

SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY

HLC Assurance Argument Summary



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Introduction

Shepherd University, a state-supported institution within the West Virginia system of higher education, is located in the Eastern Panhandle in historic Shepherdstown, Jefferson County. Shepherdstown and the University are situated on a bluff overlooking the Potomac River where the quaint college community offers a rich, unique learning-living environment, located within a few miles of neighboring Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, MD, within 70 miles of the University, provide many cultural and career experiences for Shepherd's students and faculty.

Remaining cognizant of current trends and future challenges, Shepherd University works to achieve its mission based on strategic planning, assessment, and the effective and efficient use of its resources to educate engaged, globally-aware citizens. Enhanced student learning experiences and effective teaching remain a central focus of planning and assessment. The expansion of academic offerings includes new undergraduate programs, a center for adult learners in Martinsburg, and Shepherd's inaugural doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice. Curricular reform, retention initiatives, and continued academic support services that effectively assist students, faculty, and staff. The University continues to seek external financial resources to support its mission and core values.

The University promotes lifelong learning in students, faculty, and staff by providing opportunities for professional development, community engagement, continuing education, and scholarship. Technology and updates to facilities support current learning strategies and research partnerships. The completion of the next campus master plan and prioritization of strategic initiatives help fulfill our mission and vision to become a premier public liberal arts institution.

The evidence presented throughout this assurance argument demonstrates that organizational structures are in place to sustain the future of Shepherd University. The assurance argument and subsequent reports and change documents submitted to the Commission provide evidence of continuous improvements since the last Higher Learning Commission visit for re-affirmation of accreditation in 2012. The Shepherd community, its constituents, and the Higher Learning Commission can be confident of Shepherd University's ongoing commitment to meeting the criteria for reaffirmation of accreditation.

Dr. Sylvia Manning, Interim President

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

- Demonstration of how Shepherd University's governance structure, planning, and assessment processes provide the framework for success in the fulfillment of its [mission](#) and core values.
- History of the development of the current mission and Shepherd's designation as a COPLAC institution.
- Description of organizational structure and institutional budget process.

Question: How does my role at the institution fit into the planning process, budget process, and organizational structure?

Evidence Files include: Strategic Planning documents, Campus Master Plan, Compact, IR data sets, SU Publications, Sample Mission Statements

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly and communicated through the website, handbooks, catalog, and through efforts by University Communications such as press releases, publications, photography, and advertising, and maintains [social media sites](#) and webpages.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

Diversity at the institution is noted in a variety of ways, from our missions statement and core values, to the types of students we serve, such as adult learners, FTIC students, and veterans. The importance of diversity is articulated in activities noted in the student handbook and sponsored by student affairs.

SU's racial and ethnic diversity reflects or is more diverse than the region from which students, faculty, and staff emanate. Information on diversity is present on many web pages, including the [Consumer Information Page](#). Diversity is also included in the core curriculum and LEAP student learning outcomes, as well as programming sponsored by the Office of MultiCultural Student Affairs, and efforts at campus internationalization.

Compliance is also noted in efforts by the Diversity and Equity Committee and the Office of Human Resources. **Evidence sources include:** Academic Affairs Data sets, HR annual reports, Core Curriculum Framework, LEAP Outcomes, Planning Documents.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

- Shepherd University's [mission](#) clearly acknowledges a public obligation for "academic, cultural, and economic opportunity," aligned with the core value of "community." To ensure we fulfill this obligation, our educational role, including the additional core values of "learning, engagement, integrity, and accessibility," take primacy.
 - Shepherd is a public university and state agency. As such, financial returns are not generated for investors, and the institution must regularly assess its academic and operational performance, while simultaneously being challenged with reductions in support from the state. Thus, the institution must look to external funding through [grantsmanship](#), which has generated an increasing level of success over the period 2012-2016. [Auxiliary units](#), including the [Student Center](#), [dining facilities](#) and [residence halls](#), generate limited profits, and are an area of potential revenue growth for the institution.
 - Active engagement with the community is commonplace at Shepherd University. This is detailed in programming, advisory boards, and service learning and cultural events.
- Evidence sources include: Various cultural events, Strategic Plan, News archives and Grant activity.**

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

Shepherd University has a clearly defined [mission](#) that focuses on the core values of learning, engagement, integrity, accessibility, and community. Shepherd's vision statement, adopted by the Board of Governors, articulates the University's aspirations for its role as a premier public liberal arts institution within a globalized society. Taken as a whole, these three statements guide the operation of the institution, solidifying our commitment to the public good, and our understanding and obligation to the communities we serve.

