement

Vice President for Enrollment & Dean of Admission

Vice President for Communications & Marketing

Board of Trustees (BoT) Chair

BoT Vice Chair

BoT Chair, Facilities & Infrastructure

BoT Chair, Advancement

BoT Chair, Finance

BoT Chair, Academic Affairs

Director, Institutional Research

Chair, Faculty Budget & Financial Priorities & Institutional Planning and Priorities Council (IPPC)

Controller

Director of Creative Services, Staff Council & IPPC

Faculty Affairs Subcommittee of the Executive Committee

Student Representative on Board of Trustees & IPPC

First Year Experience (FYE) Committee

Assessment Committee

Associate Dean of the College

Associate VP Human Resources

Assistant Dean for Diversity & Inclusion, Co-Chair, Campus Diversity Committee

Co-Chair, Campus Diversity Committee

Intergroup Dialogue

Executive Director, Bastian Family Center for Career Success

Associate Director of Alumni Engagement

Former McNair advisor

Startup Term

Pre-health Advisor

Chair, Assessment

Chair, Curriculum Committee

Assistant VP & Dean of Students

Assistant Dean for Student Wellness

Executive Committee

Former Registrar

Director of Financial Aid & Student Financial Services

Accreditation Liaison Officer

Chair, Staff Council

Director of Athletics

Associate Director of Athletics

Director of Campus Safety

Associate Director of Campus Safety

Director of Facilities Services

Director of Campus Life

Open Forum 1&2; 65, 4 faculty, 3 students, 48 staff

Open Forum 3&4; 46, 15 faculty, 6 students, 25 staff

Open Forum 5; 32, 3 faculty, 29 staff

Drop In session; 2 faculty, 1 student

Additional Documents

Student outcomes data and grievance procedures

Course syllabi - non-traditional and off-campus programs

Course syllabi - 78 representative programs

Federal compliance data - program templates and degree audit examples

First-year preceptorial assessments - 8 examples

Program review documents - 8 examples

Key strategic indicators 2017/18

Risk management update, June 3, 2017

Top risks 2016-17

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 broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

1.A.1. Knox College's mission statement was adopted in 1993 as part of a strategic planning process; was reaffirmed in 2008; and was modified and approved by the Board of Trustees 2017, as evidenced by Board agendas and minutes. The mission statement honors and points to the College's founding by anti-slavery activists in 1837, with a strong commitment to intentional access to higher education and to educating students as part of a "community of individuals from diverse backgrounds," as it states in the first sentence of the mission statement. The revision to the mission statement approved in 2017 replaced the word "tolerant" with the word "inclusive," and was based on input and feedback from students on the changing norms about how an institution describes its commitment to inclusion. The mission statement includes four pathways for how the College carries out its mission: (1) the curriculum, (2) the learning environment, (3) the residential campus culture, and (4) the community.

The College noted in its Assurance Argument that the mission statement is lengthy, at more than three hundred words. Indeed, feedback from faculty, staff, and students during the campus visit underscored that the mission statement is often shortened to the first sentence. Additionally, some staff noted during the campus visit that they were not familiar with the mission statement. However, in further discussion, it was clear to the visit team that there is a widespread understanding of the College's ethos, values, and campus culture. The College noted in the Assurance Argument that it intends to "undertake a complete review of the mission statement in the near future." Regardless of the outcome, the review itself may provide more concise and updated language to the community about why the College continues to value and sustain a small, residential liberal arts educational environment.

1.A.2. The College's mission is foundational for an education in the "tradition of active liberal arts

learning” that prepares students “to live with purpose and to contribute to the well-being of others.” Knox has a number of programs to support student success and to support advanced student research and creative work, including a summer bridge program, TRIO/SSS program, McNair Scholars Program, and the Gerald and Carol Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study. The Bastian Family Center for Career Success, co-located in Alumni Hall with other related student support areas, provides guidance to students on both personal and social goals while connecting them with alumni, internships, and other opportunities for career discernment. The College provides health and counseling services in support of its emphasis on the residential campus experience.

The College’s enrollment profile reflects its commitment to provide access to students from a wide range of backgrounds. Knox has received national recognition for its commitment to providing an avenue for upward social mobility. From 2009 to 2017, the College more than doubled the percentage of students of color among the student body, putting Knox at the highest percentage of students of color among the Associated Colleges of the Midwest and Great Lakes Colleges’ Association.

1.A.3. Both the Knox 2018 strategic plan and the draft Knox 2022 strategic plan are guided by the College’s mission, focusing on the liberal arts and liberal learning, diversity and inclusion, community, and sustainability. In an era of challenging demographic and financial realities for many small liberal arts colleges, the College has been able to invest in new and remodeled facilities, thus strengthening the residential campus experience that is one of the pathways includes in its mission statement.

Knox College’s mission statement is broadly understood across the campus and guides its work.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of 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 document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Rating

Met

Rationale

1.B. Knox College's mission is articulated publicly. The mission statement is included in the College's faculty and employee handbooks, and a dedicated webpage also provides information on the mission. Copies of the mission statement are distributed to new employees as well. The College's rich history, captured in displays located in several buildings on campus, include references to Knox's founding documents and to the mission statement. The academic catalog includes the College's mission statement, as well as information on the admissions process and timeline, tuition and fees, and financial aid. In addition, the current strategic plan, Knox 2018, affirms the mission and is published on the College's website.

Throughout the Assurance Argument and in conversation during the campus visit, the College described multiple ways in which its mission and shared history guide engagement with the town of Galesburg to meet community needs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Rating

Met

Rationale

1.C.1. From its founding in 1837, Knox College has been a leader in advocating for social change, from the opposition to slavery to the commitment to students from all racial backgrounds to enrolling women. Diversity is central to the College's identity and mission, which includes the description of the College as "a community of individuals from diverse backgrounds" who create a campus culture that is a "reflective, inclusive and engaged." National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results show that both first year and senior students report having discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than one's own (+8 percent), and report that the College encourages contact among students from different backgrounds (+19 percent) at levels higher than students at peer institutions.

1.C.2. Conversations and interviews during the campus visit supported the descriptions in the Assurance Argument of the College's efforts to better serve its increasingly-diverse student population. As noted in the Assurance Argument, forty percent of Knox U.S. citizens/permanent residents identify as students of color, nineteen percent are international students, and more than twenty-five percent identify as LGBTQIA+. The new general education curriculum, implemented beginning in fall 2018 (described in 3B), includes a requirement in the Elements focused on the critical examination of power and inequity. The program review process, as outlined in the College's program review guide, requires that academic departments address inclusivity and describe how the department is working to respond to disparities among the students it serves. Academic departments must also discuss their commitment to diversity in applications for faculty searches, and all job advertisements include a diversity statement, both of which were part of updates to the faculty search guidelines.

Student activism resulted in a campus-wide "Day of Dialogue," when classes were canceled to encourage discussions on race, class, gender, and political ideology. This event was held in both 2018 and 2019. The College recently invested in a half-time advisor for LGBTQIA+ students. Moreover, Knox's quality initiative focused on the development of a comprehensive retention plan, which resulted in a narrowing of the completion gap between various student subgroups.

At the same time, and as noted in the Assurance Argument and in conversations during the campus visit with staff, faculty, and students, the College has not made as much progress on hiring and retaining a workforce that more closely reflects the diversity of the student body. In the Assurance Argument, the College identified two barriers to increasing the diversity of faculty in particular: (1)

the rural location of the College, and (2) faculty salaries that are not nationally competitive. In that context, the Provost described how salary offers for new faculty have been essentially flat since 2015. The narrative stated and the Provost described in conversation how the institution is committed to investing in faculty salaries in the next three to five years to bring them closer to peer benchmarks. In addition, the fall 2019 Board of Trustees briefing presentation included feedback from international students who noted that the lack of required diversity training for faculty and staff is a challenge. In addition, while the search guidelines for faculty searches include a number of key best practices to support hiring for diversity, the Provost noted that additional work is need to ensure consistent application of those practices in all searches. Several comments during the campus visit highlighted the difference between the time that students are part of the campus community and the time it takes for organizational change to take hold, underscoring the importance of being nimble in responding to calls for organizational or policy changes. In that regard, one member of the College staff noted that a metric of success would be a more responsive system, rather than the substance of any single change, important as such changes may be. Finally, faculty, staff, and students highlighted the challenge of investing additional resources—staff, training, and professional development, for example—that support diversity initiatives when enrollment is less predictable and tuition revenue remains flat or declines. In this context, the College may want to consider adopting an equity framework that would underscore a commitment to provide the resources and support for all students to succeed.

In light of the evidence of progress and the evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement, it is clear that Knox College understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
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 identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

1.D.1. The College's mission statement includes a commitment "to explore, understand, and improve ourselves, our society, and our world." Knox College participates in Illinois Campus Compact and national Campus Compact, both of which promote civic engagement and the democratic purposes of higher education. The College is a signatory of Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Commitment to Civic Engagement. The self-reported data from the 2017 NSSE survey provides evidence that students experience community-based projects in courses at a higher percentage (+7 percent) than students at peer institutions.

1.D.3. Knox College and the town of Galesburg have a shared history: the Reverend George Washington Gale founded the College and Galesburg. As described in the Assurance Argument, when the current mission statement was drafted in 1992-1993, the planning committee met with constituent groups including members of the Galesburg community. The College is committed to serving as an anchor institution in Galesburg, and measures the economic, cultural, and social impact on the community. The Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities estimates Knox's direct economic impact in the state at nearly \$100 million. In addition to its direct economic impact, the College's Kleine Center for Community Service serves as a connecting point for community engagement, including charitable activities, volunteer activities, and community based learning, including holding day of service each term. Among the programs that the College includes in their website under civic engagement programs is the KnoxCorps, a program in partnership with the Galesburg Community Foundation and other organizations that connects Knox students with local non-profit organizations. The Assurance Argument and conversations with faculty, staff, and students during the campus visit also highlighted additional programs and initiatives that support the Galesburg community. Blessings in a Backpack began as a student-led initiative that aims to address food insecurity by providing backpacks of healthy food to students. All told, the Assurance Argument stated that students engaged in over 80,000 hours of community service in Galesburg during the 2017-2018 academic year.

To support educational access, the College offers College for Kids, a two-week summer enrichment

program for students in grades 1-8 from Galesburg and the surrounding communities. For high school students, the College has partnered with the local school district and with Carl Sandburg College to create the Gale Scholars Program, which provides a tuition-free pathway to a college degree for 10 new students annually.

Looking to the future, the Knox 2022 strategic plan includes a strategic priority to “create a Galesburg community advisory board to provide counsel and feedback on campus community matters and enhance relationships with [the College’s] community partners.”

All of these factors affirm that Knox College’s mission and activities demonstrate a commitment to the public good.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

Knox College's mission statement is foundational for an education in the "tradition of active liberal arts learning" that prepares students "to live with purpose and to contribute to the well-being of others." Both the Knox 2018 strategic plan and the draft Knox 2022 strategic plan are guided by the College's mission, focusing on the liberal arts and liberal learning, diversity and inclusion, community, and sustainability. From its founding in 1837, the College has been a leader in advocating for social change, from the opposition to slavery to the commitment to students from all racial backgrounds to enrolling women. The College is committed to supporting an increasingly diverse student body. Throughout the Assurance Argument and in conversation during the campus visit, the College described multiple ways in which its mission and shared history guide engagement with the town of Galesburg to meet community needs.

The College has identified areas for improvement in a very transparent manner, both in the Assurance Argument and during the campus visit. The College's mission statement was adopted in 1993, and the College noted in its Assurance Argument that the mission statement is lengthy, at more than three hundred words. As a consequence of its age, length, and absence of any mention of civic engagement, the College intends to undertake a review of the mission statement in the near future. The College also recognizes the challenge and the importance of recruiting and retaining a diverse mix of faculty and staff who more closely reflect the diversity of the student body.

In summary, Knox College's mission is clear and articulated publicly, and it guides the institution's operations.

