

Lake Region State College - ND

HLC ID 1516

OPEN PATHWAY: Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Review Date: 6/23/2025

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

6/23/2025

Review Type:

Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

There is no institutional context.

Interactions with Constituencies

There are no interactions.

Additional Documents

There are no additional documents reviewed.

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) has clearly articulated its mission publicly and operationalized it throughout the institution. As a member of the North Dakota University System (NDUS), LRSC develops its mission in alignment with the system's common mission, guided by formal state board policy outlining prescriptive processes for mission creation and approval. The college's mission, originally created in 1941, has been refined over time, with its most recent iteration developed following the 2010 self-study process. This revision included input from faculty, staff, students, and community members, followed by approval from the local administrative council and the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education.

The mission is supported by additional guiding statements, including its philosophy, core values, and general education philosophy statements, which were updated in 2021. These statements guide strategic planning and institutional operations. While there is clear evidence of thoughtful development and integration of these statements, documentation does not indicate whether a systematic approach exists to assess and reaffirm the mission and related statements regularly. Establishing such a process would ensure continued relevance and alignment with the college's strategic goals and external context.

LRSC's mission identifies the nature and scope of its services and stakeholders, positioning itself as a

student-centered, open-access, comprehensive community college serving the community, regional service area, state, and global community. The mission is embedded institution-wide, appearing in the policy manual, student handbook, college catalog, website, and course syllabi, ensuring it is publicly visible and operationalized in daily practices.

Moreover, although not directly tied to specific academic offerings, the college's support services and enrollment profile reflect its mission. Its commitment to lifelong learning and meeting the personal, social, and economic needs of the Lake Region community is evident in enrollment data, student demographics, and the range of services provided, such as advising, tutoring, and other student supports.

Overall, LRSC effectively articulates and operationalizes its mission, though it would benefit from implementing a formal, cyclical review process to reaffirm its mission and related statements to ensure continued alignment with institutional and community needs. While it was last formally reviewed during the 2010 self-study and approved by the State Board, there is limited evidence of a systematic process to regularly review and reaffirm the mission and related statements to ensure they remain current.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College's (LRSC's) mission to "enhance lives and community vitality through quality education" demonstrates its commitment to the public good. This is evident in LRSC's efforts to grow in-demand programs, offer workforce training through TrainND Northeast, and partner with regional organizations such as the Northeast Education Services Cooperative (NESC) and North Dakota Career and Technical Education.

As a cooperating member of NESC, with the college president serving on its governing board, LRSC increases access to services and courses for rural students. TrainND Northeast supports the region's economic vitality by providing in-person, online, and customized training to enhance the competitiveness of local businesses and industries.

LRSC's commitment is also demonstrated through its broader community engagement efforts, such as hosting public events and services that enhance community well-being. Documenting community events, fairs, blood drives, and participation of employees, students, and student athletes in these activities would further illustrate the college's role as a vital community resource and partner.

Additionally, LRSC hosts advisory committee meetings for its Career and Technical Education programs, connecting with business and industry leaders to align offerings with workforce needs. It is important to document how advisory feedback results in program improvements, ensuring evidence that recommendations lead to changes that strengthen program relevance and responsiveness to community and employer needs.

Overall, LRSC operationalizes its mission through strong community partnerships, workforce training, and responsive program development, demonstrating a clear commitment to serving the public good.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) provides opportunities for civic engagement within a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, aligning with its mission and the constituencies it serves. The college encourages cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and future success, as evidenced by its range of student clubs and organizations, TrainND online certification programs, study abroad opportunities, and the adult learning center promoting GED attainment.

The college promotes inclusivity through CTE program evaluations, nondiscrimination compliance efforts, TRiO, the Diversity Waiver, and its Diversity Committee. While these examples show support for students, additional evidence is needed to illustrate how faculty, staff, and administrators actively foster inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations across the institution. Providing examples from academic course syllabi would further demonstrate how civic engagement and global perspectives are embedded within the curriculum.

The college's climate of respect is evident in its core values, general education philosophy, equal opportunity policies, and commitment to diversity. The 2022 Vision Visit confirmed strong relationships with industry partners and suggested further expanding opportunities for students to engage in work-based and experiential learning, enhancing their preparation to contribute meaningfully within their communities and the global workforce.

Overall, LRSC demonstrates a commitment to civic engagement and inclusivity through cocurricular supports, but it would benefit from more robust examples of curricular integration and evidence of how all stakeholders uphold and advance these institutional values.

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

Lake Region State College's mission aligns with the North Dakota University System's common mission and is appropriate for its role as an open-access, comprehensive community college. It is clearly stated, widely published, and guides strategic planning. However, while it was last formally reviewed during the 2010 self-study and approved by the State Board, there is limited evidence of a systematic process to regularly review and reaffirm the mission and related statements to ensure they remain current.

LRSC fulfills this mission by offering programs that meet industry needs, providing workforce training through TrainND Northeast, and partnering with organizations like the Northeast Education Services Cooperative (NESC) to expand educational access in rural North Dakota. Its role in the community is further supported by active engagement with advisory committees for Career and Technical Education programs, connecting with industry leaders to inform and align programs with workforce needs, though clearer evidence of how advisory feedback is used in decision-making would strengthen this process.