The University communicates to its constituencies, through the mission statement, [publications](#), [press releases](#), and through [planning documents](#), its purpose and goals. The mission statement is easily accessible on the University's website, in the [catalog](#), and in student, [faculty](#) and staff publications, acting as the foundation for operations and strategic planning.

Through the involvement of internal and external stakeholders, mutually beneficial relationships are in place to aid the institution in promoting the public good, while at the same time enhancing academic and cultural opportunities for our students and community partners. The University is the cultural and academic center for our region, fostering the continuity of lifelong learning in its diverse populations.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

- Shepherd University ensures that its activities and actions are consistent with its mission and core values. The University has in place policies, procedures, and practices to promote

and protect the integrity of its operations. This is demonstrated in the business and responsibilities of the Board of Governors (BoG), organizational chart, administrative policies and procedures, human resources [staff and supervisor handbooks], academic advising, and student affairs. This also includes policies related to FERPA, Banner custodians, and NCAA compliance. Lastly fiduciary responsibility is noted by the organizational structure (VP Administration & Finance) and the fiduciary responsibilities of the BoG. **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

Shepherd University's institutional Board of Governors (BoG) has a long and consistent history of authentic oversight and service. The deliberations and decision-making process of the BoG reflect the priorities of the institution. This is noted in [WV Code §18B-2A](#), and evidenced in the minutes and agendas of Shepherd's BoG, well as its policies and bylaws.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. Through its policies detailed in multiple documents from the faculty handbook and BoG policy to the student handbook, Shepherd University ensures faculty and academic directors protect the integrity of the institution and maintain high standards in teaching, research, and service activities. These include the faculty handbook (items addressing academic freedom and the promotion and tenure process), Article IV of the Constitution, BoG Policy 19, and the Campus Student Conduct System. These principles and policies demonstrate the institution's commitment to academic freedom that is expected of our students, and is supported by faculty through the instructional experience, and through their scholarly and creative activities. **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Shepherd University provides significant oversight regarding the integrity and ethical research and scholarly practices by students, faculty and staff. Expectations regarding ethical research practices are outlined in handbooks and through published policies of Shepherd University. These also include the faculty research ethics committee detailed in the [faculty handbook](#) and the following excerpt from community expectations regarding research in the [student handbook](#):

Organizational structures noted include the Institutional Review Board, the

Shepherd University Research Corporation and its policies, as well as ethics being an integral part of many programs like Teacher Education, Nursing and Social work. Courses with ethics as a focus are also noted in the evidence files. Students are informed about the ethical use of information resources through individual courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and through resources, both electronic and seated, through the Scarborough Library, Sakai and the Core Curriculum. Noted sources regarding the ethical use of technology include BoG Policy 35, and the Student Code of Conduct.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

In its operations, Shepherd University honors the careful balance, collaboration, and autonomy of its diverse set of stakeholders, while maintaining a strong sense of ethics and integrity. Its governing body (BoG) receives and accepts its powers from the state, while at the same time delegating the day-to-day managerial operations and academic enterprise to the administration, faculty, and staff of the University. Policies and procedures adopted by the BoG and the state provide evidence that SU thoroughly and consistently provides accurate information to students, families, and community members, as well as faculty and staff.

Students are taught the importance of [academic integrity](#), ethical behavior as it relates to behaviors in and outside the classroom, to [research](#) and to make decisions through multiple ways at the institution. Faculty and staff handbooks and professional association standards also guide our faculty and staff in their academic and professional behaviors.

Also evident in University and [BoG policy](#) is a commitment to academic freedom and controls to ensure research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner. Through its policies and practices, Shepherd demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom and to the ethical and responsible use of information.

The business of the BoG is transparent as demonstrated through the content of its web pages. This includes [agendas](#), [meeting minutes](#), board policies, [bylaws](#) and the state code that informs such documents. The BoG functions in an ethical manner regarding trustee expectations and pertaining to its fiduciary responsibilities and the items considered at each meeting. These practices create an environment guided by ethical and responsible conduct that is dedicated to teaching, learning, and the pursuit of knowledge.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

3.A.1. is addressed through the tiers of core curriculum and course numbers listed in the catalog. Graduate courses are also differentiated by numbers (500-600) that represent expected level of performance. [Shepherd's 2013 HLC Progress report](#) (pages 33-38) documents differentiated learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate programs, while simultaneously showing how graduate programs build upon outcomes for their parallel undergraduate majors.