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 operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Rating

Met

Rationale

2.A. The College has established policies and processes regarding fiscal and accounting integrity. Independent audits occur annually, and the College has received an unqualified opinion on every audit since the last accreditation. The Board of Trustees has an Investment Policy Statement regarding the endowment and other investments, and in 2016 the Board created the Knox Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing in response to constituents' requests for greater transparency related to ethical concerns about investments.

The Office of Advancement has an established policy to review all endowed funds on an annual basis. To ensure that they are honoring donor intent, a Gift Acceptance and Valuation Policy has been adopted and revised as recently as 2016.

Knox's Honor Code has been in existence since 1951, and webpages provide a thorough description and detailed procedures. Students are trained in the Honor System, and the Academic Standing Committee ensures that the student-led Honor Board operates effectively and with integrity.

A review of the Faculty Handbook on the College's website demonstrates the existence of relevant faculty policies and procedures. Information for students (including the Code of Conduct and Community Living Standards policies) is accessible in the catalog and on the College's website.

The Human Resources Department conducts appropriate background and reference checks and manages some requirements by stipulating them in letters to new hires. In the 2009 report from the HLC review team there was a suggestion to implement an institution-wide annual employee evaluation process. While conversations during the campus visit provided examples of rigorous staff evaluation processes, such as in the athletics department, there is no evidence to indicate that such a process exists for all current staff. The visiting team reiterates the concern expressed in 2009 and strongly encourages the College to provide regular performance reviews, across all departments, as a tool for continual improvement and staff professional development.

The College responded to a 2014 Office of Civil Rights notice with full cooperation, transparency, and openness to change. The College has followed through on commitments made in the resolution agreement. The Title IX Coordinator provides training to students and employees, and extensive educational information related to sexual misconduct is available on the Culture of Respect webpages.

Dining Services, Knox Bookstore, Student Housing, and Postal Services function as auxiliary services. Descriptions of each service are included in regular College publications and are featured on the website.

The Board of Trustees' activities and responsibilities are clearly spelled out in the Knox College Bylaws. The committee structure of the Board is delineated, and the process of naming trustees to committees has recently been under review in hopes of moving trustees more quickly into leadership roles. The Board is attentive to appropriate ethical standards regarding conflicts of interest, and each Board member completes a disclosure form annually.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Rating

Met

Rationale

2.B. There is compelling evidence of clear, direct, and transparent communication at Knox. The College's website is accessible and comprehensive. Examples of campus-wide emails demonstrate that the president models strong communication with all campus community members. The College's online catalog includes complete information about academic programs, degree and major/minor requirements, course descriptions, and departmental learning goals.

All accreditations are listed on the website, and the latest tuition, fees, and financial aid policies are clearly stated. Admissions materials are easy to understand and provide prospective first-year, transfer, international, and home-schooled students with specifics on the application process and requirements.

The College's catalog includes a campus directory that identifies staff, trustees, and administrative officers. Each academic department or program's web pages list faculty.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

2.C.1. Review of materials describing the Board of Trustees' operations and committee structures, together with identified changes that have been implemented since the 2009 HLC report, support the finding that the Board is taking appropriate steps to ensure that their priorities are in the best interest of the institution. The Board has made changes to term limits, life/emeriti status, committee assignments, and orientation for new trustees. The Board has introduced a process for self-assessment as well as a mentoring system for new trustees.

2.C.2. There is a documented process for the selection of trustees and for leadership positions on the Board. Names, pictures, and brief bios of Board members are available on the website under the College Leadership heading.

The agenda and pre-read materials for the Spring 2019 Board of Trustees retreat provide evidence that the Board is focused on relevant issues in higher education (governance models, philanthropy, the changing landscape for small colleges) as well as topics specific to Knox and its current challenges (5-year financial models, the need for supplemental funds from the endowment, enrollment, and dependence on alumni giving).

The Board of Trustees has added faculty and student members to Board committees. The goal is to ensure that various campus voices are being heard directly by trustees so that the Board's deliberations can be well-informed.

2.C.3. In an attempt to preserve its independence from undue influences, the Board of Trustees has written policies that clearly define a conflict of interest. Each Board member discloses any conflict of interest each year. A continuing area of focus for the Board is the lack of progress regarding trustee members who are not alumni. The 2009 HLC review team recommended that the Board recruit more non-alumni members to ensure a more objective and inclusive membership and a consideration of a

wider range of viewpoints. While this remains a goal, there are now even fewer non-alumni on the Board (there is currently only one). The Assurance Argument attributes the difficulty in making progress in this regard to the high level of Board membership requirements, particularly the time and financial commitment. The visiting team suggests a review of Board requirements in order to determine possible changes to ensure a diverse Board composition (diversity including alumni and non-alumni, trustees of color, greater gender diversity, etc.).

2.C.4. As noted in the College Bylaws, day-to-day operations of the College are delegated to the faculty and the administration. This was confirmed during the campus visit and in conversation with all College constituencies.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

The online Faculty Handbook has a section on “Academic Freedom” in the category titled *Academic Responsibilities and Professional Obligations*. The academic freedom statement is a part of the Knox College Bylaws and is a clear statement of freedom of expression as adopted by AAUP and the Association of American Colleges. The Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment does stipulate that academic freedom is considered in cases of alleged bias: while offensive speech or expression "is not, standing alone" enough to establish a "bias-related incident," if such speech or expression is "persistent, pervasive, and not germane to the subject matter," then it may be considered an incident of bias.

The College’s mission statement references “the character of the learning environment,” the “critical exchange of ideas,” and “creative expression.” The framework of a Knox education is highlighted in the catalog, but academic freedom as it is described in the Faculty Handbook is not referenced in student publications. Still, the College's Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment does state that "faculty, staff, and students have rights of free expression."

The Student Handbook does provide policies regarding demonstrations and protests and the rights and responsibilities of those involved with student media. These policies are clear and concise.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

2.E.1. Faculty and student researchers are provided with information about ethical and responsible research through the Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study, and Responsible Conduct of Research training is required. Knox's IRB is a standing committee and the Assurance Argument indicates both policy articulation and compliance with relevant policies. The Office of Corporate, Foundation, and Sponsored Research Support is proactive in ensuring compliance with regulations that involve federal funds, and they have procedures and paperwork about financial conflicts of interest.

The Faculty Handbook clearly states policies and procedures regarding animal care and use. A committee with specified membership reviews animal research proposals and there are clear provisions for investigation of alleged research misconduct.

2.E.2. The First-Year Preceptorial course includes specific and direct instruction on ethics surrounding academic integrity including topics of plagiarism and citation of sources. The library has online tools to assist students with their writing and to avoid issues of academic dishonesty. Faculty offer guidance in the ethical use of information resources in the classroom setting and in the SPARK Summer Bridge program.

2.E.3. As noted in 2A, Knox has had an Honor Code for more than 60 years. The Student Handbook includes the definition and implementation of the Honor Code. There is a clear expectation regarding appropriate student behavior in the academic arena. There are additional stated policies that govern academic integrity such as the Acceptable Use Policy regarding technology use on campus. Such policies are evident and accessible in the Student Handbook.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Rationale

Knox College has established policies and processes regarding financial, academic, fundraising and investments, auxiliary, and governance aspects of the institution. A long-standing Honor Code and focused attention and instruction on academic integrity are in place and functioning well. There is compelling evidence of clear, direct, and transparent communication to all constituents. The College's website is comprehensive and accessible, and the catalog includes important information about academic programs, regulations, and requirements. The Board of Trustees, while not as diverse a body as they would like to be, is an engaged group who understand the College's mission and their role, appear open to change, and are aware of the institution's issues and challenges. The Faculty Handbook addresses academic freedom, responsible research practices, and relevant policies and procedures. The Student Handbook provides rules that govern student behavior outside the classroom and information to support student success.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

3.A.1. Knox College offers educational programs leading to the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, with majors in 41 areas of study, all of which are listed in the College Catalog. The B.S. degree was added in Fall 2018 in order to enhance students' preparation for graduate and professional school by increasing the rigor of the curriculum and appeal to prospective students, especially international students, many of whom consider the B.S. a more desirable degree.

An examination of program review self-studies and external evaluator reports for several departments (American Studies, Biochemistry, Educational Studies, History, International Studies, Latin American Studies, Mathematics, Neuroscience, Philosophy, and Theatre) indicated that courses and programs are reviewed periodically as a way to keep them current and effective. Members of the Assessment Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee also affirmed that program reviews are used to evaluate the relevance of curricula and adjust course offerings and pedagogical approaches as necessary. For some departments that recently conducted their first program reviews, however, updates of their curricula are still in process.

Knox's Faculty Regulations articulate academic policies by which the faculty ensures appropriate levels of rigor and consistency throughout the curriculum. These include policies on admission; graduation requirements; academic calendar (trimester); a course numbering system that identifies increasing levels of expectation for student performance from introductory to advanced-level work; definitions of grades and grade point averages calculated on a 4-point scale; academic probation; final examinations; advising and registration; and other related policies. The visiting team's conversations with faculty and academic administrators verified that these policies are understood by

the faculty and consistently enforced.

Notes from a Faculty Executive Committee meeting in November 2019 indicate that a recent review of the Credit Hour Policy identified potential problems related to the HLC Assumed Practices. To address the issue, the faculty discussed and the Executive Committee approved a revision to the policy increasing the minimum amount of instruction per week from 180 to 210 minutes. The new policy goes into effect for Fall 2020. (See Federal Compliance review for more detailed information.)

3.A.2. Knox offers baccalaureate degree programs only. The College Catalog lists learning goals for each department. An examination of sample syllabi from a variety of departments included course learning objectives, though they were not always clearly linked to the department's program learning goals. The College distinguishes between its two baccalaureate degrees by requiring four additional courses beyond the B.A. requirements for the B.S. degree in the approved fields of study.

3.A.3. Knox has no additional locations, nor does the College offer courses through distance delivery, dual credit, or contractual/consortial relationships. The faculty has approved regulations for Cooperative Degree Programs with other institutions through which a student may combine undergraduate study with professional study in a variety of fields (e.g., architecture, business administration, engineering, law, nursing, medicine) to earn both a Knox degree and a degree from the cooperating institution. All course work at the cooperating institution is evaluated as transfer credit, and students must otherwise meet the minimum number of credits required for earning a degree from Knox.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. 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. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

3.B.1. Knox College recently revised its general education program after a three-year process of research and discussion in connection with the Knox Strategic Plan 2018, which included the goal to “Advance Knox’s Distinct Approach to Liberal Learning.” The program's strengths, articulated by faculty and staff in an open forum, include clear and assessable learning outcomes, alignment with the College’s mission and values, an emphasis on community building, and curricular and financial support for experiential learning. The specific general education course requirements comprise 8 of the 36 Knox credits required for graduation. As indicated in faculty minutes, the total program requirements (i.e., General Education, Major, and Minor) range from 23 to 29 credits for the B.A. and from 27 to 32 credits for the B.S. degree. With the remaining credits available for electives, a second major/minor, and immersive experiences such as study abroad and internships, the general education program anchors the College’s degree programs in a liberal arts foundation distinctive to Knox while providing opportunities for students to pursue their own interests across a wide variety of disciplines.

3.B.2. Knox College articulates the purpose and intended outcomes of its general education program--and its entire curriculum--in a section of the catalog titled “The Framework of a Knox Education.” This framework identifies “three guiding and interrelated principles” that provide a foundation for the curriculum: Creativity, Innovation and Critical Thinking; Immersive Learning Experiences/Active Inquiry; and Civic Engagement. The curriculum engages students in developing

both breadth and depth of knowledge and reflects the College's commitment to active and engaged learning.

