NEVADA STATE COLLEGE

Be bold. Be great. Be State.

▶ **2022** MID-CYCLE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT
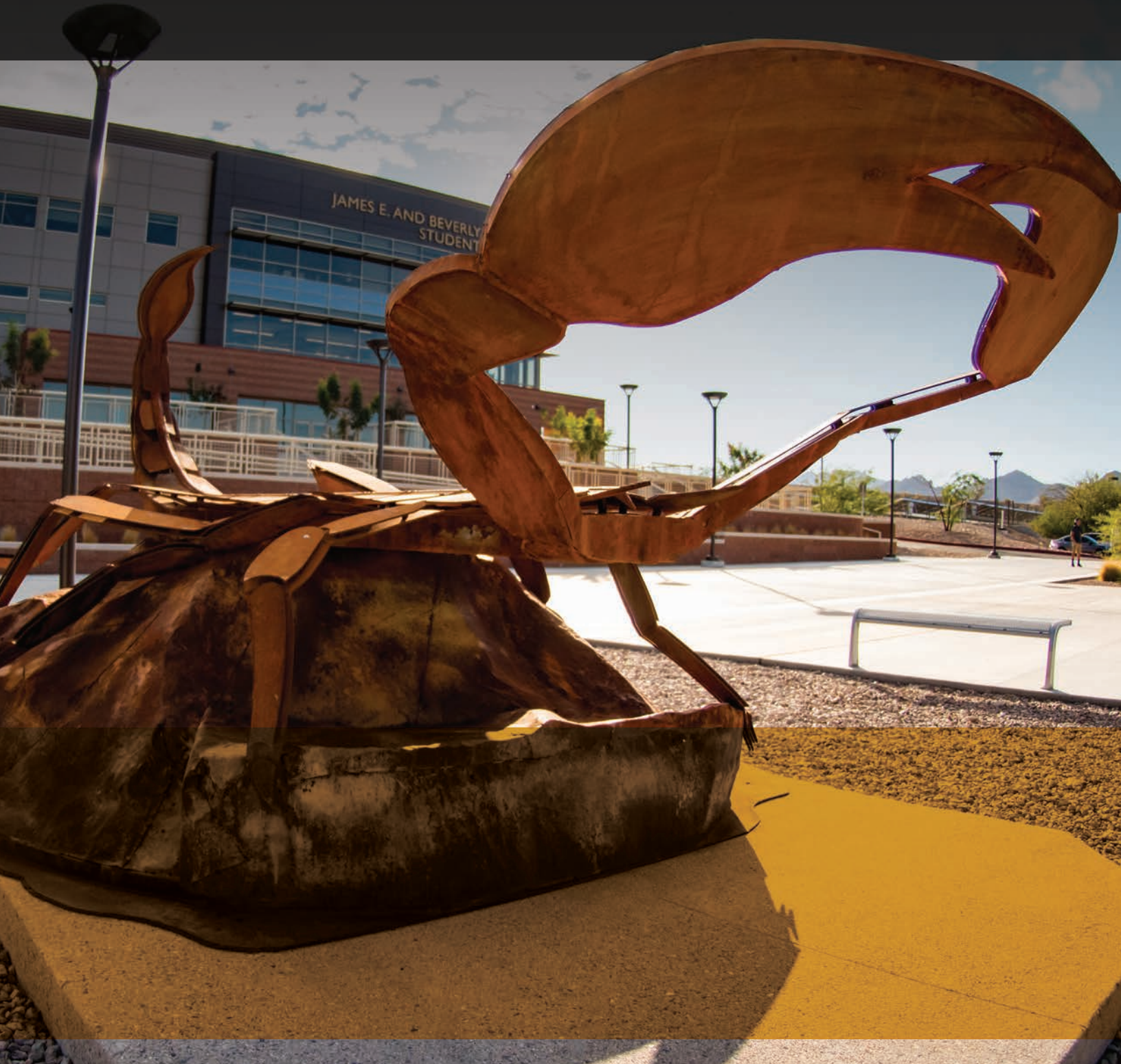
Table of Contents

Mid-Cycle Evaluation
Institutional Overview

Nevada State (NS) is a public institution of higher education that serves as the middle tier in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), positioned between the two-year community colleges and the doctorate-granting research universities. The College offers over 40 baccalaureate majors and one master's degree, providing numerous pathways to life and career success for individuals interested in a student-centered education. NS is a Hispanic Serving Institution, an Asian American Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and a Minority Serving Institution, and enrolls a highly diverse student body that includes many first-generation, low-income, and returning students. Our students are predominantly female, with women making up 74% of all students.

As of Fall 2021, **Nevada State** served 7,200 students and has been recognized by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as one of the fastest-growing baccalaureate institutions in the U.S. The College was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting quickly to remote instruction and student services in March 2020 and remaining largely remote through Fall 2021, while simultaneously requiring key personnel to divert significant time and resources toward the resolution of challenges brought on by the health crisis. The state's vaccine mandate, originally scheduled to take effect in Spring 2022, created additional challenges, requiring the campus to quickly develop and implement a vaccine verification process while struggling to retain students who chose to leave the College rather than get the COVID-19 vaccine. Despite these difficulties, enrollment for Spring 2022 was 6,801, and the campus shifted to more in-person classes and services as we begin to enter the "new normal" of a post-COVID-19 world.

The campus 2020-2025 strategic plan, *Delivering on the Promise*, established metrics and goals for measuring mission fulfillment and student achievement. Key among these metrics is increasing retention and graduation rates. Since **Nevada State** prepared its last Year 7 Mission Fulfillment self-evaluation in 2019, our 6-year graduation rate has increased by 11 percentage points, from 21% in 2019 to at least 32% in 2022. One-year retention dipped slightly, from 79% to 76%, likely due to the complications created by COVID-19, but remains higher than at almost any point in our 20-year history.

Several important changes have occurred since our last NWCCU site visit. Our first residential halls opened in Fall 2020, providing an unprecedented opportunity for students to have an on-campus living experience. Opening campus housing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic marked an important milestone in our institutional history, but also presented unique challenges as well as the need to expand Student Life

programming. In Fall 2021, the campus also opened a new academic building, the Glenn and Ande Christenson Education Building, which provides state-of-the-art facilities for the School of Education and houses our new Early Childhood Education Center. Almost simultaneously, a shared Health Sciences building opened on the nearby College of Southern Nevada campus, providing dedicated space for the School of Nursing to offer simulations and other learning experiences. Executive leadership also changed at the College; in the summer of 2021, Bart Patterson, our longest-serving president, retired. Dr. DeRionne Pollard subsequently joined our campus as president in August 2021. The School of Liberal Arts & Sciences hired a new dean, Dr. Elizabeth Gunn, in Spring 2021 and recently created the new position of Associate Dean of Engagement to provide additional support for faculty and student outreach. In Spring 2022, President Pollard announced a reorganization plan that created a division of Student Affairs, restructured our Office of Advancement, and expanded an existing unit into the Office of Culture, Planning, and Policy. These changes went into effect on July 1, 2022.

New academic programs include our first master's-level degree, the MEd in Speech-Language Pathology, which debuted in Fall 2019. We also introduced new baccalaureate degrees in Interdisciplinary Data Science and Early Childhood Education, and a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry will begin accepting students into the program in Fall 2022. The decision to launch each program was strongly influenced by trend data on student demand and workforce needs.

Since Fall 2019, **Nevada State** has hired 50 full-time academic faculty, and 5 additional academic faculty positions have been approved for searches in the 2022-23 academic year.

Mission Fulfillment

Our Mission

Nevada State operates under a mission statement that articulates our commitment to promoting the success of a diverse student body, providing an exceptional educational experience, and contributing to the economic diversification and progress of the State of Nevada:

> *At Nevada State College, excellence fosters opportunity. Excellence in teaching leads to innovative, technology-rich learning opportunities that promote the acquisition of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Quality, affordable degree programs open doors to career success and an enhanced quality of life for a diverse population of students. Our graduates, in turn, foster the greatest opportunity – the promise of a stronger community and a better future for all of Nevada.*

The College's vision statement, core themes, and strategic goals derive from this mission statement. They resulted from an 18-month-long strategic planning process that engaged campus and community stakeholders. The final product, *Delivering on the Promise: Strategic Plan 2020-2025*, provides a guide for activities and initiatives at **Nevada State**, including strategic goals and key indicators for measuring success and mission fulfillment. Each of Nevada State's strategic goals aligns with one or more of the strategic goals adopted by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Board of Regents in 2018.