3.A.2. This core component outlines how outcomes are determined for the core curriculum, undergraduate and graduate programs, and also outlines the institutional structure for developing and approving these items. Learning outcomes for individual courses are listed on syllabi. Outcomes at the undergraduate level provide a foundation for further enhancement, refinement and progression at the graduate level.

3.A.3. Most course delivery originates from Shepherd's main campus, with additional courses in the MBA and RBA programs, originating from the Martinsburg Center. Additionally, the SU constitution demonstrates this compliance with the formation of the Extended Learning Integrity Committee. **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

3.B.1. Consistent with SU's [mission](#), the undergraduate major aligns with the [core curriculum](#) and requires a set of expectations for demonstration of breadth of knowledge and skills. The undergraduate curriculum provides multiple opportunities for a diverse community of learners such as traditional residential, non-traditional, and commuter students. Students from diverse backgrounds bring special talents, abilities, and interests to the campus. Undergraduate courses range in rigor from Stretch-Model courses with extra assistance to enrichment courses in the Honors Program.

3.B.2. Curricular and [co-curricular](#) opportunities enable students to become successful citizens in a global community. The University capitalizes on its proximity to Washington, D.C. and Baltimore to offer an array of academic, cultural, and social programs. This wide range of opportunities enables students to experience intellectual inquiry, research, and multicultural exposure in varied settings.

3.B.3. Noted here are the integration of co-curricular learning in the classroom, a [capstone](#) project that demonstrates intellectual inquiry and the intensive [Writing in the Major course](#) documents students' ability to participate in the written discourse of their field of study. Also noted are cooperative education opportunities and internships.

3.B.4. In addition to the core curriculum, noted here are internationalization efforts on campus, study abroad experiences and events sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and various student groups on campus.

Question: How does my role on campus enhance efforts for diversity and inclusion?

3.B.5. Students are prepared to conduct research or creative activities in a number of courses and as a [component of all programs](#) of study. Within the arts and sciences, students participate in studio and/or laboratory-based courses that provide them with the diverse training needed including skill development, practice, habits of mind, and discipline to fulfill course requirements and to apply theory to practice. Students' progress in level of research responsibility, from faculty prescribed to student designed and executed, is monitored. Students conducting research, also receive training in safety practices in accordance with federal guidelines. For example, the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics employs a safety technician and a lab technician who are responsible for approving [student lab access](#) for individual or faculty-sponsored research. **Evidence files include:** Listing of labs on campus, [Sparks](#) (www.sparksjournal.org), [NASA Undergraduate Research Consortium](#), [Journal of Undergraduate Research](#), [SOARS program](#), [West Virginia Academy of Science](#), and the [Graduate Studies Strategic Plan](#).

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of

academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

3.C.1. Noted here is the community involvement of the faculty, strategic plan pathways and annual reports to the BoG by Human Resources

3.C.2. Qualifications for new instructors are established within academic departments provided minimum qualifications are met. Full-time, tenure-track positions require a terminal degree in the field. Exceptions for ABD applicants are occasionally made, with the contracted requirement of completing the degree within a year. Also noted are various HR policy manuals, and the process for hiring graduate faculty. **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

3.C.3. As further evidence of Shepherd's processes for supporting its mission, the Faculty Handbook describes the standards and procedures for the [promotion and tenure process](#). This section also includes information on the annual evaluation process and student classroom evaluations. **Evidence includes:** Faculty handbook, evidence files of evaluation forms and resources from the CTL.

3.C.4. This sub-component contains information on resources for teaching to support student learning outcomes, specialized resources have been implemented, modified, and expanded to meet the needs of the faculty. These resources include professional development opportunities, technology, and support for professional development and scholarship activities. Noted are the professional development committee opportunities, faculty awards, and numerous resources from the CTL.

3.C.5. This sub-component deals with faculty availability. Included is information on policy from the Faculty Handbook, information on course syllabi, and availability of advisors. Faculty generally interact with students in labs, studios, clubs and organizations, and field experiences well beyond the requisite number of office hours.