LRSC supports informed citizenship and student success through cocurricular opportunities like student clubs, TrainND certifications, study abroad, and GED programs, though evidence from academic courses or syllabi would strengthen this area. While LRSC demonstrated its commitment to inclusive and equitable treatment through its CTE evaluation and nondiscrimination compliance efforts, additional examples of supports for diverse populations and outcomes from the Diversity Committee would be beneficial. The college fosters a climate of respect, reflected in its core values and programs such as TRiO and the Diversity Committee, but providing more examples of this commitment among faculty, staff, and administration would enhance its evidence.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) demonstrates that it aligns its policies and procedures with the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) and the North Dakota University System (NDUS) to ensure the fair and ethical behavior of the governing board and LRSC employees. For example, the NDUS Officer and Employee Code of Conduct (308.1) clearly articulates expectations for all NDUS members and the need for each institution to adopt and implement a code of conduct consistent with NDUS policy; LRSC P&P Section 1500.05 is consistent with NDUS policy 308.1 and informs college employees about reporting requirements and procedures. The NDUS Office of Compliance and Ethics enforces policies and supports a culture of integrity and ethical conduct by receiving and reviewing anonymous investigation reports and providing training, informal outreach, and education services.

The institution complies with statutory requirements to complete a financial operational audit report with the North Dakota Office of the State Auditor. Evidence included in the assurance argument link to a webpage with audit reports for the larger University System Office, North Dakota and a single report from Lake Region State College's audit. With only a single LRSC audit report attached, it was difficult to determine consistency in report outcomes and/or improvement with specific regard to the institution. Upon review of the North Dakota Office of the State Auditor webpage for LRSC reports, operational audit from 2019 and 2021 demonstrated findings with the College's procurement process which were improved and resolved by the 2023 audit. Evidence demonstrates that the college is working towards making improvements in effectively using its own procurement procedures. However, providing additional information regarding this improvement in future assurance arguments may be helpful.

The institution has developed policies and procedures that align to its governing body and state regulations. Although there are no concerns that policies exist, the quality of evidence can be

strengthened in future assurances by including supporting evidence demonstrating how those policies are enacted in practice.

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.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Evidence provided in the assurance argument and review of several public-facing webpages demonstrate that Lake Region State College (LRSC) presents itself clearly to its constituents. The institution maintains comprehensive public-facing resources including its main website, college catalog, student handbook, policy manuals, and data reports.

LRSC ensures that its costs and program requirements are clear, transparent, and easily accessible to students and community members. A review of LRSC's academic webpages and the college catalog demonstrates that programs with special admission requirements are transparent and include relevant information. Critical student and community resources such as the net price calculator, accreditation relationships, as well as student tuition and fees are easily accessible. Furthermore, the Admissions Office and program faculty maintain relevant webpage content to ensure its accuracy.

The institution's college website also conveys a wealth of information regarding the college's contribution to the educational experience. Notable sources of evidence include the accessibility of annual data reports, dashboards, and equity in athletics information. LRSC does not make claims related to research or religious/spiritual purpose, and the evidence it provides otherwise is sufficient to demonstrate this core component is met.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College's (LRSC) governing body, the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) for the North Dakota University System, has a clear structure with authority defined in the North Dakota Constitution and Century Code. The SBHE's constitutional authority establishes a comprehensive legal framework for governance decisions. SBHE code of conduct policies (308.1.6 and 308.1.7) appropriately address conflict of interest and ethical standards providing clear provisions for preserving their independence from undue influence. Furthermore, the Community College Foundation demonstrates structural independence through established bylaws, conflict of interest procedures, and external audit processes.

LRSC documents meaningful board-institution relationships through annual retreats and systematic administrative representation via the chancellor's cabinet and specialized councils (academic affairs, student affairs, administrative affairs, etc.). Evidence included in the addendum demonstrates that the SBHE regularly deliberates and makes decisions in the best interest of LRSC and properly preserves its authority to operate without undue influence from external parties such as legislators. In the last two years, the SBHE has approved LRSC's requests to offer a new program, initiate a funding campaign for new construction to ensure there is an adequate facility for the athletics program, and a request to transfer capital building funds to replace critical equipment such as a wind turbine and gearbox. When necessary, the SBHE provides LRSC additional support, such as legal consultation, to assess strengths, risks, and weaknesses for critical decisions that could impact the institution.

The SBHE Policy 305.1 demonstrates the board's authority to delegate the day-to-day management to the college president. Peer reviewers noted that evidence included in core component 5A, Faculty Committee Structure, effectively demonstrates how faculty have representation and proper oversight in areas such as curriculum and academic standards, professional growth, faculty rights,

nominations, learning commons media, faculty welfare, tenure, and outreach learning. Additionally, the findings and recommendations report provided by the Ad Hoc Committee on Tenure/Post-Tenure demonstrates that SBHE advocates for the rights of faculty members with regard to the establishment of tenure and the tenure review process. Further deliberation noted in the February 27, 2025 SBHE meeting minutes reflects the institution's priority to preserve faculty rights and their engagement in the tenure review process by advocating for addendums to HB 1437.

Overall, LRSC's governing board has the proper authority to exercise and preserve its state constitutional rights. LRSC provided compelling evidence demonstrating that this core component has been met; policies and procedures are operationalized and there are regular examples exemplifying how the board acts in the best interest of the institution.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) clearly articulates and demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom and academic expression by aligning its policies with the State Board of Higher Education (401.1). Institutional academic freedom and academic expression policies impacting faculty and students are provided publicly in the policies and procedures manual (700.18 for faculty; 503.1 for students). However, reviewers noted that relevant policies or information could not be found in other relevant faculty- or student-facing resources (e.g., student/faculty handbook).

Opportunities may exist in future assurance arguments to demonstrate the institution's commitment to the sharing of differing viewpoints and ideas (e.g., course materials, faculty scholarly pursuits, forums, and/or conferences).

Overall, the team's deliberation and assessment concludes that LRSC meets core component 2.D.