Table 1 articulates the connection between our major strategic metrics, known as "Key Indicators," and the NSHE Strategic Goals, our Strategic Goals, and our Core Themes.

Vision Statement

Nevada State College will deliver on its promise to Nevada by becoming a model of teaching excellence, a pioneer in innovative student support, and an agent of economic growth and social justice.

Table 1: Strategic Goal Alignment

NSC Core Theme	NSHE Strategic Goal(s)	NSC 2020-2025 Strategic Goal	Key Indicator(s)
Students	Success; Close the Achievement Gap	We will deliver on our promise to students by demonstrating leadership in academic and student support, improving student success for a highly diverse, first-generation student population through innovative and evidence-based practices.	1. Retention rate 2. 6-year graduation rate 3. Disaggregated student success metrics on closing the achievement gap *The specific metrics are detailed in the Strategic Plan Dashboard*
Curriculum & Instruction	Success; Close the Achievement Gap; Workforce; Research	We will deliver on our promise to innovate in curriculum and instruction by building socially relevant curricula that anticipate and are responsive to the regional workforce, are transformational in nature, and are committed to developing the whole student.	**1.** Responses on National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) – 90% or more of NSSE respondents rate educational experience as "good" or "excellent" **2.** Program learning outcomes attainment – 70% of senior-level students will achieve "proficiency" or higher in their mastery of learning outcomes **3.** Number of student research presentations
Organizational Culture	Success	We will deliver on our promise to nurture our unique organizational culture by cultivating a workplace that is inclusive, inspirational, characterized by meaningful work, and supportive of diverse perspectives.	1. Percentage of faculty and staff who report high levels of satisfaction with NSC as a workplace
Growth & Capacity Building	Access; Success; Research	We will deliver on our promise to steward our growth and capacity building by expanding the College in creative ways through public-private partnerships, governmental and sister-institution collaborations, relationship-driven advancement practices, and strategic enrollment management.	1. Student enrollment (disaggregated by demographics and source of enrollment) 2. Research grants received
Community Engagement & Economic Development	Workforce	We will deliver on our promise to improve community engagement and economic development by forging strong relationships with business and community organizations, making a positive impact on the community through service-oriented programs and applied research, and creating the critical workforce to grow our regional and state economy.	1. Total number of graduates

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan is based on a foundation of continuous assessment and improvement. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has created a dashboard that displays key metrics and progress toward meeting the goals set out in the strategic plan and provides a publicly-accessible method of tracking our progress. Events such as campus-wide professional development days regularly include updates on key student success metrics such as student persistence and graduation rates. This helps keep the campus focused on these metrics and the extent to which we are fulfilling our mission.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan guides institutional planning and resource allocation, including the campus budgeting process. Accordingly, all **strategic initiative requests** must include a rationale explaining how they align with the strategic plan and/or accreditation standards[1].

Campus processes that contribute to continuous improvement include student learning outcomes assessment, periodic thorough review of existing programs (mandated by the Board of Regents), Core Curriculum assessment, discipline-specific accreditations held by programs in the School of Nursing and School of Education, and annual progress reports on the implementation plan created to guide our efforts toward meeting goals and timelines set forth in the strategic plan.

Student Achievement

Student achievement is measured in a variety of ways, including metrics established in the strategic plan and initiatives implemented by the Nevada System of Higher Education.

In the section that follows, we have identified goals from our strategic plan that address student achievement as well as several vital signs we use to measure mission fulfillment.

Student Success Goal

We will deliver on our promise to students by demonstrating leadership in academic and student support, improving student success for a highly diverse, first-generation student population through innovative and evidence-based practices.

Our two most important student achievement indicators are 1-year retention and 6-year graduation rates (both of which are consistently examined as a function of mission-relevant demographic characteristics such as ethnicity and first-generation status). In this accreditation cycle, our 1-year fall-to-fall retention has been relatively stable, with a slight decrease in Fall 2021 (to 76%; Table 2) that may be partly attributable to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will be attentive to future retention rates as we seek to clarify whether the slight dip is a short-term pandemic effect or a sign of a longer-term problem that requires new measures to address.

Our students' 6-year graduation rate has steadily increased, from 21% in 2019 to 29% in 2021, and current data indicate that we will reach at least 32% in 2022. Our ultimate goal is to build upon this progress and achieve a significantly higher graduation rate, but we are nevertheless encouraged by this trajectory of improvement, which reflects more than a twofold increase over the rate of 14% that we achieved when the Provost's office was restructured in 2015 with a renewed focus on student success. The pattern, along with relevant data from academic support divisions and initiatives, suggests that the measures we have put in place to support student success are paying dividends.

Table 2: Retention and Graduation Rates

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
1-year retention	78%	79%	76%
6-year graduation	21%	23%	29%

1 *"Strategic Initiative Requests" refer to appeals for funding through our formal budget process, including both personnel (e.g., faculty positions) and non-personnel expenses (e.g., equipment, software platforms).*

Disaggregated Campus Demographics and Indicators of Student Achievement

The tables in this section present Nevada State's 1-year retention and 6-year graduation rates disaggregated by important demographic groups relevant to our student body: race/ethnicity, gender, Pell recipient status, and first-generation status. Unless specified otherwise, all student metrics reported here are IPEDs data for first-time, full-time cohorts. As noted in the following sections, we believe these data reflect both our institutional efforts to improve as well as the recent challenges caused by the pandemic.

Race/Ethnicity

Our 6-year graduation data reveal equity gaps in student achievement, with White students exhibiting a significantly higher rate than other groups in Fall 2019 (Table 3). However, two observations relating to our institutional work are critical here. In recent years, the College has invested in programming and personnel that can improve key outcomes for historically under-represented students, from specific programs (e.g., Nepantla; TRIO Student Support Services) to college-wide efforts that benefit these populations (e.g., gateway math and English redesign; mandatory, proactive advising; peer support).
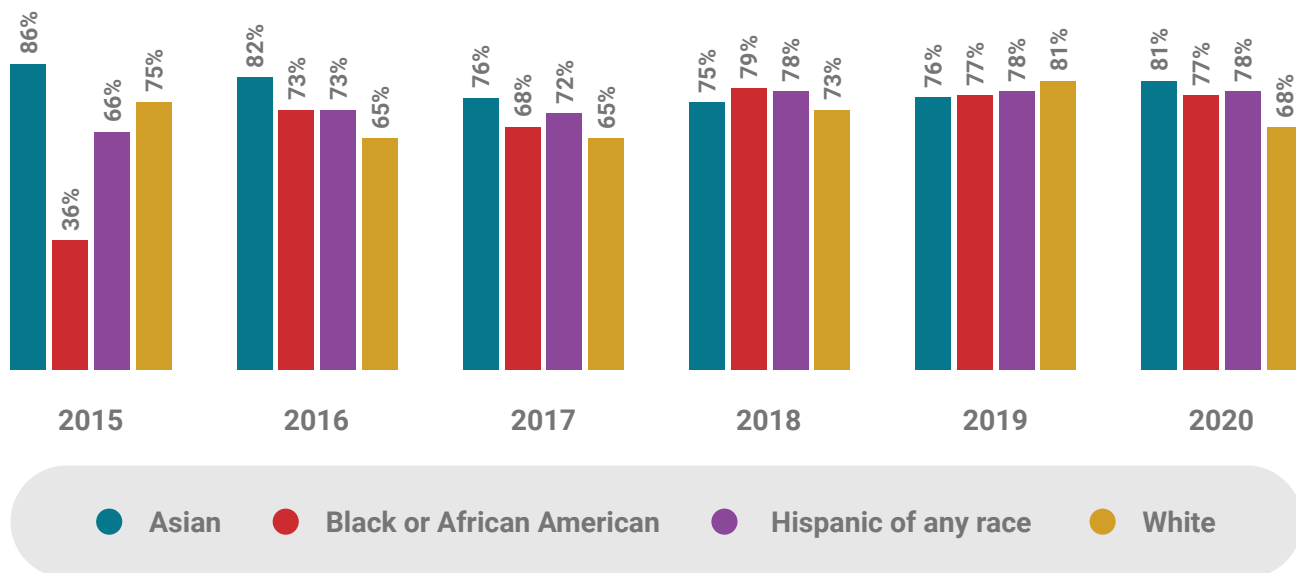
Since implementing and expanding these efforts, the achievement of students from diverse backgrounds has risen in kind. As illustrated in Table 3, from 2019 to 2021 the graduation rates of self-reported African American and Hispanic students have risen by 10 and 6 percentage points respectively. Both of those rates remain below those of our White student population, but the gap has narrowed substantially.