The Catalog outlines four components of the general education program:

- 1) The First-Year Experience, including the First-Year Preceptorial (FP) course. In addition to helping students make the transition to College and understand the nature of a liberal arts education, FP's learning outcomes, included in sample syllabi and multiple assessment reports, include developing writing skills, demonstrating habits of critical thinking, and understanding and embracing academic integrity. Both faculty and staff involved with the broader First-Year Experience program affirmed to the visiting team the effectiveness of the program in introducing new students to Knox and helping them find their place in the community's academic and social life.
- 2) The Elements comprises seven areas of study that cultivate the skills of liberal learning. Specific learning goals are identified for each Element, and courses approved to satisfy each one are listed in the catalog. These courses are approved by the Curriculum Committee on the basis of a proposal form submitted by departments. Members of the committee affirmed that this approval process is substantive and rigorous, requiring departments to clearly demonstrate how the learning outcomes for a particular course align with the learning goals designated for the appropriate Element.
- 3) Civic Engagement seeks to cultivate in students "an understanding of the local and global contexts in which they study and apply what they have learned." Students, in consultation with their advisors, fulfill this component through course work and co-curricular activities such as community service, internships, off-campus study, and advanced research.
- 4) Immersion/Active Learning may be fulfilled through Knox's extensive opportunities for study abroad, special intensive academic programs focused on a discipline, independent research, and service activities that benefit the local community.

Unlike the first two components, which are fulfilled through completion of required courses or course options, the Civic Engagement and Immersion/Active Learning components of the General Education Program are embedded throughout the undergraduate experience in disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and co-curricular programs. However, documenting learning outcomes for these latter two components has proved to be a challenge. Faculty minutes indicated that the learning outcomes and documentation for these components was not fully developed when the program was adopted. As a result, the catalog states, "There are no specific requirements for these components. Students will pursue them in consultation with their academic advisors." As of November 2019, a report to the Faculty from the Curriculum Committee's Policy Subcommittee indicated that learning goals have been drafted for the two components, but a mechanism for documenting their fulfillment had not yet been clearly formulated. Although students have many opportunities to engage in these experiential learning components, faculty acknowledged to the team that they have not yet designed a structure for documenting and assessing the outcomes of such learning. Faculty and academic administrators explained to the visiting team that they are committed to making the experiential learning components authentic and organic to the Knox curriculum rather than a superficial add-on to be checked off a list of requirements. Though this is an admirable goal, implementation and assessment issues must be resolved in order for the program to be fully effective for all students.

3.B.3. The General Education Program described above provides a common set of learning goals for students regardless of major and ensures that they are exposed to modes of inquiry and creative expression spanning the scope of liberal education. The development of writing skills, a key learning

outcome of the First-Year Preceptorial course, is extended in the majors, all of which must address competency in writing and oral communication. Each department has adopted learning goals that require analyzing and communicating key concepts within the discipline. Capstone courses in most majors require students to synthesize and apply their learning through a major research project or other integrative activity. The curriculum approval process outlined in Faculty Regulations and described by faculty on site includes submission of proposal forms that require learning goals to be identified for all new or revised majors or minors, with outcomes mapped to specific required courses. Department program reviews, as well as interactions with faculty during the visit, confirm that degree programs are designed to prepare students with knowledge and skills appropriate to the discipline and adaptable to changing needs of society.

3.B.4. Consistent with its history and mission, Knox College values cultural diversity and seeks to prepare its students for living and working in a diverse society. At least two of the Elements in the College's General Education Program--communicate in a second language (1) and critically examine questions of power and inequality (3)--promote learning outcomes directly related to diversity. Courses such as "Music and Social Movements," "Race and Place in the Classical World," and "American Liberalism," were approved by the Curriculum Committee to satisfy Element 3 after departments submitted documentation that the course learning outcomes were aligned with the appropriate learning goals. Beyond individual courses, the College offers several majors and minors that focus on world diversity, including International Relations, International Studies, Africana Studies, Asian Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, German, Latin American Studies, and Spanish.

The College's emphasis on diversity is further reflected in the composition of the student body, which includes nearly 1 in 5 international students and has one of the highest percentages of minority students among its peer institutions. Co-curricular opportunities further reinforce engagement with cultural diversity. Examples include exercises and activities in the First-Year Experience orientation program; a Day of Dialogue sponsored by the Multicultural Student Advisory Council; a broad range of options for study abroad offered through the Stellyes Center for Global Studies; and offices and organizations that provide support for underrepresented groups (e.g. African-American, Asian, Chicano, and LGBTQ+ students). According to the College's NSSE 2017 Snapshot Report, the top four highest performing items relative to the comparison group for Knox seniors were all related to diversity.

A Campus Diversity Committee made up of faculty, staff, and students promotes opportunities for understanding and commitment to a diverse community. Comments by faculty and staff affirmed the committee's work, including a comprehensive set of "Recommendations for Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce." Agendas from Faculty Development Workshops on diversity and inclusion provide further evidence that the College continues to promote pedagogical approaches that recognize human diversity and that support diverse learners. Faculty and staff who provide leadership on campus diversity initiatives affirmed to team members that these efforts have had a positive impact but also noted progress is uneven and continued improvement requires ongoing, systemic change.

In an open forum with the visiting team, students, faculty, and staff expressed support and appreciation for the services and personnel the College has added to serve an increasingly diverse student body, including more mental health counselors and an additional employee in the Disability Services office. However, they acknowledged the persistent challenge of diversifying the faculty and staff, noting factors such as the College's location and the problem of noncompetitive salaries. Some

students and staff also expressed their view that the curriculum should reflect more diverse perspectives and that more needs to be done to support students from underrepresented groups who struggle to find a sense of belonging at Knox.

3.B.5. Knox considers research and creative expression essential to successful teaching and learning. All faculty are expected to be active in scholarly research or creative endeavors. The tenure and promotion criteria include “Excellence in teaching, appropriately informed by research and other creative work,” with the additional provision that candidates must demonstrate “superior performance in scholarship” (*Faculty Handbook*, 2019-20). The College recognizes such research and creative expression in an annual *Faculty Achievements* publication, which documents faculty publications, presentations, service to scholarly organizations, performances, and other activities that demonstrate a high level of expertise and ongoing scholarly productivity on the part of the faculty.

Evidence that students at Knox benefit from the College’s emphasis on research and creative work can be found in curricular requirements; opportunities for students to engage in research and creative endeavors; and financial support for students to attend undergraduate research conferences. A listing of capstone and senior projects for each major included in the evidence file provides documentation that most majors require a culminating experience in research or creative expression. Faculty affirmed to the team that one of the key strengths of the academic program is the opportunity many students have to collaborate with faculty on their research projects. Courses in quantitative research methods and statistics are required in many majors, and term-length opportunities for creative projects include Open Studio for Art majors, writing workshops in English, and Repertory Term in theatre. The Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study promotes student research through its annual Horizons event, a mini-undergraduate research conference. The center also administers grant programs that support undergraduate research under the supervision of a faculty member, as well as travel funds enabling students to present their work at scholarly conferences.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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 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; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. 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.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

3.C.1. With a Fall 2019 instructional staff of 123 full-time and 13 part-time faculty, the College overall has sufficient faculty to carry out the full range of teaching responsibilities, as well as oversight of the curriculum and assessment of student learning. The faculty are actively engaged in the governance structure, serving on 14 standing committees as outlined in the Faculty Regulations document. They also exercise key responsibilities in the hiring process for new faculty, including serving on search committees. Faculty noted that some departments are understaffed as requests to fill vacancies or hire new faculty have been denied due to fiscal realities. The recent introduction of a phased retirement program for faculty and a first-ever early retirement plan for staff are steps the College has recently taken to create flexibility and better align staffing with enrollment patterns.

One of the challenges Knox faces in maintaining the strength of its academic program is a lack of competitiveness in compensation relative to other liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. Evidence in the form of a comprehensive compensation study conducted in 2018 indicated that Knox's faculty salaries fall well below its target of being at the median for all ACM schools. In several contexts during the visit, faculty and administrators expressed concern to the team that the continuing erosion of compensation could lead to increased attrition and difficulty attracting qualified replacements.

3.C.2. According to the faculty listing included in the Knox College Catalog and a collection of faculty CV's, full-time and part-time faculty hold minimum qualifications for teaching baccalaureate-level classes. Moreover, 96 percent of full-time faculty hold the highest degree in the academic

discipline they teach, and the other 4 percent have significant professional experience. As noted in 4.A., a review of a sample of 18 faculty files confirmed that official documentation is used to verify faculty credentials. Knox College offers no dual credit courses and has no contractual or consortial programs.

3.C.3. The Faculty Handbook contains policies and procedures for faculty evaluation and establishes performance criteria in the categories of Teaching Effectiveness; Scholarship and Other Creative Work; and Institutional Service. Faculty submit annual updates of their CV's indicating their accomplishments in each of these areas. In addition, student evaluations of courses are conducted regularly using a standard course evaluation instrument that allows comparison of ratings on a seven-item questionnaire for the specific course, all courses in the department, and all courses in the College. Every course taught by untenured faculty is evaluated every term, while courses taught by tenured faculty are evaluated in two of the three terms each year.

Procedures for reviewing candidates for renewal of appointment, tenure, and promotion are stated in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty being considered for these personnel milestones must submit extensive materials demonstrating performance in the three categories of criteria for evaluation. The materials provided by the candidate, along with letters of evaluation from supervisors, colleague information forms, advisee comments, and student course evaluations are reviewed by the department chair, the Dean of the College, and the Faculty Personnel Committee. Final recommendations go forward to the President, who recommends the appropriate personnel action to the Board of Trustees.

3.C.4. Evidence of the College's commitment to faculty development begins with its process for onboarding and supporting new faculty. An agenda for the annual two-day New Faculty Orientation session in early September indicates that faculty are introduced to the institution, including the various resources available to them, information about the student body, academic policies and procedures, and course design principles. Monthly meetings in the New Faculty Seminar Series provide each cohort of new faculty additional information throughout the academic year, including Title IX procedures, student support services, personnel processes, and designing effective assignments. The annual faculty development budget also provides \$80,000 for start-up funds for new faculty. Knox thus provides considerable resources and structure to engage new faculty in the community and help them understand and adjust to the culture and expectations of the Knox educational experience.

Ongoing faculty development support is provided through annual budgeted grant funds, including \$55,000 for conference travel available for all faculty; \$100,000 for research and creative work; about \$20,000 for projects with an international focus; and about \$60,000 for pedagogical improvement and curricular innovation. In addition to these College-wide budget funds, another \$165,000 is available for several departments and programs through endowed research funds. A Committee on Faculty Resources recommends policies, which are included in the Faculty Handbook, and serves as a review board that recommends faculty development grants to the Provost. Faculty members affirmed to the team the key role that access to such development funds had played in their own careers.

3.C.5. Though Knox does not have a policy requiring a minimum number of office hours, the team's interaction with both faculty and students on campus confirmed that faculty regularly make themselves available to students outside class. Students stated that being able to interact with faculty was one of the most important features of their experience at Knox. Further evidence of the accessibility of faculty is found in the results of the HLC Student Survey administered in Fall 2019. In response to the prompt "Faculty are available when I need help," the average rating on a 5-point scale was 4.31, with 88 percent of respondents selecting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree."

3.C.6. Before staff positions are authorized, hiring managers must complete a Job Description Questionnaire designating the appropriate credentials and experience required for each position. A review of a small sample of staff job descriptions confirmed that student support positions require appropriate qualifications, normally a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a master's degree preferred. Furthermore, the catalog listing of staff credentials confirms that employees providing student support services are qualified for their respective positions.