3.C.6. Shepherd celebrates having talented and highly-qualified Student Support Services personnel. These faculty are hired after rigorous screening processes and undergo ongoing and annual assessment and professional development to foster best practices. Because

the [TRiO program](#) is funded by a federal grant, there are specific guidelines that institutions must follow regarding the hiring of staff for the program.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

3.D.1. SU provides a variety of student support services to meet the needs of its diverse student body. These include the [Advising Assistance Center](#), [Career Services](#), [Office of Cooperative Education](#), FYEX program, [Disability Support Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), and [Multicultural Student Affairs](#). Additional services are also provided for [veterans](#), adult learners in the RBA program, [transfer](#) and commuter students.

3.D.2. Noted here are the following:

- SU has a thorough program for targeted and individualized [academic advising](#)
- Stretch-model courses
- Honors program, TRiO program
- The general resources available in the Carper Learning Commons.

3.D.3. SU provides thorough [academic advising](#) suited to the individual needs of a diverse student population. Upon entering the institution, students are provided individualized advising for course scheduling during either an Advisement/Registration Session (i.e., the orientation for traditional first-time students) or a Transfer/Readmitted Student Session. . The [Advising Assistance Center](#) is fully-staffed throughout the year. The **evidence file** includes various advisement forms and a list of FAQs and resources for faculty and students.

3.D.4. This subcomponents addresses the IT infrastructure, wireless access, computer labs, Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment, user support. Further evidence includes documentation of library resources, clinical sites, field placements, and performance spaces. **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

3.D.5. information here is provided by library staff who teach information literacy classes and workshops to students and faculty to facilitate understanding of the resources and services that the library offers. Another resource for students and faculty conducting research must submit a proposal to the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB).

3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.
- 3.

3.E.1. Consistent with the core values of our mission, co-curricular programs foster learning, engagement, and community and are, therefore, plentiful on campus. Examples of some of these opportunities include: FYEX, Learning Communities, Common Reading, cultural offerings, Professional Connections Day, Clubs and Organizations, Office of Service Learning, and numerous events offered through student affairs.

3.E.2. These opportunities (see 3.E.1) along with many others enrich the college experience and foster retention among students, faculty, and staff. Program participation promotes critical thinking as students apply knowledge and theory to practice. Shepherd's learning community prepares students for careers in a global society by providing opportunities to develop reasoning, research, and leadership skills. Re-iterated here is information from the Office of [Service Learning](#) and the Office of Student [Community Services](#) noting that SU has been recognized consistently on the [President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll](#). **Evidence sources are noted in the text.**

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

The academic and co-curricular experience at Shepherd is guided by the University's [mission, vision, core values](#), and [outcomes](#) embedded in both academic and administrative units. This is demonstrated in the LEAP student learning outcomes embedded in the core curriculum that all undergraduate students complete. These outcomes emphasize the importance of diversity among people, cultures, and nations of the world.

The general education or [core curriculum](#) program has strong links to the major in three ways: the first-year experience, writing intensive courses within the major, and finally an integrative learning experience in the capstone. Through this strong linkage, students demonstrate competencies and outcomes both in general education and specific knowledge within the major at ever-deepening levels.

The quality of Shepherd's education is ensured through ongoing reviews of where and how instructional offerings are delivered. This is accomplished through information published in the online catalog, course syllabi, articulation agreements, and the work of departmental and University committees such as Core Curriculum, Curriculum and Instruction, and Extended Learning Integrity Committee. Additional input from programmatic advisory boards, coupled with internal policies and procedures, assures appropriateness, quality, relevancy, and currency of program offerings.

Shepherd University employs both full-time and part-time faculty who are required to remain current in the field, as demonstrated through guidelines in the hiring process and through policies in the faculty handbook. Faculty members also participate and mentor students in their creative work and the discovery of knowledge (research). Through service learning projects and co-curricular activities, students can effectively put theory into practice within the community, strengthening the symbiotic relationship of the University and the region it serves.

Online course offerings provide additional opportunities for our students to complete their educational programs, and focused Master's degrees in education, business, and student affairs, as well as the Doctor of Nursing Practice, emphasize research and service to the profession.