Perhaps more importantly, if we examine recent retention rates as a "leading indicator" of future graduation rates, the achievement of our Hispanic and African American students will continue to increase, and equity gaps are likely to narrow or perhaps even reverse. This analysis is based on the 1-year retention data shown in Figure 1. In 2015, both Hispanic and African American students achieved lower 1-year retention rates than White students, and the graduation rates of these students – as observed in our 2021 graduation data – demonstrated a similar pattern, with White students outperforming the other groups. However, in the last three years, the average 1-year retention rates of Hispanic and African American students often eclipse those of White students, which reverses traditionally observed equity gaps. If the historically-observed pattern holds, where retention rates predict relative graduation rates, in three to five years our diverse students are expected to achieve the highest graduation rates at the College (and our hope, of course, is that all groups will fare better than ever before).

Table 3: Retention and Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
1-year retention			
Asian	75%	76%	81%
African American	79%	77%	77%
Hispanic	78%	78%	78%
Two or more	81%	73%	64%
White	73%	81%	68%
6-year graduation			
Asian	15%	38%	36%
African American	11%	14%	21%
Hispanic	21%	21%	27%
Two or more	30%	25%	39%
White	24%	19%	28%

Figure 1: One-Year Retention by Race/Ethnicity

|	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic of any race	White
2015	86%	36%	66%	75%
2016	82%	73%	73%	65%
2017	76%	68%	72%	65%
2018	75%	79%	78%	73%
2019	76%	77%	78%	81%
2020	81%	77%	78%	68%

First-Generation Status

The pattern of improvement observed for students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds also extends to our first-generation students. In terms of graduation rates, the equity gap between first-generation students and non-first-generation students has narrowed. Furthermore, 1-year retention rates again forecast a brighter future for this historically under-represented first-generation population. Whereas first-generation students achieved a lower retention rate than non-first-generation students from 2013 to 2016, since 2017 they have achieved a consistently higher rate (Figure 2). If these retention rates predict similar patterns in graduation rates, as they often do, in the coming years we may observe another reversal of traditional equity gaps, with first-generation students achieving a higher graduation rate than non-first-generation peers.

Table 4: Retention and Graduation Rates by First-Generation Status

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
1-year retention			
First-Generation	80%	82%	78%
Non-First-Generation	76%	76%	75%
6-year graduation			
First-Generation	17%	19%	26%
Non-First-Generation	33%	32%	34%

Figure 2: Retention and Graduation Rate by First-Generation Status
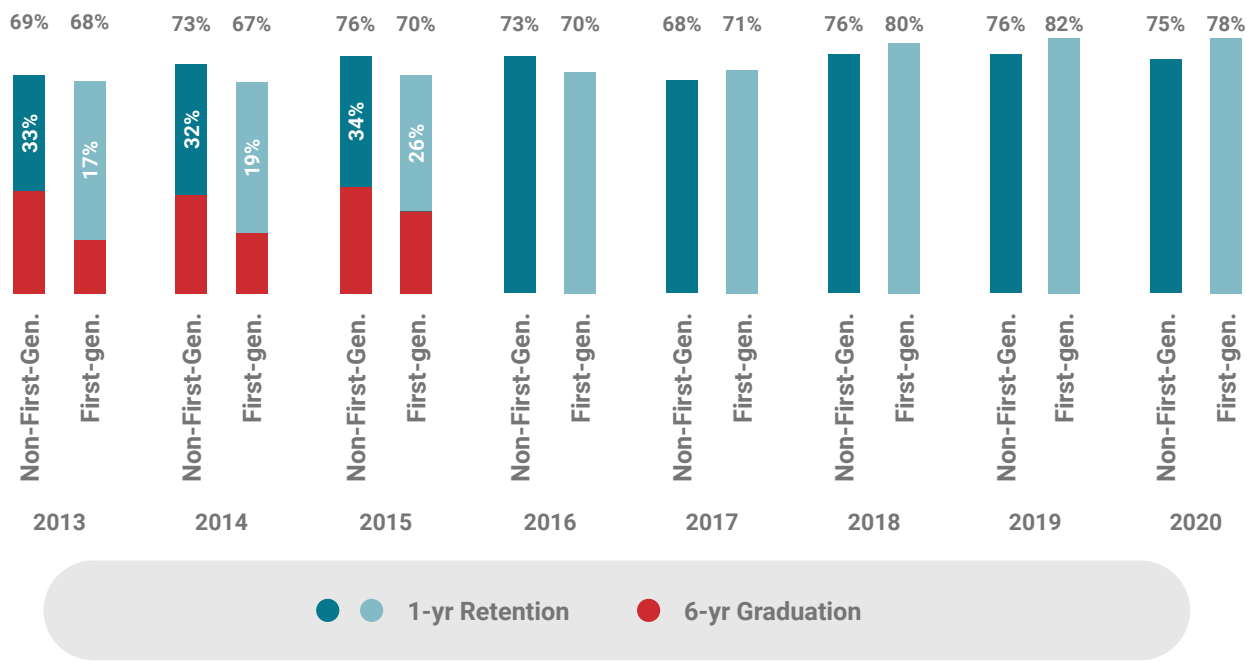
We believe this positive trend is tied, at least in part, to comprehensive institutional efforts to promote the success of all students. For example, data analyses conducted in 2014-15 revealed that academic advising often had a disproportionately positive impact on first-generation students, and we subsequently expanded our advising support to reach increasing numbers of students. Figure 3 presents data on the impact of use of advising on retention and graduation rates.

Figure 3: Use of Advising and Success Metrics

Fall Semesters 2013 to 2016 First-time, Full-time Students, 1-yr Retention

	Non-First-Generation		First-Generation
No Advising	58%	No Advising	50%
Advising	79%	Advising	74%

Fall Semesters 2013 to 2016 First-time, Full-time Students, 6-yr Graduation

	Non-First-Generation		First-Generation
No Advising	19%	No Advising	16%
Advising	32%	Advising	28%
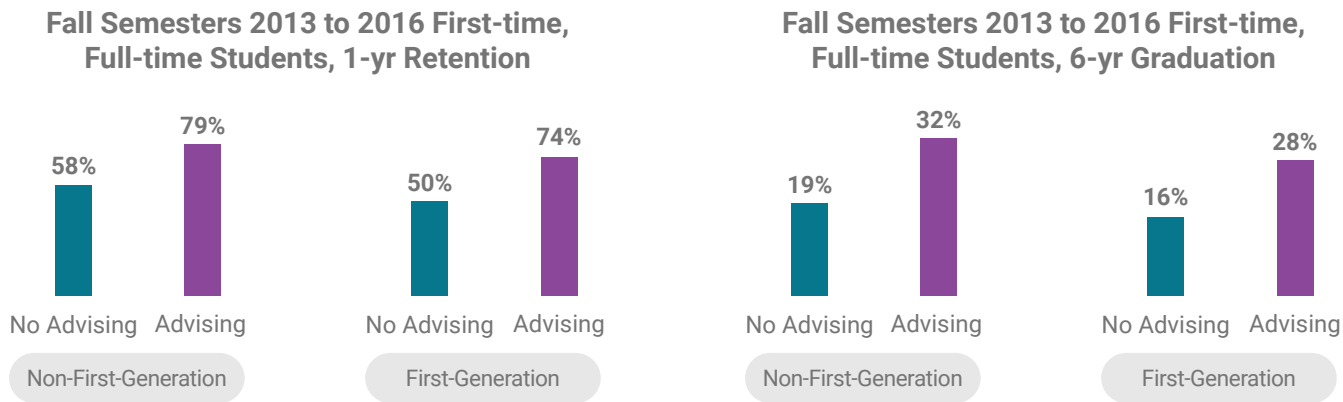
Gender

Reviewing the same metrics by gender, we see that the 1-year retention gap between men and women has decreased since Fall 2019, while women's 6-year graduation rate now surpasses men's (Table 5).