Staff contracts require new hires to participate in training related to discrimination and harassment and to one's responsibilities as a legally Mandated Reporter for sexual abuse. Managers complete a training program provided by Human Resources on Knox policies as well as applicable state and federal regulations. Individual departments provide more specific training as needed. Support for staff professional development is offered by individual units rather than a centralized approach as with faculty development. Academic and student support units including the Division of Student Development, the Library, Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study have designated funds for professional development. In addition, webinars and local training sessions offered by Human Resources provide opportunities for staff development. With less consistent funding, however, Knox acknowledges that staff development remains an area needing additional resources and support. This was confirmed by staff in open forums, where several observed that opportunities for professional development in their areas are limited.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and 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 programs 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, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Rating

Met

Rationale

3.D.1. In recent years Knox College has expanded its comprehensive student support programs to better serve an increasingly diverse student body. Usage statistics from The Center for Teaching and Learning, for example, indicate an upward trend in the number of students served over the last five years, despite a decline in overall enrollment. According to usage data provided by the Office of Disability Support Services, the number of students receiving assistance increased from 43 in 2011-12 to 256 in 2018-19. To handle the increased demand, an additional staff member was hired in the summer of 2019. The online Student Handbook, maintained by the Division of Student Development, identifies and describes additional support services provided by the various offices in the division, including the Health and Counseling Center; the Office of Spiritual Life; Intercultural Life; the Bastian Family Center for Career Success; and the Kleine Center for Community Service. The College's federal TRIO program also provides valuable support services for students who qualify. This broad range of services addresses the diverse needs of the student population, as evidenced by the team's interaction with students who affirmed their positive impact.

3.D.2. The College has developed a systematic approach to identifying the academic needs of its students and placing them in courses that address any gaps in their academic preparation. First-year students complete placement exams for mathematics and second languages during the summer before coming to campus for orientation, with results used by faculty advisors to place them in appropriate first-term courses. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers two preparatory courses in mathematics and two in English language skills, as well as a College Success Seminar open to students who need support with study skills, academic goal-setting, time management, and related skills. Throughout the academic catalog, pre-requisites are stated in course descriptions to prevent students from enrolling in classes for which they are unprepared. The effectiveness of these

procedures is confirmed by the HLC Student Opinion Survey. In response to the prompt, “I was placed at the appropriate course level that matched my academic preparation,” the average student rating on a 5-point scale was 4.13, with nearly 83 percent of respondents choosing Agree or Strongly Agree.

The College’s two bridge programs for entering students--a federally-funded TRIO support services program and a private grant-funded program developed to assist students with need who do not qualify for TRIO--provide intensive academic and social support, including advising, tutoring, peer mentoring, and social activities. Preliminary assessment data indicate that students who participate in the programs are more likely to persist. Students and staff affirmed to the team the value of these programs both for the academic support and the social and emotional connections they provide.

Additional evidence of the College’s learning support is found in the tutoring offered to all Knox students by the CTL. Trained and certified peer tutors provide tutoring services in all areas of the curriculum, as well as specialized writing workshops.

3.D.3. The visiting team found evidence of effective academic advising in the stated responsibilities and evaluation procedures for faculty, advising resources and training for faculty, assessment and program review procedures, and student feedback. The Faculty Handbook lists advising as one of the key faculty responsibilities and includes it as one aspect of the tenure and promotion criterion for Teaching Effectiveness. The evidence file includes a comprehensive Academic Advising Manual and an agenda for an advisor training session, both under the direction of the Associate Dean of the College. Program reviews and new major proposal forms require departments to reflect on advising and articulate how they address advising issues specific to their programs. In response to two questions on the HLC Student Opinion Survey, students affirmed 1) the availability of an academic advisor “to help me with questions about my course of study” (average response of 4.28) and 2) an academic advisor “provided accurate information about requirements necessary to fulfill my course of study” (average response of 4.24).

3.D.4. The College’s instructional facilities include a mixture of historic buildings, newly renovated spaces, and some new construction. Trustees and administrators cited significant infrastructure and facilities improvements as some of the College’s most important advancements over the last ten years, including the renovation of Alumni Hall; recent and ongoing work to renovate the central classroom core of the Science and Math Center; and the recent construction of the award-winning Whitcomb Art Center. A tour of these and other facilities by visiting team members confirmed that the College’s learning environments range from serviceable, if somewhat dated, to extremely attractive, student-friendly spaces for effective teaching and learning. Science labs have yet to be fully renovated, but they remain functional, while NSF instrumentation grants have funded equipment purchases to meet the research needs of faculty and students in the sciences. The College’s Green Oaks Biological Field Station, an off-campus facility, provides extended classroom spaces and offers opportunities for experiential learning.

A robust technological infrastructure described in the Assurance Argument serves the needs of the College, as evidenced by conversations with the Vice President and Chief Information Officer as well as interactions with students and faculty. Classroom technology has been updated periodically, and both classrooms and library spaces have been reconfigured, when possible, to facilitate active learning and technology-enhanced group study. The Seymour Library offers both a strong print collection and access to digital materials including e-books, electronic journals, and research databases. These resources, along with the library’s ongoing participation in consortial relationships that offer interlibrary loan privileges, ensure that students and faculty have access to a broad array of

research materials. Though digital access is increasingly preferred, the library continues to offer extensive evening and weekend hours to accommodate continued student demand for individual and group study.

3.D.5. Both the catalog and course syllabi for the required First-Year Preceptorial class indicate that the course learning goals include developing “an understanding of what constitutes academic integrity,” including appropriate citation of sources. The Knox College Honor Code (see 2A) is introduced in this course, and library staff work with FP instructors on the course's academic integrity unit.

Library instruction data for the last several years included in the evidence file indicate that the staff typically offer over 100 group instruction sessions each year. The library web site includes online research guides developed by library staff for more than 60 courses. Learning goals for academic programs include understanding of the discipline’s approach to research and effective use of information resources, and departments typically require one or more courses in the major that deepen students’ understanding of the discipline's specific research methods and processes.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

3.E.1. Knox College offers a broad range of co-curricular programs and services that complement the academic program, enhance the well-being of students, and strengthen the cohesiveness of their residential community. Five learning goals provide direction for the Division of Student Development, which includes the following units: the Dean of Students' Office; the Bastian Family Center for Career Success; Campus Life (residence life, fraternities and sororities, campus organizations); Health and Counseling Services; the Kleine Center for Community Service; and Spiritual and Intercultural Life. Evidence including an updated curriculum map and a table of major program assessments and improvements demonstrates alignment between the five broad goals and each unit's objectives. The various units regularly assess the effectiveness of their programs through local and national surveys, including NSSE and the CIRP Senior Survey. Staff from a number of these offices articulated to team members a strong sense of purpose for their work and a conviction that what they do makes a positive difference in the student experience.

The College's residential curriculum, which includes every-other-week sessions designed to assist students with the transition to college, is integrated into the First Year Experience program. More recently, the College has piloted living-learning communities in conjunction with the First-Year Preceptorial course, with preliminary data indicating positive outcomes. The Assurance Argument also notes that 24 percent of students participate in a Division III or club sport, comprising another significant component of the co-curricular experience. The athletic program's use of post-season and exit surveys, included in the evidence file, provides the basis for improvements, such as better access to WiFi while traveling to facilitate homework and studying.

3.E.2. The College's stated commitment to experiential learning is evident in the extensive programmatic offerings of four separate named centers focused on global studies, research and advanced study, community service, and career success. As indicated in the Assurance Argument, more than half of Knox students studied abroad in 2018-19. Independent research and creative work are supported through the College Honors Program, the Vovis Center, and by academic departments and individual faculty, resulting in a high percentage of students completing major research and creative projects as part of their educational experience. Opportunities for volunteer work and community service are promoted by the Kleine Center, and students involved in sororities

and fraternities, athletic teams, and other clubs and organizations further engage in volunteer work in the community.

In an open forum with the visiting team, faculty and staff affirmed the value of experiential learning and cited the Power of Experience Grant program as a particularly vital resource to ensure that all students have such opportunities. These grants make it possible for every Knox student to receive up to \$2,000 to support enhanced learning experiences outside the classroom. The results of Knox's commitment can be seen in data from the 2017 NSSE data, which indicate that 93 percent of seniors participated in at least one of the "high-impact educational practices," such as Learning Communities, Service Learning, Research w/Faculty, Internship, Study Abroad, and Culminating Senior Experience, while another 5 percent had participated in two of these high-impact practices.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Rationale

Knox College has demonstrated through its Assurance Argument, evidence files, and interactions with the visiting team that it offers a high-quality education enriched by a diverse student body, robust co-curricular programs, and support for experiential learning. The College's highly qualified faculty, supported with ample resources for professional development, is engaged in scholarly and creative work and deeply committed to effective teaching and mentoring of students. An innovative curriculum integrates the College's liberal arts foundation with opportunities for students to engage in research and service. Though full implementation of the new general education curriculum requires clarity regarding assessment and documentation of these experiential learning components, the framework is in place to ensure all Knox students have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of settings outside the classroom and the campus. A dedicated staff manages co-curricular programs designed to achieve learning goals that complement and support the academic program. Although the competitiveness of faculty salaries and inconsistent opportunities for staff professional development need to be addressed, the College has effectively leveraged external grants, fundraising, and budgets to maintain the strength of its educational programs.

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 demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
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 assure 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 assures 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 assures that the degree or certificate programs 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, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Rating

Met

Rationale

4.A.1. As indicated in the Assurance Argument, Knox College has developed and implemented a system of routine reviews of academic programs since the 2009 reaccreditation (Note: Knox uses the term program generically to indicate academic departments and interdisciplinary programs). Team review of the Knox College Program Review Guide (6th Ed, 2016) found it to outline the review process in alignment with the process described in the Assurance Argument. The introduction of the Guide indicates that programs are reviewed approximately every seven years which matches the timetable linked to the Assurance Argument. The Guide leads programs through the questions and data that must be considered for the self-study portion of the Program Review. The Guide is

thorough, also outlining how programs will conduct a visit with external consultants, how programs will reflect and report on the consultant's report, and how each program will submit a final report one-year out following the consultants' visit. In 2019 the self-study portion of the Guide was updated. The revision appears thorough and reasonable, likely to yield useful reflection and planning for academic programs and the College as a whole. The Provost and Dean of the College expanded the visiting team's understanding of the program review process, by indicating that it includes conversations within the program and between the program and administration regarding program needs (i.e., staffing, budgets, curriculum) identified during the Program Review.

Implementation of the program review process was examined by reviewing the self-studies and consultant reports linked within the Assurance Argument (i.e., Philosophy, Computer Science, Art & Art History, and Biochemistry). One member of the visiting team also examined a random selection of program review files from English, Physics, American Studies, Biology, Classics, and Economics, obtained from the Office of the Provost and Dean of the College. Program reviews appeared comprehensive, although the files did not always contain an obvious record of the final one-year-out report or of the discussions between the program and administration about the findings of the review. During an open forum, a few faculty commented that they valued the program review process as a way to encourage curriculum and other departmental discussions or as a means to advocate for a program's needs. The program review documents and feedback from faculty suggest that Knox College maintains a practice of regular program reviews which should assist programs in planning and enhancing their work and help the College make informed decisions regarding program needs.

4.A.2. As described in the Assurance Argument and supported by evidence in the Knox College Catalog (p.322), the Registrar has responsibility for evaluating transfer credits, with assistance from academic chairs for courses that may contribute to a student's major or minor.

4.A.3. The Knox College Catalog describes a policy on acceptance of transfer credits (p. 322) that is typical for a college or university and that assures the quality of such credits. This policy is accessible to current and prospective students. The catalog also clearly outlines how Knox awards credit for online courses, credit by Examinations (i.e., Advanced Placement, Cambridge A-level, International Baccalaureate), and credit for internships. These policies match those described in the Assurance Argument. The visiting team concludes that Knox College takes responsibility for evaluating the credits it accepts in transfer.

4.A.4. The Assurance Argument indicates that the Curriculum Committee has oversight of the curriculum, primarily through the process of approving new courses. The visiting team's conversations with the Board of Trustees confirmed that faculty have responsibility for academic courses and this responsibility also is defined in the Faculty Handbook. Review of the *Course Proposal Submission Form* used by the Curriculum Committee found that it requires information on learning goals and asks instructors to place those goals within the context of the broader learning goals for the department/program. The rigor of proposed courses also is evaluated through the *Course Proposal Submission Form* by asking instructors to describe the organizing principles of the course, provide a tentative reading list and assignment list, and to articulate how the assignments and class activities connect to the learning goals. This form also provides a useful example matrix showing how learning goals might connect to class assignments. Finally, the form asks for program context on how the proposed course fits into the program's curriculum and the broader College curriculum. In conversations on assessment, participants emphasized that new course proposals undergo thoughtful review, with particular consideration of learning goals and the ability of the instructor to use assignments and class activities to assess those goals. Thus it appears that Knox

College takes seriously its responsibility to manage its courses and curriculum to encourage high expectations and support student learning.