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, staff and students.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) informs its faculty, staff, and students of policies and procedures calling for the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. LRSC's conflict of interest policy (700.21) clearly articulates the fiscal responsibilities required of faculty when receiving grant money from external sources for scholarly research purposes. The student conduct policy (800.30) provides clear definitions of scholastic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication while establishing requirements for students to maintain academic integrity. These policies are made accessible to students through the student handbook and course syllabi.

While LRSC's evidence demonstrates compliance with the integration of relevant policies and procedures, the institution may consider strengthening future documentation by providing additional context and resources demonstrating how LRSC operationalizes its commitment to responsible knowledge practices beyond policy statements (e.g. LRSC Institutional Review Committee charge; digital or physical resources available to faculty, staff, and students, etc.)

Overall, the existence and use of relevant policies and procedures noted in the assurance argument demonstrates the LRSC has met core component 2.E.

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

A comprehensive review of Lake Region State College's (LRSC) policies, procedures, and governance structures demonstrate that the institution operates with integrity and that its conduct is ethical and responsible. LRSC demonstrates a strong alignment with the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) and North Dakota University System (NDUS) through established policies and compliance structures. Financial operational audits demonstrate improvement over time as procurement process findings from 2019 and 2021 were successfully resolved by 2023.

The institution presents clear and comprehensive information to constituents through multiple channels including its website, college catalog, and policy manuals, with program requirements, costs, and admission criteria transparently communicated through easily accessible resources. The SBHE operates within a well-defined constitutional framework that preserves institutional independence while providing appropriate oversight, with recent board actions including approval of new programs, facility funding, and capital equipment replacement demonstrating effective governance. The board appropriately delegates operational authority while maintaining faculty representation in academic matters, as evidenced by the Ad Hoc Committee on Tenure/Post-Tenure work and SBHE advocacy regarding legislative matters affecting faculty rights.

LRSC maintains policies protecting academic freedom and expression for both faculty and students, aligned with governing body requirements and made publicly available through its policy and procedures manual. However, these policies are not consistently integrated across all relevant faculty and student resources, creating potential gaps in awareness and accessibility. Future assurance arguments would benefit from ensuring academic freedom policies appear in handbooks and other student-facing materials, along with providing concrete examples of how the institution supports diverse viewpoints such as through course materials, faculty scholarly activities, or campus forums/conferences.

The institution has clear policies governing responsible knowledge acquisition including faculty conflict of interest requirements for external funding and student academic integrity expectations, with policies accessible through handbooks and course syllabi. While these policies demonstrate compliance, the institution should consider strengthening future documentation by expanding evidence beyond policy statements to include items such as Institutional Review Committee activities, digital and physical resources made available to faculty and/or students, and other practical applications that demonstrate operational commitment to responsible knowledge practices.

Several overarching recurring themes emerged throughout the review process that apply across components. Most significantly, while LRSC maintains comprehensive policies aligned with governing body requirements, there exists a consistent gap between policy existence and demonstrated implementation in practice. The quality and depth of supporting evidence could be strengthened across multiple areas, with opportunities to provide more robust documentation of policy effectiveness, operational outcomes, or continuous improvement processes. To strengthen future assurance arguments, LRSC should prioritize developing comprehensive documentation

demonstrating how existing policies are enacted in practice, including specific examples of policy application and outcomes.

Overall, Lake Region State College successfully meets all reviewed core requirements while demonstrating strong foundational structures for governance, transparency, and academic integrity.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) ensures that its courses and programs are current and in alignment with student performance levels as appropriate to the credentials awarded. These credentials include certificates of completion, certificates, diplomas, associates of arts, associates of science, and associates of applied science degrees. Evidence to support this statement includes the materials from the LRSC College Catalog, assurance argument, LRSC website, *Multiple Delivery Modes, Consistent Outcomes: A Decade of Assessing Student Learning* document, Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee, program assessment reports, and LRSC policy documents.

As verified by both the assurance argument and 2023-2025 college catalog, LRSC offers a mix of transfer degrees and technical education pathways. These include three associate degrees across 14 programs and 18 certificate and certificate of completion programs, and two diploma programs in automotive technology and simulation technology. Students earning an associate of science or arts degrees must complete 39 credits (of 60 credits) as general education courses across six designated areas. Students earning an associate of applied science degree must complete least 20 general education credits in five areas, including a required University 101 course in addition to discipline-specific courses. Links to course descriptions, degree/certificate program descriptions, and degree requirements show offerings typical for a comprehensive community college.

Additional evidence in the assurance argument verifies that four programs have achieved specialized accreditation with third-party accreditors, including automotive technology, fitness trainer technician, nursing and peace officer training. Furthermore, pass rates for programs requiring licensure examinations, such as Nursing, are in alignment with national averages, reinforcing the

relevance and quality of LRSC's academic programs. LRSC's programs are current and appropriate to the credential the college awards.

LRSC employs a systematic and well-defined process for developing, modifying, and approving curriculum. This process is coordinated externally through the North Dakota University System (NDUS) Academic Affairs Council (AAC) and the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) Chancellor's Cabinet. Internally, LRSC's Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee ensures consistency in academic standards by reviewing and approving all course and program proposals, modifications, and discontinuations. Faculty and administrators are active participants in this ongoing process. The college also maintains oversight of student performance levels through multiple mechanisms, including admissions requirements, licensure exams, industry certifications, Career and Technical Education (CTE) advisory committees, CTE Vision Visits, and periodic academic program reviews. In addition, LRSC aligns its course offerings with the NDUS common course numbering system and participates in the General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GETRA), which supports consistency in learning outcomes and facilitates smooth transfer of credits across institutions.