Table 5: Retention and Graduation Rates by Gender

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
1-year retention			
Women	80%	80%	76%
Men	70%	74%	77%
6-year graduation			
Women	18%	23%	30%
Men	29%	23%	25%

The dip in women's 1-year retention rate in Fall 2021 may be due in part to COVID-19, as women appeared to be particularly affected by the disruptions to schooling and childcare caused by the pandemic.

Pell Status

Disaggregating retention and graduation rates by Pell Grant recipient status shows that Pell recipients have consistently lower graduation rates than students who do not receive Pell awards, but have higher retention rates in recent years. As noted elsewhere in the report, these retention gains are expected to predict increases in future graduation rates (Table 6).

Table 6: Retention and Graduation Rates by Pell Recipient Status

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
1-year retention			
Pell Recipient	81%	82%	78%
Not Pell Recipient	75%	74%	75%
6-year graduation			
Pell Recipient	19%	18%	26%
Not Pell Recipient	24%	32%	32%

Curriculum and Instruction Goal

> *We will deliver on our promise to innovate in curriculum and instruction by building socially relevant curricula that anticipate and are responsive to the regional workforce, are transformational in nature, and are committed to developing the whole student.*

A key metric for this strategic goal is students' responses on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). We set a target of having 90% or more of students rate their overall educational experience as "good" or "excellent." We met this target in 2019 and 2020 but fell just below it in 2021 (Table 7). However, our recent scores of 89% and 91% remain significantly higher than the comparable overall ratings within our Carnegie class (84%) and for NSSE overall (84% to 86%).

Table 7: Percent of NSSE Respondents Rating Overall Educational Experience as "Good" or "Excellent"

	2019	2020	2021
NSC	91%	91%	89%
Carnegie Class Peers	84%	84%	84%
All NSSE	86%	86%	84%

Growth and Capacity Building Goal

We will deliver on our promise to steward our growth and capacity building by expanding the College in creative ways through public-private partnerships, governmental and sister-institution collaborations, relationship-driven advancement practices, and strategic enrollment management.

Our metric for this strategic goal is overall enrollment, which has grown substantially over this accreditation cycle. While headcount fell slightly from 2020 to 2021, FTE increased, indicating that our students are taking a higher course load (Table 8). Our initial analysis suggests that the headcount decline is largely attributable to pandemic-related factors, including a significant decrease in the size of our Fall 2021 first-year cohort, which dropped by 35% in relation to the prior year. Multiple national and institutional indicators suggest that we may struggle with enrollment shortfalls in the coming year, and we are contemplating and implementing measures that can help ameliorate the contributing factors (e.g., financial hardship).

Table 8: Enrollment

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
Headcount	5,578	7,287	7,281
FTE	3,290	3,795	3,834

Community Engagement and Economic Development Goal

> *We will deliver on our promise to improve community engagement and economic development by forging strong relationships with business and community organizations, making a positive impact on the community through service-oriented programs and applied research, and creating the critical workforce to grow our regional and state economy.*

Our key metric for this strategic goal is the total number of graduates from Nevada State. This has increased each year (Table 9), with a total of 847 graduates in 2022 at the time of writing. As the table illustrates, our graduating classes have steadily grown in size, which is a testament to both our increasing enrollment and rising graduation rates.

Table 9: Number of Graduates

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Graduates	591	687	763	847

Peer Comparators

Nevada State has identified five comparator institutions. Two institutions are considered to be "aspirational" peers based on their student achievement metrics: California State University, San Marcos and CUNY Brooklyn College. The others are comparable peers: CUNY Medgar Evers College, Middle Georgia State University, and Rogers State University. Table 10 summarizes enrollment at Nevada State and these comparator institutions.

Table 10: Fall 2021 Enrollment

Institution	Undergraduate	All Students
Cal State San Marcos	15,040	16,367
CUNY Brooklyn College	14,969	17,735
CUNY Medgar Evers College	5,237	5,237
Middle Georgia State University	8,015	8,404
Nevada State College	**7,218**	**7,289**
Rogers State University	3,324	3,400

Per-student Funding

Our institutional goal, regardless of the circumstances, is to help our students achieve at the highest possible level. However, per-student spending – as calculated by dividing our entire operating budget by student FTE – provides essential context for this effort in relation to our peers. Table 11 presents total annual operating expenses for Nevada State and our comparator institutions, as well as annual FTE and expenses per FTE. Nevada State has the second-lowest operating expenses and, at $13,773, the lowest spending per student FTE.

Table 11: Operating Expenses and FTE

Institution	Total Expenses	Annual FTE	Expenses/FTE
Cal State San Marcos	$328,672,713	12,636	$26,011
CUNY Brooklyn College	$320,538,333	12,866	$24,914
CUNY Medgar Evers College	$153,977,862	4,548	$33,857
Middle Georgia State University	$114,990,005	6,301	$18,249
Nevada State College	$53,868,000	3,911	$13,773
Rogers State University	$45,943,201	2,705	$16,985

Nevada State's IPEDS cohort 1-year retention rate compares quite favorably to our peers'; at 79%, we have the third-highest rate (Table 12). As mentioned elsewhere in this report, we hope that this rate – which actually approaches the level of our aspirational peers, despite far lower per-student spending – is predictive of future gains in our graduation rates, particularly among students in the "new majority" (i.e., diverse, first-generation students).

Table 12: Fall 2020 One-Year Retention Rate (IPEDS Cohort)

Institution	Retention (%)
Cal State San Marcos	84
CUNY Brooklyn College	82
CUNY Medgar Evers College	49
Middle Georgia State University	59
Nevada State College	79
Rogers State University	65

Figure 4 disaggregates six-year graduation rates at each institution by race/ethnicity.

Native American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander categories are not shown due to small sample sizes.

Figure 4: Six-Year Graduation Rate (Fall 2015 IPEDS Cohort)

Comparison of 6-Year Graduation Rate

Legend:
- Cal State San Marcos
- CUNY Brooklyn College
- CUNY Medgar Evers College
- Middle Georgia State University
- NSC
- Rogers State University
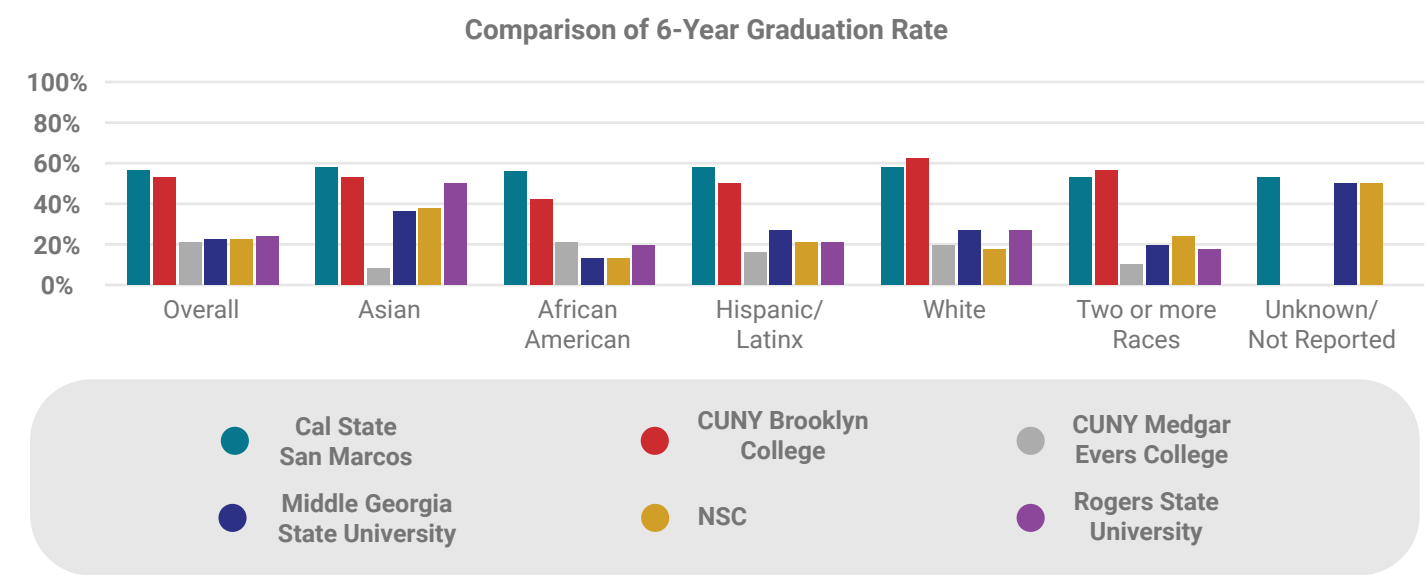
Barriers to Academic Excellence and Success and College Responses