Knox College has guidelines for the qualifications that faculty need for employment, as evidenced in the Faculty Handbook. Review of a random selection of 18 faculty personnel files found that Knox is following its policy with files containing graduate degree transcripts, diplomas, or degree verification certification documentation. Conversations with the Provost and Dean of the College further clarified that contracting offers to new faculty include a requirement that graduate transcripts must be provided prior to employment. Knox's policy on faculty credential adheres to HLC guidelines for undergraduate institutions and the evidence demonstrates that Knox exercises authority over faculty qualifications.

4.A.5. Knox maintains accreditation for the Chemistry Department from the American Chemical Society (ACS). The College also is approved by the Illinois State Board of Education to offer teacher certification in multiple subjects, as indicated in the 2017 documents from the Board of Education. ACS accreditation and state Board of Education approval shows admirably that these programs are rigorous, meeting professional expectations of the discipline.

4.A.6. Knox tracks the success of its graduates in appropriate ways, formally and informally. The primary formal method is *The First Destination Survey*. Review of the 2018 survey findings found that it generates a number of outcome metrics including students employed upon graduation, students entering graduate or professional schools, and those participating in service work (e.g., Peace Corps). During a focus meeting with administrators, staff, and faculty, the visiting team learned that the Survey is administered each year and that recent intentional efforts to improve the response rate have resulted in a robust response rate of 72 percent (class of 2017) and 92 percent (class of 2018). The Assurance Argument indicates that Knox plans to clarify how *The First Destination Survey* results can be better shared and utilized.

According to Assurance Argument and a linked 2014-2015 HEDS Survey report, Knox graduates perform well in earning doctoral degrees, supporting the assertion that Knox graduates are well prepared for graduate study.

The program review process at Knox also encourages programs to gather feedback from alumni. A review of eight Program Reports found alumni outcomes data and discussion/evaluation of these outcomes in each report. Indeed the Program Reports are a rich source of information about Knox alumni and the College would be wise to purposefully gather these findings into a centralized location for more effective institutional use.

In conversations during the area of focus meeting on this criterion, faculty from different academic programs described how they used social media and person contacts to learn about students' post-Knox careers. Additionally, several academic programs and the Alumni Office reported hosting campus events where graduates and current students engage around topics of careers or graduate education. This evidence from formal and informal means of monitoring alumni success indicates that a Knox education serves to prepare students for further education, employment, and volunteer service (e.g., Peace Corps).

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Rating

Met

Rationale

4.B.1. After the 2009 Knox reaccreditation visit, improving assessment was a serious focus point for the College, as evidenced by the production of the *Guide to Academic Program Assessment* (2010). By 2013 Knox had made acceptable progress on developing its assessment program, as evidenced by the HLC's approval of the 2013 Monitoring Report.

Currently, student learning goals are evident at Knox for individual courses, as determined by visiting team review of course syllabi from across the curriculum. Examination of the Knox Catalog revealed that both programs for majors/minors (i.e., Specializations - writing & oral communication focus) and general education programs (i.e., First Year Experience, all seven Elements) list goals for student learning. The inclusion of learning goals for the various components of General Education (GE) is noteworthy, especially given that Knox College launched a new GE program in the fall of 2018. The exceptions are the Civic Engagement and Immersion/Active Learning Experiences components of the GE program. These components currently lack explicit learning goals, but the descriptions of these elements in the Knox Catalog contain implicit learning goals, such as "placing knowledge in local and global contexts" (p. 23) or "sustained application of classroom learning" (p. 24).

The co-curricular program at Knox also has invested in identifying learning goals with five broad goals for the Division of Student Development (DSD) described in the Assurance Argument. A review of the DSD Curriculum maps from 2016 and 2019 found descriptions of each learning goal along with the identity of units within DSD (e.g., Residential Life, Career Center, New Student Orientation, Counseling Services) that engage students in achieving these goals. The evidence suggests that the College's development of academic and co-curricular learning goals has been a thoughtful and continuous effort since the 2009 reaccreditation and represents a solid step in designing and implementing an effective program of assessment.

As explained in the Assurance Argument, Knox College began transforming its assessment process

through the initial appointment of an Associate Director of Assessment in 2009, a position that became a full-time Director in 2011. The Director of Assessment along with the Assessment Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee (a standing committee of the faculty) has facilitated and managed the process of academic assessment across the College. As described in the Faculty Regulations (p. 31) the Assessment Subcommittee gives feedback to dept/programs, assesses major curricular arenas, manages “assessment calendar & activities on it,” and reviews proposals for new courses to ensure learning goals are present. In support of these responsibilities, proposals for new courses must indicate learning goals and the activities or assignments that can be used to assess these goals (see 4A for details). The process of assessment at Knox involves academic programs and the First-Year Preceptorial course (FP) filing annual assessment reports with the Academic Affairs Office which are then discussed by the Subcommittee on Assessment (major/minor departments) or the First-Year Preceptorial Steering Committee. As described by participants in focus meetings regarding assessment, the annual reports often follow a common format of reviewing program learning goals, summarizing assessment activities, describing any curricular changes in response to assessment outcomes, and planning assessment for the next year. As described during focus meetings and as evidenced upon review of the 2018 annual reports, this format for annual reports and subsequent review and feedback from the Subcommittee on Assessment and the Director of Assessment represent a reasonable process of assessment.

The process of co-curricular assessment at Knox is managed by the Division of Student Development (DSD). Many specific events and activities, including New Student Orientation, Career Services programs, Spiritual Life programs, and services offered by Counseling Services, are assessed annually, as evidenced by summary documents provided by DSD and as described by participants during our focus meetings on assessment. Assessment tools may include surveys or focus groups, and the findings are discussed by DSD staff who then adjust the programs/activities in response to assessment data and outcomes.

An important recent change to Knox’s assessment process is the departure of the Director of Assessment in Fall 2019 which forced the Subcommittee on Assessment to assume more responsibility for assessment. Conversations with the Provost and Dean of the College indicate that staff reorganization may shift assessment responsibilities to an Associate Dean rather than rehiring a Director of Assessment.

A final important point about academic assessment at Knox College is that the Assurance Argument stated that the program review process is evolving to include more assessment within the program self-study, with the aim of improving the connection between annual assessment and the 7-year cycle of program review. Examination of the 2019 Update for the Self-Study Guide confirmed that Knox is trying to intentionally formalize assessment tasks and timelines for each academic program so that annual assessment tasks will better complement and support the Program Review process.

Although the 2009 re-accreditation indicated a need for Knox to improve its processes for assessing student learning, the visiting team found good evidence that the College has made steady and significant progress in creating student learning goals and assessment processes for curricular and co-curricular learning. If these assessment processes are comprehensively implemented, then Knox will have an effective process for assessing student learning.

4.B.2. Review of multiple program assessment reports from 2015-2016 and a feedback document from the assessment subcommittee (i.e., *Departmental Assessment Reports 15-16: Feedback Summary*) found that academic programs engaged in assessment in different ways, including discussion and revision of learning goals (AMST, LAST, EarthSci), collection of assessment data

(e.g., alumni or student surveys; ANSO, HIST, ENGL), assessment of a specific learning goal (CHEM, MATH, HIST), or planned revisions to curriculum or instruction as a result of assessment outcomes (ARTH, MATH). These records indicate that Knox College has implemented assessment practices as suggested by the 2009 HLC reaccreditation report.

Review by the visiting team of the 2018-2019 assessment reports from 28 academic programs found that all programs reported learning goals and more than half described assessment activities including collecting, analyzing, and reflecting upon specific data or evidence. In at least seven programs, reflection on assessment outcomes led to specific changes in pedagogy or curriculum. The launch of the new General Education program in fall 2018 shifted writing into the major/minor programs, thus multiple programs used their 2018-2019 annual assessment report to focus on creating learning goals and/or assessment plans for assessing writing, rather than focusing on routine assessment of learning goals. A few other departments reported on curricular discussions, often linked to changes in GE, rather than reporting on routine assessment. Only one academic program indicated no assessment activities in 2018-2019, but all programs reported a description of their assessment plans for 2019-2020. These observations align with the Assurance Argument's description of the flexibility designed into annual assessment, encouraging academic programs to target activities toward important curricular needs or the pursuit of improvements based on assessment. Conversations during focus meetings confirmed this understanding of the annual assessment reports and the different options programs could focus upon in their reports. This evidence suggests that Knox has an active process of assessment, and while not all programs engage in the same manner in all years, the process is likely to produce curricular and learning improvements if continuously implemented by the College.

The First Year Experience (FYE) component of General Education has academic and co-curricular components to assess. The visiting team examined multiple years of annual assessment reports for the First-Year Preceptorial (FP) course. Impressively, these reports included summaries of data from the direct assessment of writing, a process that involved having a set of papers read and scored using a common rubric. The rubric is grounded in the learning goals for writing and it appears well-designed. Annual FP assessment reports also include data for evaluating the learning goal of academic integrity. The Assurance Argument states that the FP Steering Committee discusses the assessment findings and the faculty decide how to adjust the FP course in response to assessment outcomes. However, the FP assessment reports do not include this reflection or a summary of the key assessment findings. Including such information in the reports might help the FP program track its assessment-based decisions and course changes even through faculty and administrative turnover.

The Division of Student Development (DSD) assesses many co-curricular programs and activities. A review of documents provided by DSD found evidence that departments within DSD use a range of assessment tools to evaluate the learning and quality of activities and programs. For example, Campus Life assessed the Living and Learning Communities using student surveys and faculty focus groups, Career Services assessed the Business Intensive Seminar using pre/post surveys, and Spiritual Life assessed Ramadan programming using focus groups. Changes based on assessment outcomes were observed in DSD documents linked from the Assurance Argument and also were described by participants in the Focus Meetings on Assessment, such as the inclusion of a business ethics unit to the Business Intensive Seminar and a planned expansion of Ramadan programming to engage the entire campus. The evidence considered by the visiting team indicates that Knox College actively engages in assessing student learning outcomes for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

In addition to its current assessment activities, Knox College recognizes the gaps in its assessment

implementation and has identified important next steps to target. The focus points in the Assurance Argument are in alignment with the visiting team's understanding of needed next steps based on campus conversations and reading assessment documents. For instance, Knox plans to fully assess the Elements learning goals within the GE program and for the Civic Engagement and Immersion/Active Learning Experiences components of the GE program, Knox needs to determine concrete learning goals and then assess those goals. This acknowledgement of needed assessment efforts and transparency in expressing these future plans is a positive feature of assessment at Knox College.

4.B.3. The Assurance Argument provided several examples of how Knox uses assessment findings to make changes to instruction, pedagogy, or curriculum (co-curriculum) with the aim of enhancing student learning, such as tailoring the annual workshops for instructors of the First Year Preceptorial course (FP) in response to assessment results. Annual assessment reports from 2018-2019 offer additional examples of the use of assessment results, three of which are shared here. In Art History, assessment findings indicated a need for pedagogy changes, and implementation of new pedagogy produced improved academic skills for the goal of Visual Literacy and the goal of Contextual/Interdisciplinary Understanding of Visual Culture. In Chemistry, assessment activity included comparing student success and persistence (in the major) for students taking two different sequences of introductory chemistry courses, one sequence which included supplemental instruction. The assessment findings caused the department to discontinue one introductory chemistry sequence and prompted the department to find ways to encourage more students to participate in the supplement, *"as this has led to the best success in chemistry outcomes so far."* The Theatre department reported multiple changes due to assessment, including the creation of a lower division course (200-level) on Directing which will be required for the major. These examples and others show that assessment at Knox is leading to improvement in student learning and improvement to pedagogy and curriculum in support of student learning.