In addition to supporting the learning process through effective teaching, [student support services](#) and resources such as the library, tutoring, academic advising and counseling, assessment and testing, financial aid, veterans support services, disability support, and student retention, ensure that all segments of our student population have the skills to thrive academically and socially, meeting needs both inside and outside the classroom. Students are also provided with the appropriate technology support in terms of wireless access, computer labs, scientific libraries, clinical placements, instrument collections, [performance venues](#), and visual art resources. The staff who provide these crucial student support services are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional 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 demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

4.A.1. details the program review process at Shepherd and includes evidence in the form of [WV-HEPC Series 10](#), information in the faculty handbook and the Shepherd Constitution, along with sample program review documents and summaries. Also included are the SPA reports from the Teacher Education program.

Question: How has my work fit into the overall review of my academic program? What changes have taken place as a result of program review?

4.A.2. Shepherd has [policies and procedures](#) in place to maintain integrity in awarding credits. This is detailed in information found in the catalog covered a variety of students, both undergraduate and graduate. HLC is concerned here with the assignment of credit as it relates to prior learning, such as in the RBA program.

4.A.3. [Articulation agreements](#) have been established with 25 state and regional institutions of higher learning, details of Shepherd's transfer policies found on web pages and in the catalog.

4.A.4. The sub-component describes the process who changing curricula at the undergraduate and graduate levels, detailing how changes flow from departments to academic schools and institutional governing committees.

4.A.5. This sub-component contain a list of Shepherd's accreditatons and where they are found, such as [Consumer Information](#) web page, Accreditations and Institutional Planning page, in the [SU catalog](#) and on the [Academic Affairs website](#).

4.A.6. The success or placement of our graduates is found in program review documents, [WVHEPC Series 10](#), the institutional compact and various surveys conducted by Alumni Affairs and Career Services. Success is also documented through the licensure pass rates of programs such as Teacher Education, Nursing and Social Work.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

4.B.1. The assessment process at Shepherd is multi-tiered and highly interconnected. Goals for student learning are clearly articulated at the macro-level through our university [strategic plan](#) and [core curriculum](#), and all academic departments and administrative units are also required to articulate and submit their own student learning goals every 18 months. In doing so, departments and administrative units are asked to clearly link their own student learning goals to the university [mission](#), the goals of the university [strategic plan](#), and, where applicable, the [AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise \(LEAP\) goals](#) and [core curriculum competencies](#). This endeavor is facilitated by a department chair or unit administrator or a designated member within that area.

Large evidence files include assessment reports run through WEAVE, the [CLA test](#) (Collegiate Learning Assessment), the [MAPP Test](#) and the [Noel-Levitz](#) and the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#), are utilized by Shepherd University to collect information about student learning and assess the extent to which students engage in and learn from enriching, educational experiences both on and off campus.

4.B.2. The process of reviewing the assessment of student learning is effective and multi-tiered. An ongoing project for the Center for Teaching and Learning is the organization and facilitation of assessment activities for Shepherd University as a whole. The description includes information on the [Assessment Task Force \(ATF\)](#), resources such as mini grants and the annual "[Celebration of Learning](#)."

4.B.3. This core components notes changes that were made to programs after assessment results have been reported. These are also a crucial part of the program review process. As a further extension of our university's striving for continuous improvement, the Assessment Task Force has started a monthly email newsletter, "[The Assessment Monthly](#)" showing how the assessment process has been used to make considerable improvements to various programs, services and curricula. The intent is to assist other departments and units with ways to utilize their assessment findings.

4.B.4. A major strength of the University assessment program is that UI departments and administrative units across campus have assessment facilitators and produce assessment plans and reports every 18 months. Assessment plan and report statuses are transparent can be viewed easily via [WEAVE](#).

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)
- 5.

4.C.1. Shepherd University establishes goals for student retention persistence, and completion in documents such as the [institutional compact](#). [Enrollment, demographic and retention data](#) is gathered by the [Office of Institutional Research](#) (OIR). Shepherd's [population data](#), combined with state and national-[trend](#) data is used to define goals for student success. The sub-component details retention results and notes connections to the institutional strategic plan. Also included are comparisons with various peer groups.

4.C.2. SU diligently collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and degree completion. Most of this data is processed by the [Office of Institutional Research](#) (OIR), and results are posted on their webpages and shared with administration, faculty, and staff. Efforts here are also noted regarding Beacon/RAM Pulse, Student Success Committee and Satisfactory Academic Progress.

4.C.3. This subcomponent notes a number of the same resources and documents related to student retention and details information targets at specific populations of students like transfer students, commuters and adult learners. Also noted are items such as the compact, strategic plan and reports to the Board of Governors by various academic and administrative units.