Students at Nevada State face a variety of risk factors identified in the literature on student persistence in higher education (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Horton, 2015). Many work full-time (31.5% report working 30 hours or more per week), balance class schedules with family obligations, and come from demographic groups that have lower retention and graduation rates nationwide. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional challenges. Students had to shift to fully online courses mid-semester in Spring 2020, and those who care for dependents faced the additional burden of supporting their dependents' learning at home when K-12 schools also shifted to remote formats. Many students faced financial hardship due to the closing of casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, a major driver of the local economy, for three months. This led to an unemployment rate of 30.1% in March 2020 and 25.3% in April 2020, the highest level of joblessness in the nation. In the wake of this spike in unemployment, initial claims for unemployment benefits rose by 1,352% (Tuman, 2020).

Nevada State has invested in efforts to assist students in overcoming these barriers. To address the acute issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the College purchased laptops and internet hotspots that students could check out on long-term loans for their remote courses. To enhance our remote offerings, the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) provided training to academic faculty on best practices in online pedagogy, and CARES Act funds were used to allow a cohort of 30 instructors to participate in the year-long Effective Online Teaching Practices course offered by the Association of College and University Educators. Academic support and student services divisions established practices to deliver effective virtual support, and in some instances were able to maintain or even increase the number of students served. We also developed a host of resources to help students succeed in online learning environments and distributed them via multiple modalities. Additionally, the Student CARE Team played a central role in the College's response. It increased the amount of emergency funds students could apply for (up to $500), expanded access to the food pantry, and provided funds to have groceries delivered to the dorms if students living in campus housing tested positive for COVID-19. Campus counseling services and the CARE Team case manager provided virtual services throughout the pandemic response, and also offered online mental health screenings and lists of resources through MindWise Innovation.

While the response to COVID-19 dominated much of the institution's activities since Spring 2020, the College also made several changes aimed at longer-term support of student success. The mathematics faculty redesigned the curriculum to adopt a co-requisite model for developmental math courses that completely eschews remediation, allowing a larger number of students to complete college-level math in their first year.

The College has strategically pursued grants that support our mission and enhance student success, particularly for first-generation and under-represented students. In this accreditation cycle, the institution has successfully applied for its second TRIO-SSS grant and a second Title V HSI grant, Transformando Caminos, which provides support to students in the School of Education. In 2021, the College also received its second Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant to fund childcare for student-parents at the newly-opened campus Early Childhood Education Center. A funded NSF-IUSE planning grant supports efforts to identify barriers to attracting diverse students to STEM fields, particularly environmental science. In Spring 2022, Nevada State submitted proposals for an NSF S-STEM grant, which would fund scholarships for STEM majors, and a TRIO McNair Program grant.

As noted previously, Nevada State also has made concerted efforts to reduce equity gaps among racial and ethnic groups. In 2021, academic program assessment focused on equity gaps within each major. Committees of faculty evaluated data on retention and graduation rates disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The reports also identified courses and demographic groups with high failure rates (defined as students earning a D, F, W, or Incomplete), which indicate potential areas for interventions. In co-curricular programming, the College established Sankofa, which provides summer bridge programming, academic year mentoring, and cultural events for African American students. In 2021, campus leaders, faculty, and staff participated in comprehensive anti-racism training offered by external experts (Think Positionality, LLC). The trainings focused on a range of topics including microaggressions, implicit bias, and the systemic underpinnings of racism. A task force of NSC faculty and staff is currently evaluating how we can apply the lessons learned to develop specific objectives that will improve the institution's ability to serve students of color. Annual peer support training provides similar anti-racism content to student peer mentors and course assistants. The revised promotion and tenure policies for each unit prompt faculty to address efforts in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their application.

Some practices, while not specifically targeted at under-represented students, aim to disproportionately affect them. The College implemented mandatory advising, first to include all incoming students and more recently for every student from entry to graduation (except students accepted into the Schools of Nursing and Education, who receive advising from faculty). Consequently, the number of students seen by professional advisors has nearly tripled, from 834 in 2015 to 2,225 in Fall 2020. The majority of these students were Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). Similarly, Nevada State has decreased students' reliance on loans (from 51% to 37% of aid awarded) and increased support from grants (from 39% to 48% of aid awarded) and scholarships (from 10% to 15%). We revised our scholarship model to help ensure that students do not lose their merit scholarships due to a single underperforming semester, which has led to a significant increase in the number of students retained.

The College also has leveraged our access to comprehensive data to identify and address areas of particular concern. For example, recognizing that an inordinately large proportion of former pre-nursing students eventually leave without graduating, we implemented a multifaceted solution that combined strategic recruitment and advising efforts with a new degree program – Human Health Sciences – that we expect will be an attractive alternative for students who do not enter the nursing program. Likewise, faced with data on the unacceptably low retention and graduation rates of undecided students, we worked with our Career Services and Advising Centers to establish additional, mandatory guidance for this population.

Overall, Nevada State College has made strides toward narrowing traditionally observed equity gaps in student outcomes. An examination of our most recent 6-year graduation rates shows that the gap between White students and Hispanic students has narrowed from 3 percent to 1 percent since 2019. For White and Black or African American students, the equity divide has diminished to an even greater degree, declining from 13% in 2019 to 7% in 2021. As noted previously, recent 1-year retention rates suggest that the gap will continue to narrow and may even reverse over time.
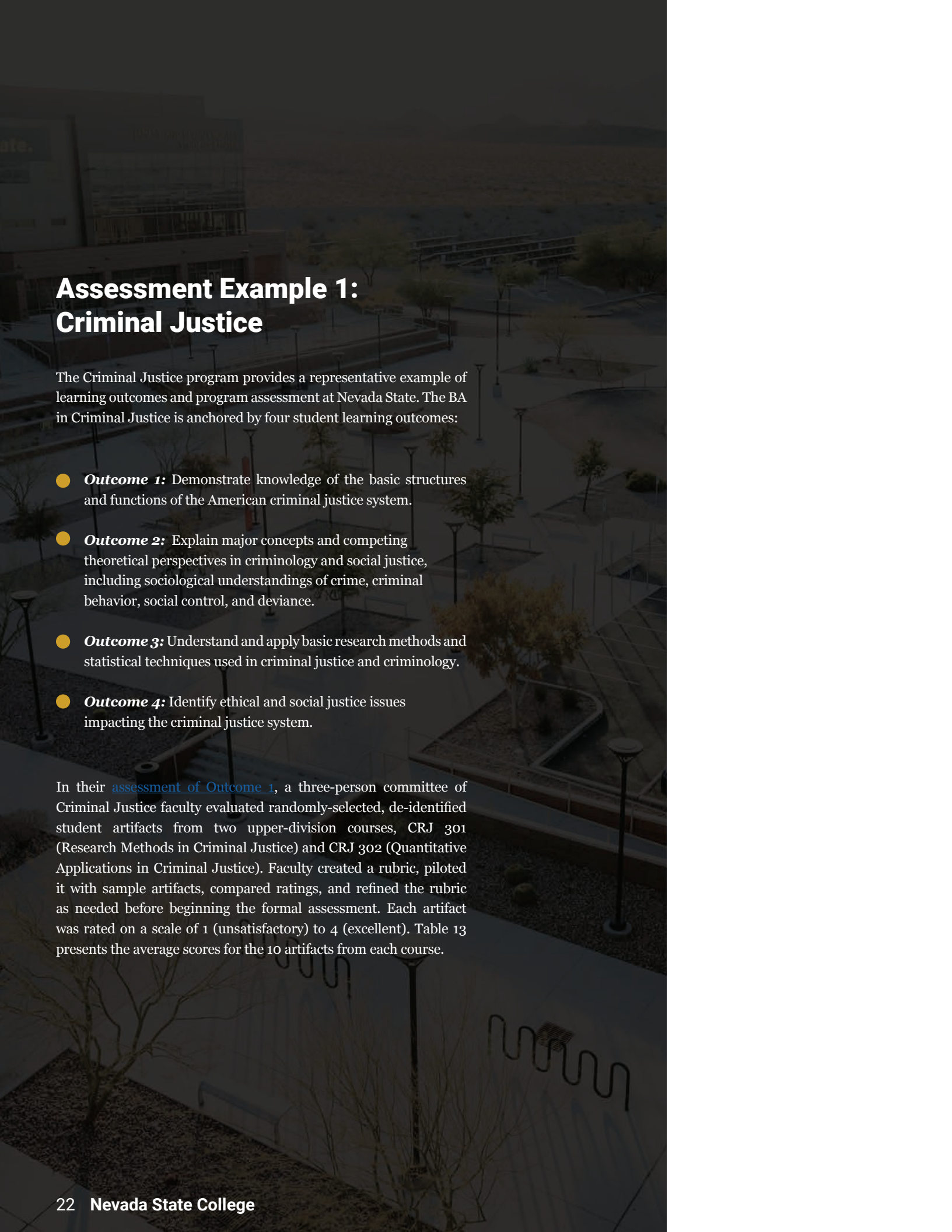
Programmatic Assessment