LRSC follows clear credit hour requirements which are clearly stated in their 23-25 Course Catalog and operates in a 17-week semester model, offering both full- and half- semester courses. Instruction is delivered through a range of modalities, including traditional in-person classes on the main campus, online courses, competency-based education, dual credit opportunities in high schools, hybrid formats, and courses at seven off-campus locations. These varied delivery methods support accessibility and flexibility for a diverse student population.

The assurance argument contained evidence of well-defined process in assessing program learning outcomes in the comprehensive program outcome document. As it relates to learning goals as referenced in the criterion's subcomponent, LRSC had an impressive and thorough 24-25 Assessment Plan document included in the assurance argument which outlined General Education Objectives, Assessment Committee and Process, and Institutional, Program, Courses and Cocurricular Assessment processes. Sample syllabi evidence was provided in order to review the outcomes for student learning for each course sample which clearly demonstrated courses taught in multiple modalities had the same course outcomes. One recommendation is that LRSC prominently display program level outcomes on their website.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC's general education program and its learning outcomes are appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the College. The College has clearly outlined the general education requirement (GER) in numerous places including the assurance argument, LRSC philosophy of general education, the LRSC website, course catalog, and program fact sheets. Grounded in Bloom's taxonomy, the institution and has clearly stated the purpose of GER as "an opportunity to enhance their interpersonal skills, communication and thinking skills, global and multi-cultural experiences, aesthetic and intellectual experiences, mathematics and sciences applications, technology, computers, information applications, and life-long learning experiences and skills." LRSC abides by the General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA) and Common Course Numbering (CCN) system which assists students with a seamless transfer process among institutions in the North Dakota University System.

As articulated in the assurance argument and LRSC's philosophy of general education, LRSC's general education program is linked to all course, program and cocurricular activity learning outcomes and course objectives. College personnel are required to specify the general education goal(s) in the LRSC Cocurricular Assessment for Clubs and Organizations document, Course Assessment Reports, and Syllabi Checklist. Additionally, faculty generally oversee the general education curriculum via the Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee. Another program that LRSC participated in the past is the WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) Passport Network to assist public and private, two- and four- year institution students

transfer and emphasized the importance of general education. However, as of 2023 LRSC no longer participates in this program due to the sunseting of the full program. An area where the assurance argument could be strengthened is by demonstrating how the general education outcome data connects to the development and improvement of academic and student life curriculum and activities.

The education that LRSC provides recognizes human and cultural diversity and encouraged diversity of thought, culture, and experience. As stated in the assurance argument, LRSC has a standing diversity committee dedicated “to encouraging efforts to create a positive living and learning environments for all students”, regardless of demographics or background. Finally, the assurance argument notes the College’s commitment Cultural Diversity Waivers to provide student tuition assistance.

LRSC’s evidence for creative and academic endeavors that contribute to scholarship and the discovery of knowledge was limited to a description of the faculty employment contract process, faculty evaluation process, the LRSC faculty senate Professional Development Growth Committee guidelines, and application for rank changes and tenure. Additional evidence of faculty and staff professional development and accomplishments would strengthen the assurance argument. While the assurance argument mentioned a faculty volunteer survey, the survey results were not available as evidence. Finally, evidence of student creative work limited to the CCSSE survey results.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC demonstrates a commitment to diversity consistent with its mission and the population it serves, as reflected in its diversity statement, equal opportunity statement, and the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education human resources policy. While North Dakota's population is 86.4% white, LRSC's workforce is 91% white, with the remaining 9% representing other racial and ethnic groups. The assurance argument notes the institution's efforts to recruit beyond the state due to limited local diversity. Although student demographic data was not included in the submitted evidence, LRSC's website indicates that 80% of its student population is white, with the remaining 20% identifying as Hispanic, Black, American Indian, Asian, or unspecified. The institution conducts national searches for key positions, such as the college president and faculty in specialized programs like farm management, nursing, simulation technology, and wind energy. Other faculty and staff positions are posted on national employment sites to attract diverse candidates and ensure equal opportunity in compliance with institutional, state, and federal policies.

LRSC maintains a sustainable 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio, as shown in the student-to-faculty ratio worksheet, ensuring sufficient faculty to support both classroom and non-classroom responsibilities. Faculty roles and expectations are outlined in the Assurance Argument and Faculty Handbook. Full-time faculty carry a balanced credit load of 30–32 credits per academic year, adjusted for course

modality and advising duties. The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs oversees faculty workloads, including overloads, to ensure equity and prevent undue burden. Class sizes are aligned with physical space and instructional needs, with smaller ratios for labs, language, and discussion-based courses.

All LRSC instructional faculty, including those in CTE and consortium programs, meet HLC qualifications as outlined in the LRSC Policy and Procedure Manual (Section 3d). A notable practice is LRSC's public-facing webpage under the student tab, which lists faculty qualifications. The Policy and Procedure Manual also clearly explains the hiring and faculty qualification process. Additionally, LRSC provided evidence of adherence to the North Dakota State Board for Career and Technical Education Postsecondary Instructor Certification Standards, including detailed CTE faculty certification and evaluation processes. All full-time faculty are required to participate in senate, committee, and council meetings, ensuring faculty oversight of academic matters. As noted in the Assurance Argument and reflected in the Faculty Senate Officers and Committee Assignments (referenced in Core Component 5.A), faculty serve on key committees such as curriculum and academic standards, faculty welfare, professional growth, and tenure.

LRSC's Policy and Procedure Manual clearly outlines the faculty evaluation process, including its components and frequency. Faculty are regularly evaluated by the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs using three key components: 1) supervisor evaluation, 2) student evaluation, and 3) classroom observation. The Assurance Argument includes supporting evidence such as samples of the faculty evaluation form, student evaluation form, online faculty evaluation form, and the non-credit TrainND participant evaluation form.