4.C.4. The [Office of Institutional Research](#) uses a reporting system that is part of the CONNECT system utilized by the Admissions Office combined with Banner data to compile specifically defined cohort data. This facilitates the analysis of various subgroups in our

student and faculty population. SU also utilizes a variety of assessments to improve institutional effectiveness and student retention centered on its academic programs. These include [program review](#), [faculty evaluations](#), [promotion and tenure](#), [merit awards](#), and [student course evaluation](#). The previous sections of 4C outline data collection and reporting provided to Shepherd by national and federal organizations (IPEDS, Department of Education, [Voluntary System of Accountability](#)), state organizations like the WV-HEPC, and data provided by organizations of which Shepherd is a member, such as [COPLAC](#). These data comparisons allow Shepherd to formulate performance benchmarks related to operational and academic outcomes.

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.

Shepherd University sustains continuous improvement in its evaluation of teaching and learning as evidenced through its effort to utilize best practices to meet the challenges of the institution's mission, the region it serves, and the current landscape of higher education. In our argument, we have outlined policies, procedures, and infrastructure that demonstrate and support our commitment to improving both the quality of our educational programs and also our systems for ongoing assessment of student learning and support services, all in conjunction with benchmarks for retention, persistence, and completion rates. These efforts are demonstrated in institutional planning documents such as the institutional [compact](#) and its [results](#) reported to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. Additional benchmarks and data are considered through the institutional [strategic indicators](#) and data sets from [IPEDS](#) and [COPLAC](#).

Through the use of high-quality data, Shepherd's continued attention to retention, persistence and completion rates will enable it to continuously improve and demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the quality of its programs.

While Shepherd has made progress in many of the areas described above, a consistent or centralized infrastructure for the systemic collection, analysis, and use of student and institutional data based upon best practices is currently in progress, most notably in tracking the success of our graduates. Through these actions the institution continues to use its mission and core values as a guiding document to be a "gateway to the world of opportunities and ideas," and in its core value of *learning*, to "create challenging, relevant experiences, inside and outside of the classroom, the university continually evaluates and assesses student learning."

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

5.A.1. deals with institutional capacity and making sure that resources are in place internally and externally that goals can be met. These range from revenue and expenses to capital initiatives, and human resources to IT infrastructure.

5.A.2. is a description of the annual budget process. All academic and administrative units have the opportunity to participate in the budgeting process at Shepherd University. The process focuses on the mission of Shepherd University as it relates to the education experiences of its students.

5.A.3. ensures that in relation to the budget process, appropriate resources are in place in considering new programs and other initiatives. Noted in the evidence file are planning documents, implementation and assessments plans associated with the compact and strategic plan.

5.A.4. The Office of Human Resources monitors the hiring, evaluation and professional development of administrative and classified staff. Overseen by the general counsel, this office also monitors the University's compliance with federal and state equal opportunity and nondiscrimination laws and regulations. Information from various handbooks and HR resources is contained in the evidence file. Resources are also included for faculty and staff professional development.

5.A.5. notes the committee structure at Shepherd that includes various internal and at times external stake holders. As noted in 5.A.2., the University [budget process](#) is participatory, with input solicited from multiple levels of the institution. **Evidence sources** include budget memos, HEPC documents, and documents detailing committee structure.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

5.B.1. The Shepherd University Board of Governors (BoG) provides oversight of the University's business through its regularly scheduled meetings and those of the board committees. The legal obligations and responsibilities, as well as the criteria for board membership are detailed in Criterion 2.C. Detailed are the items considered at each meeting, as well as regular reports to the BoG.

5.B.2. Shepherd University engages its internal constituencies through shared governance whenever possible and appropriate. This is detailed in the [SU BoG Bylaws, Article 1](#), meetings by various groups such as Executive Staff, Faculty Senate, University Assembly, Administrative Council, SGA, etc. Internal constituencies are also engaged in major planning initiatives such as the [Campus Master Plan](#), [Currents Strategic Plan](#) and the [Institutional Compact](#).