Academic programs at Nevada State undergo several forms of assessment that align with and feed into one another. These assessment activities culminate in Existing Program Review, which is required by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) at least once every ten years. The comprehensive program reviews include an evaluation of student success criteria (disaggregated by key demographics), program quality, need/demand for the program, relation to the institutional mission, cost, relationship to other programs within NSHE, and quality and adequacy of resources (including faculty, facilities, library materials and services, and non-academic resources).

Assessment activities are undertaken as part of continual improvement efforts at the College. Academic faculty evaluate aspects of their programs in annual assessment retreats, which alternate between Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and broader Program Assessment. Outcomes Assessment derives from the Nichols model, where a faculty assessment chair guides a small faculty committee in the evaluation of student artifacts to determine how well students have mastered the learning outcome under review. Program Assessment allows us to examine the effectiveness of academic programs from a different perspective, often permitting a more comprehensive but indirect examination of key factors. For example, an audit of assignments looks solely at the quality of these key assessments, allowing us to examine a broader array of critical program materials than might be possible with the Nichols model alone.

For both Outcomes Assessment and Program Assessment, faculty committees review the evidence, consult directly with the Office of the Provost, make recommendations for improvements, and submit regular progress reports on the status of implementing those recommendations. Results are shared with the campus community through the Provost Newsletter. Individual academic programs conduct other assessments as needed to meet discipline-specific accreditation or licensing requirements.

These ongoing assessments are integrated into the more comprehensive Existing Program Reviews to yield a robust and multifaceted evaluation of program quality and effectiveness. To garner an alternative – and typically insightful – perspective on the program, review committees are encouraged to seek external reviewers to provide additional evaluations as well. Existing Program Reviews also lead to recommendations, which are formalized by the committees in collaboration with their academic deans. After review and feedback by the Office of the Provost, Existing Program Reviews are finalized and submitted to the Board of Regents in the fall.

The two examples below illustrate different levels of assessment. Example 1, a summary of recent assessment efforts by the Criminal Justice program, emphasizes outcomes and program improvement assessment. Example 2 focuses on the broader Existing Program Review completed in 2021-22 by the School of Education for the BA in Elementary Education.

Assessment Example 1:
Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice program provides a representative example of learning outcomes and program assessment at Nevada State. The BA in Criminal Justice is anchored by four student learning outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Demonstrate knowledge of the basic structures and functions of the American criminal justice system.

- **Outcome 2:** Explain major concepts and competing theoretical perspectives in criminology and social justice, including sociological understandings of crime, criminal behavior, social control, and deviance.

- **Outcome 3:** Understand and apply basic research methods and statistical techniques used in criminal justice and criminology.

- **Outcome 4:** Identify ethical and social justice issues impacting the criminal justice system.

In their assessment of Outcome 1, a three-person committee of Criminal Justice faculty evaluated randomly-selected, de-identified student artifacts from two upper-division courses, CRJ 301 (Research Methods in Criminal Justice) and CRJ 302 (Quantitative Applications in Criminal Justice). Faculty created a rubric, piloted it with sample artifacts, compared ratings, and refined the rubric as needed before beginning the formal assessment. Each artifact was rated on a scale of 1 (unsatisfactory) to 4 (excellent). Table 13 presents the average scores for the 10 artifacts from each course.

Table 13: CRJ Artifact Ratings

Artifact	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CRJ 301 Average	3	3	3	4	4	3	2.33	3	3	3
CRJ 302 Average	3	4	4	2	3	3.33	4	4	2.66	3

Based on the results of the assessment, faculty identified four areas of improvement for each course, as well as a recommendation to identify the best sequencing of courses for the degree as a whole. For example, both the quantitative results and the direct qualitative analysis of student artifacts suggested that underperformance may be partly attributable to unclear expectations. Consequently, in CRJ 301, faculty began to provide examples of excellent and below-average papers to offer a more palpable illustration of assignment expectations. The assessment also crystallized the belief that what ultimately matters is whether students master the learning outcome, not whether they struggle in the pursuit of this goal. As a result, Criminal Justice instructors established a more scaffolded approach that allows students to overcome missteps and benefit from what they have learned by resubmitting one assignment of their choice. To assist students in CRJ 302, Supplemental Instruction (SI) was integrated into the course to give students additional support in mastering statistical skills. Due to the pandemic, SI sessions were offered on Zoom at flexible times, including weekday evenings and Saturday mornings to accommodate as many students as possible. The number of exams was increased from three to four, allowing students to cover less material on each test, which was associated with higher average test grades than in previous semesters.

In 2021, faculty completed a program improvement assessment involving detailed data on enrollment, retention, and graduation among majors that were disaggregated by race/ethnicity, which allowed committees to reflect on potential equity gaps among groups of students. Though equity concerns did not materialize, faculty did identify three courses with relatively high overall DFWI rates (20% or above). While students may have struggled in the courses due primarily to the shift to remote learning during the pandemic, faculty identified several areas for improvement and implemented them in the subsequent semester. As detailed in their progress report, two of the courses were redesigned to include a no-cost open educational resource (OER) textbook and more low-stakes assignments (e.g., quizzes embedded in short lecture videos, peer-reviewed article summaries that later contribute to larger projects that carry more points). Faculty incentivized students to visit the Writing Center by embedding extra credit for visits into their courses. The Criminal Justice assessment committee will continue to monitor the courses to see if the DFWI rates improve with these changes as well as with a return to more in-person and hybrid courses as the pandemic recedes. To address overall enrollment, a departmental account line was budgeted with $1,500 to purchase promotional items (e.g., t-shirts) to aid in recruitment efforts for all majors in the unit, and the Criminal Justice Instagram page is updated regularly with information about jobs, internships, campus events, and other opportunities that may interest Criminal Justice majors.

The Fall 2022 assessment retreat is scheduled for mid-September; Criminal Justice faculty will assess learning outcome 2. The program will undergo its first holistic Existing Program Review in 2023-24.

Assessment Example 2: Elementary Education

The BA in Elementary Education underwent Existing Program Review in the 2021-22 academic year and provides a representative example of this process. The final report will be presented to the Board of Regents in Fall 2022.