In conversations with those involved with assessment (i.e., focus meetings) and in the open forum for Criteria 3 & 4, the HLC team probed for examples of how departments or programs used information gained from assessment to improve student learning. The visiting team heard an array of examples, for instance in the General Education curriculum the First Year Experience (FYE – a mix of academic and co-curricular programs) has improved its process of on-boarding new students to Knox as a result of using assessment data. Specifically, assessment findings suggested that New Student Orientation was too content-heavy and students did not retain the information, so now more of this content is shifted to the year-long Residential Hall curriculum. A physics professor noted that assessment revealed that physics students were not retaining important math skills from course to course. Now the department uses a math review tool imbedded within courses to help students continually hone specific math skills, resulting in improved overall performance. History reported that assessment results prompted revisions to pedagogy to improve the students' ability to use evidence and build arguments. These examples highlight Knox College's use of assessment to improve student learning.

4.B.4. Assessment at Knox College is characterized by processes and methodologies that reflect good practice, many of which are described above. For instance, Knox requires that instructors articulate learning goals and assessment methods for new courses and academic programs also have learning goals and assessment plans. Both curricular and co-curricular programs at Knox routinely utilize assessment processes resulting in changes to instruction, curriculum, and other activities in aid of student learning. Finally, Knox has encouraged assessment efficiency by having academic assessment contribute to academic Program Reviews, enabling programs and the College to make assessment-

based program decisions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

4.C.1. The Assurance Argument indicates that Knox College used its 2015 Quality Initiative (QI) to focus on issues of retention and persistence. This QI included setting ambitious goals for retention from 1st to 2nd year, as well as 4- and 5-year graduation rates. The QI clearly shows multiple examples of programs and initiatives that produced successful outcomes including: 1) increasing retention and graduation rates, notably narrowing the gaps in these rates between underrepresented students and non-underrepresented students and between TRIO-eligible students and non-eligible students, 2) reducing College departures due to mental health issues (especially for students of color), 3) enhancing opportunities for experiential learning leading to improved retention, and 4) the development of new programming. Data associated with these initiatives suggest that they will have positive impacts on student persistence and success (e.g. Living & Learning communities, FOX courses). These efforts are admirable and indicate that the College is actively engaged in the work of monitoring, analyzing, and developing programming aimed at improving retention, persistence, and graduation rates for its students.

4.C.2. The 2019 Assurance Arguments indicates that the Associate Dean of the College, Academic Standing Committee, Student Development, and several other offices help collect data on students who withdraw or take a leave of absence. As evidenced in the Faculty Regulations (p. 30), the Admission, Retention, and Placement Committee is tasked to monitor retention and communicate findings to the Faculty. It is abundantly clear that Knox College is collecting and analyzing data on student retention, as exemplified in the 2015 Quality Initiative. This process of data collection and analysis was elaborated by members of Senior Staff (i.e., President, V.P for Student Development)

during conversations with the visiting team.

Knox College also reports in the Assurance Argument that it engaged in a comprehensive analysis of student attrition data in Fall 2016 (data from 2011-2016) and again in Fall 2019. Review of the findings by members of the visiting team revealed that Knox College is tracking multiple parameters, including why students leave, demographics of students who leave, gpa and academic challenges faced by students who leave, and the social or personal reasons contributing to a student's decision to leave. Findings from the QI and these attrition studies should enable Knox to identify and respond to significant patterns in retention and attrition.

4.C.3. As described in the Assurance Argument and the 2015 QI, data used by the Admission, Retention, and Placement Committee contributed to the creation of the SPARK summer bridge program, resulting in improvements to first-second year retention for first generation students and other TRIO-eligible students. Additionally, the Assurance Argument described program improvements or the development of new programs which followed from analysis of data on retention and persistence. In particular, attrition analysis identified challenges and suggested new programs and interventions such as changes to Counseling Services (e.g., students of color are no longer over-represented as leaving due to mental health issues) and the piloting of First-Year Oriented Experience (FOX) courses, modeled on the successful SPARK bridge program, to better support students' college transition and thus improve persistence & retention. Knox College also used data to examine the impact of its Experiential Learning Stipends, initially funded by a Mellon Foundation grant. The positive retention results from this initiative paved the way for implementing the campus-wide Power of Experience Grant program. Other high-impact practices, such as new student orientation, Living-Learning communities, and summer pre-advising opportunities, also have been monitored with data collection and analysis as the College seeks ways to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates. The College's data analysis and new initiatives and programs also were highlighted to the visiting team during conversations on assessment with faculty and staff (e.g., changes to Counseling Services, changes to First Year Experience programming, creation of Power of Experience Grants) and during conversations with Senior Staff (e.g., SPARK bridge program, Counseling Services). These programs and initiatives have the potential to help the College improve student retention and graduation rates. Knox College skillfully demonstrates that a data-centered commitment to the challenges of retention, persistence, and graduation rates can result in positive change.

4.C.4. Knox College has several solid processes in place for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion, including exit interviews with students and the comprehensive attrition studies; these processes reflect good practice. Importantly, findings on retention and attrition are shared broadly, as evidenced by the visiting team's review of Senior Staff Board Reports and in the Board of Trustee Open Forum presentations, thus enabling faculty, administrators, students, and Board members to be better informed and to engage in developing new strategies and programs for improving retention and reducing attrition at Knox College. Finally, the visiting team observed that the 2022 Strategic Plan includes a commitment to "expand and deepen the College's comprehensive retention plan..." again indicating good practice for this critical aspect of the College. Knox effectively demonstrates it has processes and plans in place to monitor and support efforts toward improving student retention.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rationale

Knox College exhibits responsibility for the quality of its educational programs as revealed by the Assurance Argument, evidence files, conversations with the visiting team, and additional supporting documents. The quality of educational programs is routinely monitored through a process of academic Program Review, attention to credit transfers, development of new courses, and tracking of alumni success. Knox College actively engages in assessment of student learning in curricular and co-curricular programs through processes that include the development of learning goals and assessment plans, data collection, reflection, and pedagogical and programmatic changes in response to assessment outcomes. These assessment processes are leading Knox College toward improvements in student learning, thus enhancing the College's educational mission. Finally the 2015 Quality Initiative and subsequent initiatives and programs enabled the College to devote needed attention to the retention and persistence of students with the goal of supporting and retaining more students. The evidence thus suggests that Knox Colleges uses an array of processes and programs to promote improvements in students' education and educational experience.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Rating

Met

Rationale

5.A.1. The Assurance Argument and evidence files provide ample evidence of careful monitoring and a deep understanding of the financial challenges confronting this College; Knox has prevailed through such challenges for many years. This visit has shown signs of significant improvement in the financial situation at Knox since the last comprehensive visit including much-improved Composite Financial Index (CFI) data and notable gains in both the College endowment and fund raising.

During the past three years, evidence files showed that the CFI, The Department of Education Financial Responsibility Ratio, the liquidity ratio, and the debt service coverage ratio have all been well above required threshold levels. Since the FY09 visit, the endowment has nearly tripled, increasing from \$57.5M to \$170.2M for the fiscal year ending June 20, 2019. Cash-only fund-raising has improved significantly as well.

That said, Knox remains a highly tuition-dependent institution with this revenue source contributing approximately 75 percent of the total. And, a declining trend in enrollment together with an increasing trend in tuition discount rate are contributing to recent declines in net tuition revenue. As

noted in the Assurance Argument, "tuition dependence in an era of enrollment challenges places a significant strain on the annual operating budget." Net tuition and fees peaked in years 13/14 at \$24.8M and are currently forecast to be approximately \$18.6M in 22/23. The overall effective discount rate has increased more than 10 percent since 13/14 - moving from 54.2 percent to 66.4 percent in the 19/20 approved budget. It is important to note that Knox is not alone experiencing these adverse trends in enrollment matters. In 2017, nearly half of the 26 Associated Colleges of the Midwest/Great Lakes College Association schools did not meet enrollment targets.

In response, since 2014 the leadership team at Knox has made a number of increasingly aggressive moves to balance the budget including temporarily reducing the institutional contribution to TIAA and draws on reserve funds. Now, with reserve funds depleted, the College is pursuing "more significant and longer-term right-sizing of its operations in order to bring revenues and expenses into greater alignment and lower the effective endowment draw." Meetings with faculty, staff, and students during the visit confirmed that the financial challenges at Knox are well known among the campus community and that a highly collaborative effort is underway to develop and implement changes.

The business model for private colleges is both labor and capital intensive and the budget at Knox shows that theirs is no exception. In FY19, 62 percent of the current budget is allocated to total personnel costs and while there are substantial pressures to maintain and improve the physical plant in order to stay competitive in the current higher-education market, just 1.2 percent of the budget is allocated to capital renewal and replacement. Considerable evidence was provided showing that Knox already has a lean staff and that faculty salaries are currently low when compared to its peers in the Associated Colleges of the Midwest.

In a review of Enterprise Risk Management work at Knox, "revenue fragility & erosion" topped the list of institutional risk factors. As stated in a June 2017 document shared with the Team, the risk mitigation plan is to "Monitor characteristics of applicant pool and market environment with regard to affinity, ability to pay, financial need, competitor awards; modify approach to building the applicant pool or making aid awards as needed." Also included in that document was a list of both short term and long term actions intended to address a tuition shortfall. While the financial challenges noted above are significant at Knox, the visit revealed both a healthy sense of urgency in dealing with those challenges and a sense of confidence that the College will find a way to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape in higher education.

Regarding human resources, the "headlines" from the Assurance Argument, the evidence, and the visit are that: 1) the institution is lean-staffed and getting leaner (though not at the bottom of relevant benchmarking groups) with ongoing personnel reduction strategies, 2) there is now more turnover in senior leadership positions at the College than in the past, and 3) both faculty and staff salaries require attention and likely upward adjustments going forward. Faculty salaries are to be addressed explicitly as part of strategic planning as is achieving a student/faculty ratio of 12/1 (it is currently between 10.2 and 11.4 depending upon how one counts). In both the written Assurance Argument material and in comments made in the open forum sessions, the need for a more "formal and systematic staff evaluation and development program" was apparent.

In a tour of the Knox facilities, the visiting team saw some impressive new spaces including the renovation of the historic Alumni Hall, the new Whitcomb Art Center, and the Umbeck Science and Mathematics Center. The College has also invested in a new fitness center and turf for its soccer and football fields. These capital investments, as well as several new academic program offerings including new B.S. programs, are having a positive impact on applications. The first phase of a

much-needed deferred maintenance project to replace undergrounds steam lines has been completed. Student survey data from this visit revealed concerns about the state of some dormitory facilities at Knox. A tour of those dorms showed that this is a legitimate need and perhaps an opportunity to address improvements in an incremental fashion, especially the bathrooms. As noted in the College's summary comments for criterion 5, the College would benefit from an updated and comprehensive facilities master plan. Such a plan is expected in the next few years.

While also relatively lean when benchmarked against peers, IT services at Knox are solid. Security training including two factor authentication for faculty and staff was recently implemented but not yet for students. Knox recently partnered with Lake Forest College for mutual disaster recovery services. Attention is being paid to life cycle replacement (currently a 3 to 4 year cycle for end-user machines) with special emphasis on back-end servers and related equipment. The College is using Google Education to reduce reliance on on-campus server space. Like many other colleges, Knox relies on a somewhat dated Enterprise Resource Planning system - Jenzabar. While the Team heard comments that "it works," additional "bolted-on" systems create an integration challenge for the campus. Training is underway to help users understand how to gain more efficiencies in their business processes.

5.A.2. As noted in the Assurance Argument, a portion of capital expenditures are informed by three plans (Land Use, Landscape Master Plan, and a Property Area Map) that are now dated. With increasing uncertainty about future enrollments, the College is anticipating a "rightsizing" adjustment and will then invest in an updated Campus Master Plan. Operational funds are monitored very closely and allocated throughout the year through priorities set by the Senior Staff, the Institutional Planning and Priorities Committee, the faculty Budget and Finance Committee, and the Trustees.