5.B.3. Shepherd University encourages the involvement of its constituents in setting academic requirements and processes through its organizational and governance structure. This includes departments, academic schools, divisions, institutes and advisory councils. This includes the Bog and the **Faculty Senate** : Standing Committees and Councils of the Faculty Senate, as defined by its bylaws and the SU [Constitution](#), oversee the development of curriculum, academic policy and the supervision of those policies and procedures (Core Curriculum, A & C, C& I). Graduate Council and various programmatic advisory boards and councils. **Evidence files are included in the text.**

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

5.C.1. This sub component circles back to Shepherd's planning and budget process aligning with the [strategic plan](#) of the institution and those of academic and administrative units. This is also detailed in the compact, the Campus [Master Plan](#) (vol. II) and strategic funding initiatives developed by University Advancement.

5.C.2. Shepherd University continues to evolve and progress in this area, as reflected by ongoing investment in systems to integrate, share, and apply information on student outcomes, institutional and operational performance. See data used for program review and resources allocated to the support of student success (TRiO, FYEX, etc.).

5.C.3. Internal and external stakeholder groups play important roles in the planning processes at Shepherd University. This includes the strategic plan, campus master plan and institutional compact. A number of academic programs and units have advisory board with external members or are accredited (see 5.B.3.) to ensure their curriculum is aligned with appropriate emerging trends and expectations. These include:

5.C.4. Annual budget planning at Shepherd is based on current capacity for enrollment, the state appropriation and anticipated external funding such as grants, annual giving and planned gifts. As noted, the appropriation from the state has represented an increasingly smaller percentage of the annual operating budget, and, in accordance executive staff, the CFO and the budget advisory council take into account such fluctuations in revenues. A crucial part of determining revenue capacity is demonstrated in the enrollment to budget [projections](#), which are generated on a weekly basis for discussion in executive staff. During the [annual budget process](#), this information allows the CFO, executive staff and the budget advisory council to make informed decisions about emerging trends for the coming year.

5.C.5. The institutional planning process described throughout the assurance argument documents Shepherd's ability to anticipate emerging factors and trends both institutionally and on a broader regional and national level. These include adult learners, veterans, international and transfer student, FTIC students, investments in classroom technology, and the development of new programs and facilities.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

5.D.1. As a public institution dedicated to the public good and in support of its mission, Shepherd University utilizes evidence that is the basis for improvement. This includes statewide and institutional metrics in the institutional, annual reports of academic and

administrative units, as well as nationalized data sets from IPEDS and the Voluntary System for Accountability. These include [Strategic indicators](#), WV-HEPC Report Card, IR data sets, [IPEDS](#) annualized data report and the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) track Shepherd's costs, graduation, acceptance and retention rates, as does the [COPLAC Common Data Set](#).

5.D.2. As a result of the ongoing reporting elements and evidence present, the University has used data to develop new or modify existing programs as a result of its historic and past experiences and performance record. In looking at the outcomes, the institution strives to understand how organizational structure and work processes have helped or hindered results. Diligent oversight of enrollment as it relates to proposed budgets, and the ability to revise the budget per cuts in state appropriations or variations in enrollment have allowed Shepherd to continue to fulfill its mission. See Student Processes, Capital Funding priorities, graphic design savings, PeopleAdmin system, OASIS, environmental sustainability efforts, purchasing and commodity contracts, software systems such as those from Campus Labs, and vacancy savings.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

Shepherd University effectively and efficiently dedicates and utilizes its resources, facilities, and processes to fulfill the institutional mission, and to continuously improve the quality of the academic experience of its diverse student population and the community it serves.

Shepherd University strives to consistently manage its existing financial resources effectively, while simultaneously working to develop new campus-based and external revenues. This will enable the institution to address current and future challenges and opportunities. The institution is utilizing new [tools](#) and [data sets](#), including [strategic indicators](#), pro forma analysis, and cost analysis of revenue and expense per FTE, which allow the University to better understand the flow and sources of revenue and expenses.

Planning [documents](#) and [processes](#) are transparent and inclusive and aid Shepherd in supporting and sustaining its educational programs, while at the same time monitoring quality and effectiveness. The institution has a strong record of inviting and including participation from various internal and external stakeholders as it maps its future. The institution's financial status and information is shared regularly with the President and Executive Staff and is shared quarterly with the Audit Committee and the Board of Governors. Audits and [financial statements](#) are transparent and available on institutional web pages of the BoG and Office of Finance. As a result, the University continues to be well positioned to make effective decisions on how it invests resources to support the institutional mission. This focus will ensure that the institution can achieve its long-term strategic vision to become a premier public liberal arts university that successfully supports student learning.