The Existing Program Review included the evaluation of key metrics from 2013 through 2021-22, such as enrollment, student demographics, retention, and graduation. Enrollment in Elementary Education increased from 314 to 371 during the period under review, and the proportion of majors who identify as Latinx grew from 24% to 45%. The vast majority of students in the program (93%) are women, and more than half are Pell-eligible (58%) or first-generation (56%).

While early in this review cycle the Elementary Education program had lower retention rates than the institution as a whole, in two of the past three academic years its retention rate has surpassed the overall mark at NSC, with a one-year retention rate of 78% for the IPEDS cohort in Fall 2021. For transfer students, the program has consistently exhibited a one-year retention rate at or above that for all programs at the College. The graduation rate for all education students has been comparatively strong, and at 34% in 2021 is 5 points higher than the overall NSC rate. Perhaps most importantly, given our goal of continual improvement, the metric has increased over time, climbing from 23% in 2012 to 34% in 2021.

Other elements reviewed in the report include the demonstrated need for the program, cost, a comparison of the curriculum with other Elementary Education majors available in the Las Vegas area, and qualifications and achievements of the 11 full-time faculty who teach in the program. Education faculty consistently earn non-significantly higher average student evaluation ratings than all faculty at NSC; for instance, in 2021, Elementary Education faculty received an average score of 4.53 out of 5 compared to 4.49 for all faculty.

The Elementary Education program is aligned with InTASC Standards. Section IV of the Existing Program Review report provides details on student learning outcomes, courses and key assessments used to analyze student mastery of outcomes, and the process for assessment in the School of Education. This includes annual calibration of the scoring rubrics for key assessments, annual curriculum mapping to ensure that the curriculum targets the InTASC Standards sufficiently, and monthly data talks among SOE faculty and staff. Additionally, in 2019-20, the School of Education piloted the use of Via by Watermark as a centralized assessment platform, implementing it in a total of 14 courses (n = 272 students). Approximately 90% of students met or exceeded the standards. Those who did not meet standards were often junior or senior pre-program students (that is, not yet accepted into the major) or students in the post-baccalaureate Alternative Routes to Licensure option. The final report provides more details on the results of the assessment, with particular emphasis on the methods courses (EDEL 433: Teaching Math Methods and EDSP 441: Characteristics and Inclusive Strategies for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities) that comprise the foundation of the major. Both courses are aligned with InTASC Standard 2: Learning Differences. In EDEL 433, 88% of students met or exceeded standards, while 100% of students in the Special Education concentration met or exceeded standards.

Barriers to student success identified from the Existing Program Review included difficulty passing the Praxis exam (including challenges paying for multiple exams, since most students in the major are Pell-eligible); confusing admissions processes and deadlines; and turnover among academic advisors. Programmatic weaknesses included a lack of arts integration, the need for more structure in field experience courses, a need for more courses to help students master content, and a lack of course sequencing to build skills. Strengths of the program include an emphasis on literacy (the National Council on Teacher Quality gave the program an A in Early Reading in 2020), innovative technology instruction, support for English Language Learner (ELL) pedagogy, Praxis support through labs, and methods courses that include field experiences. Accounting for the findings in their entirety, the faculty and administration of the School of Education have identified clear steps for improvement to address barriers and capitalize on the Elementary Education major's existing strengths. For instance, the analysis of Praxis Core pass rates indicates that the Praxis lab should be revised to more effectively support students. To improve retention and graduation, the School of Education has identified potential initiatives such as a fall orientation for first-year students, more workshops offered by the Academic Success Coach, and hiring a full-time SOE undergraduate advisor to provide consistency in degree planning. Reviewing the curriculum sequencing for Elementary Education courses may also lead to a better degree pathway for students, ensuring they both build necessary skills before taking advanced courses and that they have a clear, timely track toward graduation.

Moving Forward

In our most recent mission fulfillment evaluation, the evaluators commended Nevada State College for "Remaining true to its mission during a time of unprecedented growth, ensuring a climate that prioritizes and promotes the success of its diverse student body." This commitment to the success of our students never wavered in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it became substantially more difficult to achieve due to the challenges wrought by the health crisis.

Moving forward – and out from under the shadow of the pandemic – we are embracing a return to "full institutional strength." This return is an opportunity to renew our work on critical endeavors that lost momentum during the pandemic, such as the imperative to establish a new and improved program of assessment. Importantly, this return also reflects a rare opportunity to cultivate the "next" version of Nevada State College, one that is more effective and resilient due to lessons learned about student behavior and adaptations we acquired during the crisis, such as greater facility in the online delivery of instruction and student services.

Though the negative repercussions of COVID-19 may continue for several years, we remain as resolute as ever in the pursuit of student success and institutional excellence. To this end, moving forward we plan to:

- Hire a Director of Assessment and implement a more comprehensive assessment plan that fully addresses the second recommendation in our Mission Fulfillment evaluation.

- Update our Strategic Plan under the guidance of our new Vice President of Culture, Planning, & Policy to best serve the needs of our students and employees in a post-pandemic world.

- Establish a new "Educational Philosophy" that articulates how the College will deliver an exceptional educational experience to students.

- Furnish a new Strategic Enrollment Management plan that follows from our Educational Philosophy and helps ensure continued enrollment growth and student success.

- Continue implementing the new version of our Core Curriculum and Essential Learning Outcomes.

- Develop and implement new programs that range from graduate-level degrees to stackable certificates that enable new and essential access points to higher education.

- Under our new Vice President of Student Affairs, expand student life and engagement opportunities that provide students with a more well-rounded and beneficial college experience.

- Refine and broadly communicate our institutional "brand" under the guidance of our restructured Office of Advancement and consequently expand awareness of the College among prospective students and external stakeholders.

- Generally advance President Pollard's key themes of Enhancing Student Access, Expanding Student Success, Refining Our Organizational Structure & Culture, and Connecting with the Community.

Addendum

Nevada State received two recommendations from the NWCCU Year Seven site visit.

> **Recommendation 1:** *Develop meaningful objectives and indicators of mission fulfillment that align to the institution's mission and goals*

Meaningful Objectives

The centerpiece of our effort to address this recommendation is our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, titled *Delivering on the Promise*. Led by the Office of the Provost, strategic planning involved collaborators from across the institution and yielded five over-arching themes that contribute to the fulfillment of our mission: 1) Students, 2) Curriculum & Instruction, 3) Organizational Culture, 4) Growth & Capacity Building, and 5) Community Engagement & Economic Development. Each theme is linked to a single, comprehensive goal, and each goal is composed of an assortment of initiatives. For example, the goal for the Students theme pledges to "deliver on our promise to students by demonstrating leadership in academic and student support, improving student success for a highly diverse, first-generation student population through innovative and evidence-based practices." Representative initiatives that further define this goal include those that "develop a system of student support that is accessible and adapts to the changing needs of our diverse student population (S1)" and "build systems of financial support . . . that maximize the success of the broadest possible number of students (S5)."

Each initiative, in turn, is supported by one or more projects that define what must be done for the initiative to be fulfilled. For example, we plan to achieve the "student support" initiative through multiple projects that range from "Expand centralized Academic Advising Center services (S1.2)" to "Improve student degree planning and progression (S1.4)." In this fashion, the strategic plan adopts a scaffolded approach where the goals define our foremost objectives in broad and inspirational terms, and the initiatives and projects more precisely articulate the work that must be conducted to bring those goals to fruition.

Indicators

As with our objectives, the indicators of our mission fulfillment are presented at multiple levels. At the highest level, each over-arching goal is attached to one or more "Key Indicators." These indicators are major, institution-defining metrics that provide campus constituents and external stakeholders with highly visible and easily understood markers of goal fulfillment. For the student success goal, the Key Indicators include our IPEDs retention and graduation rates, as well as disaggregated measures that reflect the narrowing of equity gaps in critical student outcomes. For curriculum and instruction, the two Key Indicators are the "proportion of students who achieve mastery of program learning outcomes" and "student ratings of their overall educational experience on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)."