LRSC also maintains a comprehensive faculty qualification process to ensure all instructors—regardless of location or delivery modality—are appropriately credentialed. According to Section 700.03 of the Policy and Procedure Manual, the President, in consultation with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, establishes faculty qualifications, required experience, and selection criteria. Clear procedures support transparency for academic, CTE, and academic skills faculty. For example, CTE faculty must obtain a teaching credential from North Dakota Career and Technical Education. Two credentialing pathways accommodate both faculty with prior teaching experience or equivalent training, and those without teaching experience.

The assurance argument and the Lake Region State College Policy and Procedure Manual both provide evidence that the institution has the appropriate resources for professional development opportunities. Additionally, LRSC clearly explained the process by which faculty apply for funds via the annual plan for professional growth. While the assurance argument provided evidence of LRSC professional development opportunities, supporting evidence to outline faculty and staff participation in all professional development opportunities was lacking.

As evidenced in the assurance argument, faculty handbook, LRSC website, and sample syllabi, LRSC faculty are accessible to students through multiple modalities, including phone, email, and office hours. These sources, along with data from the 2024 CCSSE survey, support the institution's commitment to faculty accessibility. Survey findings indicated that 97% of students used email to communicate with instructors, 90% discussed grades or assignments, 77% talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor, 55% discussed ideas from readings or classes outside of class, 95% received prompt feedback on performance, and approximately 36% worked with instructors on activities beyond coursework. Collectively, this evidence demonstrates a strong culture of student-faculty engagement and availability.

Lake Region State College (LRSC) ensures that staff members are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development through several key initiatives. These include adherence to the NDUS broadband process, institutional hiring policies, new employee training programs, human resources policies that encourage ongoing professional development, and access to both local and national professional memberships. LRSC demonstrates a strong commitment to faculty growth through a well-established Professional Growth Committee, which includes appropriate faculty representation and is well positioned to support faculty needs. Each faculty member is allocated \$450 annually for professional development, and they are encouraged to submit an annual professional growth plan to access committee-held funds.

The college also fosters a culture of collegial learning by inviting faculty to share outcomes of their professional development during the annual faculty in-service event. LRSC further emphasizes professional growth through its faculty evaluation process. Section C of the evaluation form specifically recognizes faculty for their participation in professional development activities and their ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Additional incentives include the Excellence in Educating Award, which honors faculty who demonstrate current knowledge in their discipline and excellence in teaching. One suggestion to improve the assurance argument would be to include more evidence of the staff evaluation and development process and initiatives.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) provides a wide range of student support services aligned with student success, as noted in its Assurance Argument, catalog, and website. All new students participate in a comprehensive three-day orientation, required Registration Days, and the UNIV 101 first-year experience course to support persistence, retention, and graduation. Additional services include TRiO, disability services, counseling, early alert (Starfish), testing, tutoring, and technology support. While the assurance argument describes these services and links to the website as evidence, it lacks assessment data demonstrating how these services are evaluated or tailored to meet student needs. To strengthen its case, LRSC should consider including evaluation data that shows how student support services are assessed for effectiveness. Making these data available ahead of the Comprehensive Evaluation would enhance the institution's ability to demonstrate alignment with student needs.

LRSC demonstrates a commitment to supporting students' academic success through learning support and preparatory instruction, as outlined in the assurance argument, NDUS procedures, SBHE policy, and institutional guidelines. The college uses ACCUPLACER to assess incoming students in English and math, placing those who do not meet benchmark scores into appropriate developmental or co-requisite coursework. To further support students, LRSC offers a range of tutoring services, including in-person assistance and virtual support through NetTutor. To strengthen these efforts, it is recommended that LRSC include data on student outcomes related to developmental education, co-requisite courses, and tutoring participation.

LRSC outlines advising services involving faculty and staff who support students in developing degree and semester plans. However, the assurance argument lacks details on how students access advising through multiple modalities (e.g., phone, email, video, in-person) and how appointments are scheduled. To strengthen the assurance argument, additional evidence could include advisor-to-student ratios, student participation, satisfaction and needs assessments, and data linking advising to

student success.

LRSC provides students and faculty with appropriate infrastructure, facilities, and resources to support effective teaching and learning. The Assurance Argument and LRSC Facilities Master Plan document recent physical developments, including the Hofstad Ag Center, featuring enhanced classroom space, precision agriculture components, and large equipment, the Adult Learning Center PearsonVUE testing center, and Business Wing renovations. LRSC has also upgraded its technological infrastructure by transitioning from Blackboard Original to Blackboard Ultra and enhancing its network, software, hardware, and security systems.

The assurance argument demonstrates that LRSC prioritizes infrastructure to support instruction, with examples such as the Learning Commons and updated labs for career-specific programs. However, the argument would be strengthened by including data on space utilization, alignment between the strategic and facilities master plans, and outcomes related to these investments. Additionally, basic data on available resources, such as the number of computer labs, science labs, performance spaces, and clinical sites, would provide clearer evidence of how facilities support student learning and better prepare LRSC for its comprehensive evaluation.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Rationale

Lake Region State College (LRSC) meets the expectations of Criterion 3 by providing quality academic programs and learning environments that are appropriate to its mission and degree offerings. The institution demonstrates that its curriculum is current, well-organized, and aligned with credential levels through robust internal and external review processes, including oversight by the North Dakota University System and the LRSC Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee. LRSC offers a comprehensive mix of associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates, and ensures that general education outcomes are clearly articulated and embedded across courses and modalities. The institution's alignment with systems such as the Common Course Numbering and General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA) further supports transferability and academic consistency.