In the open forum session on Criterion 5, the visiting team heard from a group of faculty and staff that while there are indeed resource challenges at Knox, all involved in decision-making do a good job in utilizing available resources. It was noted that the recent first-phase replacement of steam lines had reduced water consumption by seventy five percent. The President has recently asked all members of the campus to submit cost saving ideas; this yielded a five page list that is currently under review.

5.A.3. Knox College has had three overarching goals based on a year-long strategic planning exercise ("Knox 2018") that began in the fall of 2013 and as part of a plan endorsed by the Board of Trustees in 2014. These goals are: 1) Advance Knox's Distinct Approach to Liberal Learning, 2) Engage our Diverse, Vibrant Campus Community, and 3) Ensure a Knox Education for Generations to Come. They now serve as guideposts in a continuous planning process. Also, in the latest planning effort called Knox 2022, additional detail has been added to these three goals as follows:

Goal One: Advance Knox's Distinctive Approach to Liberal Learning

- Identify new areas for study and new degree programs of strategic value, while embracing our foundation in the liberal arts and sciences.
- Expand the number and variety of distinctive immersive experiences.
- Expand and enhance the College's comprehensive career services program.
- Complete a thorough review and assessment of the academic calendar.

Goal Two: Engage our Diverse, Vibrant Campus Community

- Make a Knox education affordable to students of all financial means.
- Expand and deepen the College's comprehensive retention plan.

- Develop and support programs that engage campus community members with diverse viewpoints.
- Recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff; achieve competitive compensation and professional development for all faculty and staff.
- Increase programming that strengthens relationships between students, faculty, staff, and members of the Galesburg community.

Goal Three: Ensure a Knox Education for Generations to Come

- Grow the College's revenues through enhanced fundraising, new revenue streams, improvements in retention and growth of the endowment.
- Identify and implement changes to the operational model to provide a distinctive Knox education at a more competitive net price to our students.
- Continue progress toward a 21st century campus that embodies contemporary approaches to teaching and learning and advances sustainability and accessibility of campus facilities.

5.A.4. Files of faculty credentials were reviewed by the visiting team and were found to be in good order. Search processes for faculty and staff as described in the Assurance Argument are appropriate as is the HR process for defining job requirements. There has been some turnover in the Human Resources office but now with better stability, the long-awaited formal and systematic annual staff evaluation process is on the near-term planning horizon. There are funds for faculty development but little for staff development at this time, given other pressing financial needs.

5.A.5. The Assurance Argument, evidence files, and campus visit all confirmed the fact that Knox staff have well-developed budgeting and expense monitoring processes (see also 5.A.2) These processes are inclusive and results are widely shared at an appropriate level through Open Forum meetings on campus.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Rating

Met

Rationale

5.B.1. Based on the visiting team's meetings with trustees and others during the campus visit as well as minutes from recent trustee meetings, it is apparent that the Knox Board of Trustees is well-informed, quite knowledgeable about the College, and provides an appropriate level of oversight. The College Bylaws clearly describe the organization of the Board, roles and responsibilities of the various Board leadership roles and committees, and are regularly reviewed and updated. The Board has established term limits since the last accreditation visit and continues to seek ways to increase the diversity of its membership, to recruit more members who are not alums, and to recruit a broad range of professional talent. The President updates the Board Executive Committee through monthly calls. As noted in the Assurance Argument, new Board members receive a comprehensive orientation and the full Board has engaged in a number of self-assessment activities in recent years.

5.B.2. Section 6.3 of the College Bylaws requires that "Each standing committee except the Committee on Trustees shall have one member who is a current member of the College faculty and one member who is a currently enrolled student at the College." Faculty members serve three year terms and students serve one year terms. Also apparent in evidence and during the visit is the degree to which the campus community is regularly informed and updated on policy, procedures, and decision-making at Knox; Open Forum meetings are held after each Board meeting.

In the open forum meeting on this criterion, it was noted that there is currently a great deal of responsibility and opportunity for faculty to engage in governance and that this works well at Knox. "Having faculty representation on board committees has been a good experience, witnessing how the board incorporates the opinions and perspectives of students and faculty. One of the by-products of this engagement has been the ability to appreciate the Board's sense of time horizon - considering long-term sustainability."

Knox has an active staff council that represents staff concerns and priorities. While staff are

encouraged to participate, the council is still in its infancy and would benefit from additional participation.

5.B.3. At Knox, the faculty in their monthly meetings have clear and primary responsibility for regulation of educational policy and requirements for any degree as stated in the College Bylaws. The Executive Committee of the College, with the Provost, five elected faculty, two students from the Student Senate, and the Vice President for Student Affairs (ex officio) along with the Curriculum Committee do associated implementation and evaluation work. During the past decade there has been substantial work in establishing a new General Education program as well as several new B.S. and other degree programs intended to increase applications to the College. The Board takes seriously the by-laws stipulation that faculty have responsibility for the academic program.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
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. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Rating

Met

Rationale

5.C.1. As noted in 5.A and elsewhere in the Assurance Argument, Knox College has a long history of managing successfully with constrained resources, all while staying true to its mission. Strategic planning has evolved since the last accreditation visit as a result of both leadership transitions at the College and the changing landscape in higher education. Knox has recently adopted in draft form (*Knox 2022*) a continuous planning model described by the leadership as an "agile planning process characterized by continual evaluation and adjustment." The larger, strategic goals developed through a highly participatory process in the past, remain the same. As noted in the Assurance Argument, continuous institutional planning now mirrors the ongoing, project-based capital campaign. Given resource constraints at Knox, any expenditures are closely monitored and priorities are reviewed and tested frequently.

5.C.2. The Assurance Argument provides two examples of linkage between the assessment of student learning and the planning/budgeting system at Knox College: 1) renewal of the academic program as called for in the *Knox 2018* plan, and 2) the Quality Initiative recently done regarding persistence and completion. During the visit, the visiting team learned a great deal about new course offerings, new majors, and the addition of B.S. programs (see the review comments for Criteria 3 and 4 for details). These changes were strongly influenced by budget considerations and the learning goals for courses and programs were informed by ongoing assessment work. Additional examples of course changes are provided in the visiting team's review of 4.B.3.

The Panel Review of the Quality Initiative provided evidence of this linkage as well. For example, that review panel wrote:

"Knox College implemented a number of initiatives, and evaluated them on an ongoing basis. These initiatives, coordinated by College leadership, involved students, some parents, faculty, and staff. The

College did not approach the issues from only one perspective but instead used a variety of tools to address retention and completion, both for at-risk and all students. While the initial Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant that made some of the funding possible is due to end in Summer 2020, the ongoing assessment of the initiatives makes it possible for the College to make decisions as to which are worthy of continued funding, and the process of identifying the necessary funds is ongoing. ... The College is using data to build on strengths and plans to continue to assess these initiatives. The College appears to have made this a campus-wide effort and to have used resources in such a way that much of the plan will be sustainable. The timeline for success is ongoing, and as the College states, this initiative is "iterative." This is a serious and genuine undertaking."

Representatives of the Senior Staff as well as the leaders of several other committees who were represented in an area of focus meeting on planning and the budget reinforced and confirmed that assessment work related to student interests and learning does indeed influence ongoing plans and the budget.

5.C.3. Throughout the Assurance Argument and also based on the on-campus visit, it is apparent that planning and decision-making processes at Knox do indeed involve the whole institution. Each Vice President has to prepare a report for the monthly Executive Committee of the Board. Many of the Board committees meet monthly or quarterly. Board members do ask for more detail from the CFO's office. Transparency is provided through regular open forum meetings led by the President and the Senior Staff and both planning and decision-making are shared among all campus constituencies.

One staff member did raise a concern about campus-wide engagement in the ongoing work. "Often, it's the same voices in the room who participate. I'm not sure if all supervisors allow or encourage participation. The individuals who do show up then bear a disproportionate amount of the work."

5.C.4. Capacity issues are clearly front and center in all budgeting and planning work at the College. The challenges of enrollment management at this college are well understood and closely tracked as indicated by data and information shared in the evidence files, e.g., enrollment and tuition discounting trends, reports from consultants, and budget forecasts. Knox remains a tuition-dependent institution in spite of notable gains in the endowment and improvements in fund-raising.

5.C.5. A review of the College's planning documents and open forum presentations shows that the staff at Knox is well aware of the emerging trends and the complexity of today's higher education environment, - "especially for a small institution like Knox where the leadership team must divide its time between strategic focus and daily operational challenges." Knox staff are tracking demographic trends nationally and in Illinois, collecting data on prospective student interests as they revise the academic program, and using predictive enrollment models as part of their admissions work. In both a focused meeting on planning and the budget and in the open forum meeting on this criterion, the issue of urgency in decision-making and implementation of new initiatives was discussed. While there were comments from staff that a sense of urgency exists only in some areas of the College, the faculty and other institutional leaders in these meetings agreed that Knox and many other colleges no longer have the luxury of time in responding to the accelerating changes impacting their operations.

Evidence was also provided about ongoing information technology enhancements including upgrades to the network, the server fleet, and the storage infrastructure. In IT, instructional support committee gathers input from other campuses on ideas.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Rating

Met

Rationale

5.D.1. The Assurance Argument provides a number of examples, with associated evidence, of external evaluations of various functions within the College with special emphasis on Advancement and Enrollment. This, of course, makes sense given the financial challenges and associated risk facing this institution. As stated in the College's Criterion 5 summary, "It is imperative that the College find a way to align revenues and operating costs to reduce dependency on the endowment and to fund annual operating revenues." Also in evidence was useful data and information related to academic program reviews, sports sponsorships, Title IX compliance, energy utilization, faculty governance, and compensation. The College benchmarks against 29 other institutions with similar missions and maintains a list of strategic indicators providing enrollment, admissions, graduation/retention, fees and financial aid, and faculty data. Indicators from 2017-18 were shared; they are currently being updated.

In the open forum meeting on this criterion, the visiting team heard a range of thoughts about the effective distribution and use of data at Knox. For example:

- "We have lots of opportunities to do this. I have a lot of faith in the strategic plan. We collect a lot of data, but we need to get better at using it. Leading through intuition only gets you so far."
- "There are some dashboard and key indicators, but not as developed as they need to be. IR has only been in place in last decade or so, and we now have only one IR staff. Some conversations have started, but turnover has meant slow progress. Some data is still siloed."
- "After last board meeting, there were conversations across campus, including with IT, about retention factors to inform staff practice that can positively impact retention."
- "In residence life, we would benefit from more data on retention and persistence to inform practice."
- "Our Financial Analyst is now doing more reporting on finance, discounting, salaries, etc., including historical data."
- "In enrollment, all the work is based on looking at data. The questions you're asking are important

because they drive the data you seek. It's not about figuring out the numbers; it's about asking good and meaningful questions."

- "HR has a new system to collect applicant data, onboarding, etc., and is using data more effectively."

- "Our legacy ERP results in some of the disconnect, when some areas go to newer software tools that are not connected to the ERP."

- "In IT, Cognos reporting tools allows budgeting reporting tools to be used in real time across departments."

The visiting team made special note of the summary comment regarding needed improvement in outcomes tracking for alumni as well as recent benchmarking of Career Center staffing. Such outcomes are now visible in a wide range of college ranking services and of great importance to prospective students and their parents. Also, the work of Career Centers is becoming increasingly important and well-staffed as students and their parents are concerned about employment during and after college.

5.D.2. The team noted that some key studies related to Advancement and Admissions were done in the 2012/2013 time frame. There is clear evidence of gains in fund-raising at Knox since that time. For example, a campaign feasibility study in this time frame involving trustees and alumni resulted in a recommendation to pursue an agile and innovative campaign in the next decade rather than the traditional approach that had been used in the past. A continuous, three-phased approach building on the momentum created by the renovations in Alumni Hall with no silent phase and counting only cash and realized bequests has resulted in \$110 million in additional revenue during Phases I and II. As for Admissions, while changes have been made, the visiting team agrees (again as noted in the College's summary for this criterion) that progress in the development and implementation of new programs should be accelerated. This acceleration might be enabled by the new agile planning process now being implemented at the College. Balancing such work with that being expended on College-wide cost-cutting measures is advised.