At the level of projects, the indicators are presented as "deliverables." Whereas the Key Indicators are quantitative in nature, the deliverables largely manifest in an assessable but qualitative format because they often reflect whether a project has been implemented. Once implemented, the projects are expected to contribute to the fulfillment of our initiatives and goals and subsequently advance our achievement of quantitative metrics such as the Key Indicators. For example, the project that aims to "expand centralized Academic Advising Center services" is assessed through the achievement of three different deliverables, one of which is to implement a student success platform that facilitates E-alert efforts, interdepartmental referral services, and student case notes that are accessible to support staff and faculty. This deliverable is achieved when the platform is implemented, and the implementation of the platform, in turn, is expected to increase our performance on Key Indicators such as equity goals and graduation and retention rates (see Table 14 for an overview of Objective Types and associated Indicators).

Table 14

Objective Type	Indicator of Fulfillment
Strategic Goal	Key Indicator
Initiative	Project Completion
Project	Deliverable

Most of the Key Indicators are represented in longstanding and publicly accessible data dashboards, including those reporting enrollment, retention, and graduation figures, and all of these data can be disaggregated by essential demographic variables (e.g., self-reported ethnicity; first-generation status). However, to best capture the full scope of our institutional objectives and means of fulfillment, we developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan dashboard. It presents the entire constellation of efforts described above, including:

● A link to the full strategic plan

● A presentation of each theme and corresponding goal, as well as the relevant key indicators and our real-time progress in achieving each of them

● A listing of each project in the implementation plan and a "scorecard" that tracks our projects in achieving the project deliverables

Taken as a whole, this dashboard serves as a centralized source for tracking the College's progress toward meeting our strategic goals and fulfilling our mission. Additionally, the campus is apprised of data related to critical indicators regularly via presentations at campus-wide professional development events and in data snapshots included in the twice-monthly Provost's Office newsletter.

Overall, we have made significant – but incomplete – strides toward addressing Recommendation 1. We have established consensus goals and initiatives that reflect the fulfillment of our mission, and have designed an array of projects that delineate how those objectives will be achieved. Key Indicators help us track the fulfillment of our broadest goals, and deliverables mark our progress on projects that ultimately lead to goal achievement.

We also have tried to amend shortcomings in this process that have emerged since the recommendation was received. In our first draft of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, we connected our institutional goals to the goals established by the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), and then showed how the NSHE goals aligned with our Key Indicators of mission fulfillment. However, this had the unintended consequence of muddling the connection between our institutional goals and our own Key Indicators. Consequently, in our 2021-2022 addendum to the strategic plan, we created a table that clearly illustrates the alignment between our goals and key indicators, while also indicating the connection of both to the broader NSHE goals (note: this table is on p. 4 of this document).

The other issue we are planning to address is the extent to which the College is assessing and updating our progress on the projects in the implementation plan. We fared well in charting our progress following the launch of the strategic plan, but have since fallen behind schedule in evaluating our achievements and updating the relevant dashboards. Much of this is attributable to the pandemic, which reallocated substantive amounts of time and effort to the resolution of other challenges, but we must nevertheless redouble our efforts to monitor our progress and adjust our plans accordingly.

Recommendation 2: *Create a comprehensive system of assessment that builds on existing program assessment efforts and supports future institution-level planning and resource allocation*

In response to this recommendation, Nevada State created the position of Director of Assessment to provide additional support and structure to program and learning outcomes assessment efforts. A hiring freeze resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the search for this position, which was initially scheduled for Fall 2020; we anticipate the position will be filled in Fall 2022. The Director of Assessment will be responsible for staying current on best practices in outcomes assessment, providing faculty development sessions on effective assessment, planning annual assessment retreats, and soliciting progress reports from units to monitor the use of assessment results to make meaningful improvements to programs and, ultimately, the campus as a whole.

The College has also implemented follow-up meetings to ensure we close the loop on recommendations resulting from assessment efforts. Assessment Committee chairs for each program meet individually with representatives from the Office of the Provost to discuss recommendations from learning outcomes and program assessments and complete progress reports, with an emphasis on identifying a small number of action items but ensuring they will be completed by the next term. As of 2022, the fall assessment retreat has been moved earlier in the semester; this provides faculty with enough time to act on the results so that a meaningful progress report and meeting can take place before winter break.

In addition, College leadership has revised existing processes and reviews to better align them into a holistic evaluation of programs. The campus updated the Existing Program Review policy to more strongly focus on student achievement metrics. The Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives developed a multi-year schedule of data collection efforts (e.g., student satisfaction data, course mapping and syllabi audit, equity gap analysis) that will feed into the Existing Program Review schedule and ensure each program has access to relevant data to analyze all facets of the program and identify actionable improvements.

Finally, we are making a concerted effort to ensure that our assessment findings inform institutional planning and resource allocation. We plan to achieve this goal by improving the integration of assessment data into our annual budget process, which involves representatives from across campus and is the primary means by which we allocate resources at the College. Since receiving this recommendation, we revised the budget forms used for all personnel and non-operating expenses to include a rationale that accounts for accreditation compliance and outcomes assessment information. Specifically, the form asks proposers to indicate whether a budget request addresses or supports "accreditation standards and/or outcomes assessment recommendations." The completed forms, in turn, help institutional leaders prioritize and justify budget requests in our annual process. This has proven to be an important first step in addressing the recommendation, and with more robust data from an expanded program of assessment we believe it can significantly inform our resource allocation and "close the loop" in our ongoing process of institutional evaluation and improvement.

Core Curriculum Assessment

In the previous accreditation cycle, we identified assessment of learning outcomes for the Core Curriculum as an area for improvement. The Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) has since led a multi-year process of developing and adopting twelve new Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) based on the AAC&U model. The need to develop assessable outcomes was considered throughout ELO development. The College funded a summer institute for faculty in key disciplines to develop rubrics for each ELO, which will be used to assess artifacts in our Core Curriculum classes.

Table 15: Approved Core Curriculum Essential Learning Outcomes

Core Curriculum Theme	Essential Learning Outcomes
Communication	Co-Creative Problem Solving
	Creative Expression & Aesthetics
	Oral Communication
	Written Communication
Critical Thinking	Information Literacy
	Inquiry and Analysis
	Lifelong Learning
	Quantitative Reasoning
Community Engagement	Civic Knowledge & Engagement
	Critical Literacy
	Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
	Ethical Reasoning

English Composition Assessment

In Summer 2021, supported by Strong Start to Finish and ECMC Foundation funds, the first-year composition faculty undertook assessment of ENG 100 (co-requisite Composition I). A team of seven faculty used the Nichols model to evaluate students on two outcomes: rhetorical knowledge and evidence/support. The committee reviewed student submissions from eight sections of ENG 100, each taught by a different instructor. This allowed the committee to get a broad view of how ENG 100 is being taught and how well students across sections and instructors are mastering published course outcomes for this Core Curriculum course.

Across the 40 artifacts the committee evaluated, students scored higher on rhetorical knowledge (1.69/3) than on evidence/support (1.47/3). This is not surprising, given that Composition I focuses on the general writing process, whereas Composition II (ENG 102) incorporates more content on information literacy, citation practices, and using secondary evidence to support an argument. Overall, 53% of artifacts were rated as "working toward expectations," 36% as "meets expectations," and 11% as "exceeds expectations."

Based on the results, the First Year Composition team recommended working with faculty teaching ENG 100 to bring more consistency to the assignments used to ensure they target course outcomes. Faculty should also clearly identify which assignment to use for future assessments. Finally, continuing to include adjunct faculty and dual-credit instructors in the assessment process is encouraged, as it builds relationships with the full range of instructors teaching ENG 100 and offers opportunities for useful conversations about course content.

Core Math Assessment

Nevada State has made several significant changes to the gateway math sequence. Due to an NSHE mandate, the College eliminated all standalone remedial coursework and moved entirely to a co-requisite model for math courses. The redesign of the core curriculum math courses was supported by funding from NV Energy, the ECMC Foundation, and Strong Start to Finish. The co-requisite model for MATH 126 (gateway course for STEM majors) was implemented in Fall 2020 and in Fall 2021 for MATH 120 (gateway course for non-STEM majors).

To assess the effectiveness of these changes, in Summer 2022 full-time and part-time math faculty will evaluate student outcomes in MATH 120 and MATH 126; this work will be supported by ECMC funds. The goal is to identify areas for improvement based on outcomes of the co-requisite model thus far and to begin to separate out the impacts of the curricular changes from the effects of the pandemic that coincided with the implementation of co-requisite coursework.