LRSC employs qualified faculty and maintains a strong commitment to faculty professional development, curriculum oversight, and student engagement. Evidence such as the course catalog, syllabi, and CCSSE data shows that learning outcomes are consistent across instructional modalities and that faculty are accessible and engaged in student success. While LRSC provides a range of student support services and infrastructure enhancements, including modernized facilities and instructional technology, assessment data on the effectiveness of student services and developmental education could further strengthen its assurance argument. The institution's commitment to diversity, faculty qualifications, and professional growth is evident, though the argument would benefit from expanded evidence of scholarly and creative activity and a more comprehensive presentation of how general education and support services impact student learning and development.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Policy documents are presented as assurance that LRSC's programs are reviewed formally in calendar years ending in 3, 6, and 9. Further evidence includes a copy of the evaluation instrument which appears to be appropriate, comprehensive, and reflective of good practice. For example, the Administrative Council uses the faculty program review report and recommendations from the review committee to act upon the findings and make strategic informed decision. As a result, the institution has been able to improve program specific needs such as faculty staffing, marketing and enrollment plans, and new partnerships. LRSC also offers completed examples from both 2019 and 2023 reviews and details the improvement recommendations resulting from effective program review. LRSC implements a faculty-driven program review process that is comprehensive and allows the Program Review Committee to provide detailed recommendations to the institution's Administrative Council. Programs requiring additional monitoring have appropriate mechanisms for

review and moves forward with discontinuation of programs when determined necessary.

Likewise, policies related to evaluation of transcript credits appear to guide effective practice. Specifically, the college's assurance argument provides ample evidence that it evaluates credits received in transfer, credit by examination, armed services credit, and credit for experiential learning.

LRSC cites its Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee as having authority over curricular matters including prerequisites, curriculum, course rigor, and course assessments. The VPAA is cited as having authority to determine faculty qualifications, and this determination is informed by a policy and procedure manual entry (Section 700.03) which appears to prescribe appropriate guidelines to ensure faculty have appropriate credentials to render instructional services.

As it relates to rigor in dual credit classes, LRSC's assurance argument sites as evidence its faculty handbook, course assessments, Assessment Plan, and student opinion surveys as tools to ensure that rigor is equivalent wherever programming is delivered. Reviewers also noted that course syllabi reflected common outcomes for on-campus and dual credit sections. LRSC maintains a public-facing resource demonstrating the qualifications of all faculty members, regardless of location. An annual in-person in-service day is hosted by the institution to communicate expectations to dual credit faculty (e.g. syllabi requirements, course assessments, and student opinion survey). Further, a review of syllabi examples provided in the addendum demonstrates consistency in general education goals, course objectives, and student learning outcomes.

LRSC's approach to evaluating success of graduates prioritizes placement into jobs and employer satisfaction measures. Both appear to be appropriate means of ensuring the credentials students receive as adequate preparation, and the assurance argument provides data from programs which includes the number of grads, percent placed into employment, and average annual salaries for those positions. The argument also sites licensure examination rates for those programs where licensure is required. Results from these analyses appear to show graduates of LRSC's career programs are successful.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC demonstrates its commitment to student learning through established assessment processes that measure institutional, program, course, and co-curricular outcomes, as outlined in the Assurance Argument and the LRSC Assessment Plan. These processes involve faculty and staff, reflecting a shared understanding of assessment's role in student success. Supporting evidence includes the *Annual Program Report*, *Annual Program Enrollment Report*, *Assessment Plan*, *Program Review Document*, *Course Assessment Report*, *Student Self-Assessment Interview Description*, *General Education Student Self-Assessment*, *General Education Goals Assessment Inventory*, and the *Co-Curricular Assessment Report*, which show articulated learning outcomes, program goals, and active engagement in assessment practices.

The completed Program Review Report from 2023 provides ample evidence that the college is using information gained from assessment practices to attempt to improve student learning. This reflects a foundational understanding of effective assessment practice; however, references in the evidence of "progress since last program review" were not clearly linked to success metrics, and concrete examples of resulting actions were limited. A stronger connection between assessment results and continuous improvement efforts is needed to more adequately address this subcomponent.. Further, this singular piece of evidence demonstrated the potential LRSC shows for analyzing data and using lessons learned to drive improvements in curriculum, instruction, or student support. Reviewers, however, are concerned that shared results for assessment of student learning were limited in the assurance argument to this Program Review report. While evidence is presented clearly that course-level outcomes assessment data are collected and analyzed, no results of this part of the Assessment Plan were presented or discussed. The institution would benefit from further development of mechanisms that ensure assessment leads to data-informed decision-making. Strengthening the feedback loop from data collection to action would enhance the institution's capacity to improve student learning in meaningful ways. While LRSC appears to be meeting the minimum expectations of Criterion 4.B, the institution could strengthen evidence by providing more robust and consistent examples of how assessment findings are being used to inform and improve teaching, curriculum,

and student support strategies. An effective tactic in future assurance arguments may include framing assessment reporting as storytelling (with a beginning, middle, and end). This structure may help campus stakeholders and reviewers more clearly perceive how results are used in the context of classroom level improvements. Another tactic which may improve evidence in this area could involve presentation of more results to demonstrate the effectiveness of processes. For example, LRSC's evidence focuses on its practice (i.e. showing templates used to seek assessment data) but does not always present the completed forms or even longitudinal analyses of results. Candidly, reviewers found the completed Program Review Report to be an ideal example of evidence for this subcomponent and wondered why LRSC did not share more evidence of this nature.