Another key piece of evidence regarding admissions work at Knox was the Art and Science Market Research study completed in 2012-2013. The report that accompanied this study provided staff with recommended "key positioning components" including experiential learning, student engagement, an open-minded culture, and successful communication of the price of a Knox education." A review of the Website and visiting team interactions with faculty and staff showed that these recommendations have been implemented by the College. Also, some recent data on applications is promising, e.g. the impressive increases in those in the STEM fields associated with new B.S. degrees as well as those associated with the new business degree (up 33 and 39 percent, respectively). Increases in applications from those with an interest in the arts is also anticipated with the completion of the new Whitcomb Art Center.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Rationale

As with the Assurance Arguments for the other criteria and the associated evidence, the Criterion 5 materials make it quite clear that Knox staff have taken this review seriously and that both institutional strengths and areas for improvement are well known and widely shared. Resources are limited at Knox College primarily due to the ongoing challenges in enrollment management and the degree of tuition dependence in its revenue model. Significant gains have been made in both the endowment and in fundraising since the last review. Structures and processes for careful fiscal management are clearly in place. The Board of Trustees and the Administration are effectively dealing with these challenges and are both appreciated and trusted by faculty and staff due to the culture of transparency and campus-wide engagement that exists at the College. The planning process is changing in its timing from periodic to continuous given the rapidly changing environment for higher education in the United States. The Team found both a sense of urgency in needs for evolution at Knox and a healthy degree of confidence in its leadership and plans for the future.

FC - Federal Compliance

INSTITUTIONS

Download the Federal Compliance Filing Form and Federal Compliance Overview at hlcommission.org/federal-compliance. After completing the form, combine it with all required appendices into a single PDF file. Bookmark the appendices in the combined PDF. Upload the PDF here by clicking the Choose File button below. The Federal Compliance Filing must be uploaded prior to locking the Assurance Argument.

PEER REVIEWERS

Download the Federal Compliance Overview and Instructions for Peer Reviewers at hlcommission.org/federal-compliance. The institution's Federal Compliance Filing and supporting documentation are provided below.

Federal Compliance reviewer: Use the template provided in the Rationale section to enter the preliminary findings for each component of Federal Compliance. The findings should include one of the following conclusions for each component as well as a rationale that fully supports the conclusion:

- The institution meets HLC's requirements.
- The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.
- The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

If the reviewer recommends monitoring for any Federal Compliance component, provide that information in the Interim Monitoring section. Describe what improvement is needed as well as how HLC would determine the institution has resolved the issue. In the Rating field, select the drop-down option that reflects the reviewer's preliminary findings.

Notify the team chair when the draft evaluation is complete, no later than one week before the team's on-site visit.

Evaluation team: While conducting the visit, the peer review team determines whether the preliminary findings made by the Federal Compliance reviewer accurately represent the institution's compliance with all applicable requirements. If necessary, adjust the rating, preliminary findings and rationale provided by the Federal Compliance reviewer. All information in the rationale should explain the findings ultimately selected. Specific instructions addressed directly to the evaluation team by the Federal Compliance Reviewer should be removed. Ensure that one of the conclusions listed above is provided for each Federal Compliance component in the Rationale section.

If the team finds that there are substantive issues related to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, address those issues within the appropriate Core Component sections of the Review tab.

Rating

Does not require monitoring

Federal Compliance Filing Form

- Knox_College_Federal_Compliance_Dec_2019

Rationale

1. ASSIGNMENT OF CREDITS, PROGRAM LENGTH AND TUITION

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Knox College (KC) is on a 3-3 academic calendar (three ten-week terms with the expectation of a load of three courses per term) system versus a semester system. Prior to the upcoming accreditation visit, the KC Executive Committee recognized that its credit hour policy may be inconsistent with national guidelines. With that in mind, according to KC's Executive Committee Meeting notes, the Committee adopted a new credit hour definition on Monday, November 18, 2019. Beginning Fall 2020, the KC credit hour definition will change to being a requirement of 210 minutes of instruction each week for a period of 10 weeks as opposed to its current credit hour definition equivalent to 180 minutes (three hours) of instruction per week for 10 weeks, and students are expected to spend at least two hours outside study for each hour of in class instruction. A review of three semesters worth of the KC schedule of class confirms that the College had been scheduling at least 180 minutes of instruction per credit hour each week. In many cases it appears that for courses scheduled over three days, 210 minutes of instruction is already being maintained. Courses meeting two days a week or less seem to be held to the minimum. There are some evening classes that might not be meeting the minimum set by policy if breaks in a contiguous three hour lecture are permitted.

The new credit hour definition will bring the total number of minutes of instruction per course to 2100 minutes which is much closer to the total number of minutes of semester based three credit hour courses, 2250 minutes, according to the Carnegie definition. (A semester hour according to the Carnegie definition is 50 minutes of instruction per week over a minimum of 15 weeks, or 750 minutes, 2,250 minutes for a 3-credit hour course.)

Given that Knox College has a proven track record of educational quality, that any credit hour discrepancies will be minimal in 2020, that the Executive Committee is well aware of Federal Credit Hour standards and brought their recent analysis to the visiting team's attention, we are confident that Knox will continue to attend to this requirement; no monitoring will be necessary.

KC tuition and fees are reviewed and established by its Board of Trustees on an annual basis. Student fees account for roughly 75 percent of KC's operating revenues. KC's dependence on student tuition to meet resource needs has been noted by the College and steps to mitigate operating expenses are being explored.

2. INSTITUTIONAL RECORDS OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The College provided a URL address for its student grievance policy, https://www.knox.edu/documents/StudentDev/Student_Grievance_Procedure.pdf, This policy statement is accessible via the KC Student Handbook. A log of student complaints received, was provided upon request indicating that students are aware of the student complaint process. The existence of a complaint log is evidence that KC collects, archives, and reviews student complaints with the intent of improving its processes.

3. PUBLICATION OF TRANSFER POLICIES

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

According to rules published online on KC's website under the Office of the Registrar, students at KC may transfer credits earned prior to matriculation or with prior approval for courses taken after matriculation. All potential transfer credit is subject to evaluation of official transcripts and approval by the Registrar. All potential transfer credit must be derived from an accredited institution of higher learning. Transfer work is credited at the rate of .3 Knox credits per semester hour, or .2 credits per quarter hour. No more than 18 credits are accepted from community colleges. No more than two credits may be earned through correspondence or internet courses. Because of the residency requirement, no more than 19 transfer credits overall may be accepted. Several additional rules exist for transfer credit including having at least a C grade, be above the level of precalculus for math courses, and not be physical education credit. While transfer credit does not count toward a student's GPA calculation, transfer credits may satisfy major or minor requirements, and possibly meet general education "Elements" requirements after Registrar review.

4. PRACTICES FOR VERIFICATION OF STUDENT IDENTITY

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Knox College does not have a distance education program at present and this particular aspect of Federal Compliance is not applicable in the context of the College.

5. TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

KC's Title IV program was recertified on 4/28/2015. KC has not been audited or inspected by the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Education since its last HLC comprehensive evaluation. KC participates in Pell Grant, Federal Direct Stafford Loan, Direct PLUS Loan, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work Study, and Perkins Loan Title IV programs. There are no outstanding limitation, suspension or termination actions; fines, letters of credit or heightened cash monitoring imposed by the Department of Education requiring any responses or corrective actions. There are no findings from the OMB Circular A-133 portion of KC's three most recent audited financial statements.

The outcomes of the three most recent Department reviews of the KC's composite ratios and financial audits were:

1. 6/30/18 – The audit contained findings that did not warrant full resolution by the school participation teams.
2. 6/30/2017 - No findings.
3. 6/30/2016 – No findings

There have been no fines, penalties, letters of credit or other requirements imposed by the Department of Education as a result of those reviews.

No concerns were raised previously by HLC or the Department of Education and a review of KC's latest audits do not raise any financial concerns as well.

The Director of Campus Safety with support from other departments including the Title IX Coordinator and Communications is responsible for campus crime information. The Director of Athletics in collaboration with Institutional Research is responsible for Athletic Participation & Financial Aid. These individuals are responsible for compiling and publishing a Daily Crime and Fire Log consistent with Federal regulations and HLC expectations. A review of the current log does not indicate anything of significant concern that has not already been addressed by KC.

Data regarding student right to know/equity in athletics at Knox College is available at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education website. There are no outstanding investigations by the Department of Education regarding KC athletics.

Information regarding financial aid availability is posted on KC's website, <https://www.knox.edu/offices/financial-aid/consumer-information>. Information concerning how student academic progress affects financial aid is posted on the KC website on its Financial Aid Handbook pages, <https://www.knox.edu/offices/financial-aid/financial-aid-handbook/academic-progress-standards>.

6. PUBLICATION OF STUDENT OUTCOME DATA

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Student outcomes data is presented at <https://www.knox.edu/documents/FA/ConsumerInformation-EnrollmentCompletionGraduationRatesFA19.pdf>. This student outcome data is accessible within three "clicks" of the institution's home page with appropriate navigational aids to do so. However,

the KC provided a weblink URL within its FCR response, <https://www.knox.edu/offices/institutional-research/data-resources>, but this URL is not accessible within three clicks and there is not an obvious means for the public to access the appropriate subpages where the data does exist. The student outcomes data presented at <https://www.knox.edu/offices/institutional-research/data-resources> includes several years of IPEDS Feedback Reports available for public review. These reports appear to be accurate.

7. STANDING WITH STATE AND OTHER ACCREDITING AGENCIES

Conclusion:

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Knox College does not have any specialized, national, and professional accreditation agencies responsibilities.

KC is licensed to operate in Illinois by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (BHE). There are no outstanding sanctions or restrictions imposed by the IBHE on Knox College.

KC's bachelor's degrees in chemistry are approved by the American Chemical Society.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	
FC	Federal Compliance	Does not require monitoring

Review Summary

Conclusion

Knox College has a long and proud history of access and inclusion and remains a high-quality institution that is striving to adapt to the changing conditions in American higher education. The College remains mission-focused and has provided ample evidence of strong leadership from the Board of Trustees, the administration, and the faculty as they work together to meet the ongoing financial challenges of a highly tuition-dependent school. Notable gains in both the endowment and fund-raising have been achieved at Knox since the last review. Also, several key infrastructure initiatives have been planned and completed. Among the institutional strengths highlighted in the Assurance Argument, the visiting team was particularly impressed by the culture of transparency and collaborative decision-making that exists at Knox. After a thorough review of the Assurance Argument and evidence files as well as a variety of meetings on campus, we recommend a finding of "met" for all accreditation criteria.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to choose

Federal Compliance

Does not require monitoring

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.



Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

INSTITUTION and STATE: Knox College, IL

TYPE OF REVIEW: Open Pathway Comprehensive Evaluation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Visit to include a Federal Compliance Reviewer: Dr. Daniel Wright

DATES OF REVIEW: 1/27/2020 - 1/28/2020

No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Private NFP

Recommended Change: No change

Degrees Awarded: Bachelors

Recommended Change: No change

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2009 - 2010

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2019 - 2020

Recommended Change: 2029 - 2030

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

Prior HLC approval is required for substantive change as stated in HLC policy.

Recommended Change: No change

Additional Location:

Prior HLC approval required.

Recommended Change: No change



Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

The institution has not been approved for distance education. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

Recommended Change: No change

Accreditation Events

Accreditation Pathway

Open Pathway

Recommended Change: No change

Upcoming Events

Monitoring

Upcoming Events

None

Recommended Change: No change

Institutional Data

Educational Programs

Undergraduate

Certificate	0	_____
Associate Degrees	0	_____
Baccalaureate Degrees	42	_____

Graduate

Master's Degrees	0	_____
Specialist Degrees	0	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

Extended Operations

Branch Campuses

None

Recommended Change: No change

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Additional Locations

None

Recommended Change: No change

Correspondence Education

None

Recommended Change: No change

Distance Delivery

None

Recommended Change: No change

Contractual Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: No change

Consortial Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: No change