LRSC demonstrates engagement of faculty and staff in assessment efforts, with structures that support involvement in developing outcomes, administering assessments, and reviewing results. Participation of stakeholders in assessment practice at the college appears to be a strength.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC has set clear goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious yet attainable and aligned with its mission, student population, and programs. The college provided both long-term and annual goals along with a plan to achieve them, using data trends to inform targets. These goals include increasing retention to 65%, graduation rates to 55%, and SAM graduation rates by 2%.

LRSC provided evidence of data collection and analysis on student retention, persistence, and completion, including detailed enrollment trends, retention and graduation rates, and disaggregated cohort data shared through Quick Data summaries. They demonstrated analysis of student success by various cohorts, highlighting strong outcomes for student athletes and residential students.

They did not provide clear examples of how this data is used to implement specific program improvements or targeted interventions. Data by ethnicity was included, but there was no discussion of strategies to address disparities among underrepresented groups.

LRSC showed it uses data on retention, persistence, and completion to make improvements through initiatives such as UNIV 101, TRiO and PowerSkills programs, proactive advising, Starfish early alert system, and enhanced orientation and counseling services. The Retention Committee meets regularly to review data, set goals, and implement interventions to support student success. However, while these initiatives were described, there was limited evidence of systematic evaluation of their overall effectiveness beyond UNIV 101 data. I would have liked to see clear examples of how data analysis directly informed changes to academic programs or curriculum design.

LRSC demonstrated good practice in its data collection and analysis processes, using IPEDS, SAM, and internally calculated retention and course completion rates, along with detailed methodologies maintained by the Director of Academic Affairs. Data is disaggregated by various student cohorts, and the institution conducts specific studies such as the dual credit conversion report to inform planning and scholarship allocation.

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

LRSC is currently meeting expectations for Criterion 4. Reviewers noted the strength of the college's Assessment Plan which is comprehensive, well-conceived, and reflective of best practice. Reviewers also noted that the plan is inclusive and engages appropriate college stakeholders in encouraging the collection, analysis, and use of data to inform improvement efforts. While meeting expectations at this time, LRSC will wish to further strengthen its assurance argument in this area before its Comprehensive Evaluation.

More specifically, LRSC will wish to include more results as evidence of the effectiveness its efforts at "ongoing assessment" for its assurance argument in response to 4.B. The 2023 Program Review Report is the singular artifact which creates a clear and compelling story relating how faculty and staff collect information about student learning, analyze it, plan improvement, and request resources in alignment with improvement plans. Reviewers questioned why similar approaches were not used in presenting evidence for course-level assessment and general education goals assessment.

Further, by the time of the Comprehensive Evaluation, LRSC will also wish to present historical evidence of student learning which can better show how faculty and staff analyze trends and/or changes in student learning and how they respond to these changes over time. Presenting evidence in this manner will help LRSC demonstrate that its assessment practices, thought well conceived in philosophy and planning documents, is systematically embedded into culture and practice.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Artifacts provided in LRSC's Assurance Argument provides ample evidence that shared governance engages appropriate constituencies. For example, the Faculty Senate convenes to provide input on decisions related to educational policy. Faculty roles and responsibilities are document in the Faculty Handbook. Likewise, the institution's committee rosters indicate faculty have multiple opportunities to participate in the work of college governance. The Staff Senate also convenes to function as a liaison between staff and the college's Administrative Council. The Student Senate is authorized by policy to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in the governance of the college. Additionally, the President has latitude to recognize internal and external constituencies affiliated with LRSC for the purpose of creating communications channels and exchanges of information.

Ample data appear to be available to inform decision making. In fact, the institution's Assurance Argument lists at least nine sources of data ranging from internally created "Quick Data" reports to nationally normed surveys (CCSSE) and a formalized program review process. The argument also identifies the Director of Academic Affairs as responsible for collecting and managing the data which suggests some systematic process for using data in making decisions. While reviewers believe that administration is using the data described here, a random sample of Administrative Council Meeting Minutes available on the college's website does not yield ideal evidence. Evidence supporting the argument could be strengthened by providing specific examples of the reports identified (e.g. budget overviews, tuition and waiver projects, etc.). Also, the assurance argument may include specific

examples of recent decisions made by administrators and informed by specific data sets outlined in the response.

LRSC relies upon its Faculty Senate Constitution as the best evidence that faculty are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes. Language in the constitution suggests faculty can be involved; however, the response does not provide any recent examples of how this structure operates. Such examples may strengthen evidence in this area. Staff and students participate in the committees; likewise, no practical examples of this participation are provided for review.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC has established policies and practices to guide hiring and on-boarding of new employees. The process includes a formal hiring committee with the president responsible for the final approval of a new hire. The on-boarding process involves work in small teams and one-on-one meetings to help new employees gain knowledge of the college and operations. All employees have access to professional development resources that help ensure faculty and staff alike stay current in their respective fields. The institution has a variety of funding sources sufficient to ensure an adequate infrastructure and maintenance of facilities over time. Facilities are developed and maintained in accordance with a Master Plan. The plan includes planning assumptions and strategic drivers extending through 2027. LRSC is facing enrollment declines driven by decreasing high school graduate numbers, which in turn are expected to reduce state appropriations for the 2023–2025 biennium. In looking to the future, the institution is aware of the challenges and is working to develop plans that address potential challenges.

The institution has established a five-year strategic plan. From the evidence presented, it is unclear as to exactly when the current plan went into place. Based on when the plan was adopted, it would be interesting to view data and evidence documenting how well the plan objectives are being met, or not. The Campus Action plans are focused on objectives of the strategic plan. Evidence provided in the Campus Action Plan report suggest the institution is making progress on various aspects of the Strategic Plan. While the data reported are interesting and informative, longitudinal reporting over a longer period of time could provide greater context for evaluating the outcomes of the work on the Strategic Plan.

The institution demonstrates sound fiscal practices through a structured budgeting and financial monitoring process. Over multiple years, LRSC has maintained strong Composite Financial Index (CFI) scores and has received annual audited financial statements, three of the last four of which contained no formal findings. The college also maintains an undesignated cash reserve equal to approximately 5% to 7% of total net tuition revenue and state appropriations. Incremental tuition and

fee increases have contributed to sustaining revenue.

LRSC, as part of the North Dakota State University System (NDUS), is responsible for submitting budgets and financial reports to state offices. Internally, LRSC's Controller provides budget reports to department directors and the Administrative Council.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

LRSC has established clear processes that align resources with programs and activities serving the institutional mission. The budget process engages constituencies across campus in the planning and development of the annual budget. This engagement serves to support alignment of resources with identified needs and goals. Engagement with the NDUS further ensures that resources are aligned with the institutional mission and expectations of the state leaders responsible for allocating state-level funding to institutions in North Dakota.

The institution has a clear plan for assessment and provides examples of how information from assessment of student learning and outcomes drives decisions concerning allocation of resources. LRSC cites the program review process as an example of how assessment is linked to institutional planning. While it is clear the institution has developed a robust process of program review, it is less clear how the results of assessment of student learning are reported and included in the process of evaluating program outcomes. Examples of program reviews included in the argument are comprehensive, yet the sections related to assessment of student learning (Section 8) refer to the process yet do not provide direct information on student learning outcomes for the program involved. Inclusion of direct data related to student learning would help strengthen both the program review process as well as the peer review process.

LRSC utilizes a broad-based College Planning Team to guide operational and resource planning for the institution. This team includes both internal and external stakeholders and is formalized in institutional policy. The institution utilizes external advisory committees to support technical and occupational programs.

As part of the North Dakota University System (NDUS), LRSC's budget process takes into account both internal and external issues that may affect college planning. LRSC's enrollment has declined in the years immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic. Although these reductions in enrollment resulted in reduced tuition income, the institution is not able to raise tuition rates due to a tuition freeze put in place by the North Dakota Legislature. The institution anticipated these issues and has put plans in place to manage resources through this period of unstable enrollment and external legislative limitations.

As outlined in various parts of this argument, LRSC utilizes a variety of processes to evaluate changing conditions, available resources, and plans for current and future programs. The institution states that, "systematic measurement and documentation of operations and student outcomes are crucial." For future reference, it would be extremely helpful if LRSC could provide examples of these specific reports and assessments as examples of the types of data that are used to inform decision-making.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Rationale

LRSC provides a clear description of how institutional constituencies share in the governance of the college. From the description and supporting documents, it is evident that campus stakeholders have a variety of opportunities to become involved in both operating decisions and policy deliberations. Although the information provided discusses the fact that data and evidence is used in the course of institutional governance, the argument is lacking in specific examples of the types of data that are used in decision-making and how and when these data are made available to governing groups.

The college has sufficient staffing to support institutional operations and provides on-boarding and training to ensure staff are knowledgeable and trained for their duties. It is worth noting that the college is well aware of potential challenges to enrollment in future years and understands the implication these issues may have for future staffing decisions. As previously noted, LRSC does utilize data in decision-making and planning. However, it would be interesting to see data reporting reflect a longitudinal component. That is, how are data changing over time and what are the trends for specific data that is being used to inform decisions?

LRSC describes clear processes for aligning resources to programs and activities. It is worth noting that the college does provide a good example of how assessment of student learning is linked to program review and institutional planning. The process for budget and resource planning at the college appears to be particularly robust. Throughout the argument, the college documents and describes processes and systems that support effective, and improved, operations.

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

Review Summary

Conclusion

At the time of this Assurance Review, Lake Region State College is meeting all Criteria for Accreditation. In its work, the peer review team noted the strength of LRSC’s ability to provide assurance and evidence that well-conceived and well-planned processes are in place across the college to support its mission and meet stakeholder needs. The college’s assurance argument sufficiently demonstrates LRSC’s commitment to quality, and reviewers noted the strength of documentation like its Assessment Plan as indicators of best practice.

Where LRSC has an opportunity is in how the college treats the results of what appear to be effective processes and uses these results in providing assurance that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation. In each category, reviewers noted the assurance argument’s apparent lack of attention to sharing the results of its processes. Notable examples appear in relation to subcomponents 4.B and 5.C. Reviewers were impressed with LRSC’s Assessment Plan document and its many templates which imply that the college is collecting, analyzing, and using information gained to inform improvement. However, little actual data and/or information gained from these processes is presented for review in the arguments. Likewise, linkage between budget and assessment of student learning is noted; however, actual results were not presented directly.

The review team did find the 2023 Program Review document to be a great example of evidence which shows that LRSC’s practice goes beyond planning. The documentation in this artifact, for example, provided evidence that faculty and staff are reflecting upon information gained, using that information to inform improvement plans written into the report, and then aligning budget requests to these plans. Given the strength of this document, reviewers questioned why similar results are not shared in similar fashion (e.g. course level assessment, general education assessment, effectiveness of advising, etc.). Improving evidence in this fashion throughout all Criteria of the assurance argument will be an imperative as LRSC prepares for its Comprehensive Evaluation.

LRSC is well-prepared to make these adjustments as the current assurance arguments appear to reflect its commitment to quality, its sound understanding of best practice, and its commitment to collecting, analyzing, and using data in all areas. Peer evaluators should note these improvements in LRSC’s next Comprehensive Evaluation.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Not Applicable to This Review

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.