

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse - La Crosse, WI

Team Report

HLC ID 2029

Review Type: Comprehensive Evaluation

Open Pathway

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

04/20/2026

Review Type

Comprehensive Evaluation

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review
- On-Site Visit
- Federal Compliance

Institutional Context

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) is located in a unique and attractive geological region. Evolving from a normal school whose mission and motto emphasized development of the whole person; UWL is committed to providing a rich educational environment for primarily residential students. UWL employs high impact practices such as opportunities to participate in research as an undergraduate, to deliver a high quality educational experience to its students. Admission is somewhat selective and UWL has retention and graduation rates that are exceptional.

Following the 2016 comprehensive visit UWL successfully completed an interim report and completed a strategic plan that was to guide UWL from 2016-2025. At the time of this visit, a new Chancellor has been leading the university for less than two years and there has been significant turnover in administrators. The culture of UWL is so strongly shared, the institution has demonstrated its resilience in the development of UWL Forward, a new Strategic Plan. The Plan features increased collaboration with community partners, deepens the university's commitment to academic excellence, educating the whole person, and the Wisconsin Idea, which is to say that educating Wisconsin residents benefits the individuals, the region, and the State of Wisconsin. It also focuses on supporting faculty and staff and mindful stewardship of fiscal and human resources. The President of the Board of Regents was interviewed virtually as part of this review providing confirmation of support for the new Chancellor and confidence that UWL will remain a jewel in the University of Wisconsin System (UWSA).

UWL further demonstrated its resilience in making changes required by Act 15, a UWSA response to legislative pressure to manage faculty workload and ease the transfer of General Education credits. The benefit of this activity for UWL and the system was the first new funding from the legislature in some time. Other challenges for the leaders of UWL include the need to understand and respond to trends that may erode UWL's consistent strong enrollment. In addition, UWL must consider capacity,

as it grows. The campus footprint and facilities, as well as instructional staff, are near capacity, growth must be deliberate and carefully planned.

Interactions With Constituencies

Chancellor

President Board of Regents (virtually)

Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Vice Chancellor, Administration & Finance

Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs

Vice Chancellor, Access, Belonging & Compliance

Vice Chancellor, University Advancement

Chief of Staff

Assurance Document Lead Writer

Accreditation Liaison Officer

Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

University Registrar

English Professor

Finance Professor

Director Research & Sponsored Programs

Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Personnel

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs & Dean of Students

Financial Aid Director

Transfer Admissions Associate Director

Institutional Research Policy Analyst

IT Client Services Director

24 Student Support and Staff members including those from counseling, Disability and Veteran's resources, Advising, Admissions, Records & Registration, Residence Life, Faculty Development and Institutional Research

16 Faculty

Dean, College of Business Administration

Dean, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities

Dean, School of Education

Dean, College of Science & Health

Violence Prevention Specialist

Director of the Library

Dean Graduate & Extended Learning

Sustainability Program Manager

Director of Sustainability

Director of Disability Services

Parking Enforcement Officer

Parking Services Director

Director of Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning

Professor of History

Professor and Chair of Archeology & Anthropology

Instructor Accountancy

Residence Life Associate Director

The members of the visit team were able to have lunch with twenty students who divided themselves among five tables, each team member joining a different table. There were athletes, student peer advisors, and representatives of different student organizations and a variety of majors and levels present.

Director of Athletics

Interim Director Center for Civil Dialogue & Civic Engagement

Associate Director Human Resources

Associate Dean Education

Associate Director Student Engagement and Leadership

Student Services Specialist Writing Resources

Talent Acquisition Specialist HR

Assistant Dean of Students

Student Billing Manager

Student Wellness Coordinator

Professor English and General Education

Associate Dean, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities,

Associate Dean, College of Science & Health
Multicultural Student Services Director
Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget & Personnel
Admissions Associate Director
Academic Department Associate
Student
Finance Professor
University Assessment Coordinator
Director of University Centers & Student Engagement
Director Mississippi Valley Archeology Center
Professor Public Health & Community Health Education
Chief Communications Officer
Mc Nair Program Coordinator
Youth Program Specialist
Professor Criminal Justice
Coordinator Student Conduct
Chief of Staff
Director of Community Engagement
Associate Vice Chancellor for IT and CIO
Student Research & Experiential Learning Coordinator
Administration Assistant
Director of International Education & Engagement
Recreational Sports Director
Director Planning & Construction
Physical Plant Director
Asst. Vice Chancellor for Admissions & Recruitment
Associate Dean College of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities
Admissions Associate Director
Admissions Assistant Director
Director of Academic Advising & Career Services

Director of Transfer Admissions

Analyst Institutional Research, Assessment & Planning

Marketing Faculty

Associate Dir. Student Engagement & Leadership

Assistant Controller

Program Coordinator. for Student Leadership

Additional Documents

None

1 - Mission

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

1.A. Mission Alignment

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL's educational programs, enrollment profile, and scope of operations align with its mission to provide a challenging, dynamic, and diverse learning environment centered on student success. The institution enrolls 9,585 undergraduate and 947 graduate students (Fall 2025) and offers a comprehensive mix of liberal arts and professional programs, including graduate certificates, master's degrees, and doctoral programs. This portfolio reflects the institution's identity as a comprehensive regional public university with a strong emphasis on undergraduate engagement and applied learning.

UWL's enrollment profile and operational scope also reflect deliberate, mission-driven choices. Institutional leaders described UWL as a relatively selective, residential campus that has intentionally leaned into an on-campus student experience. Capacity constraints in housing reinforces a focus on quality over growth. While the institution has expanded its geographic reach—drawing students from Minnesota (approximately 16%) and other regions—it remains strongly aligned with its public and regional mission, with more than 80% of graduates remaining in Wisconsin after graduation.

The alignment between mission and practice is evident in student experience. Across visit sessions, faculty and staff consistently described student success as a shared institutional responsibility. Examples include undergraduate research opportunities, community-engaged learning, first-year seminars, and a redesigned advising model that provides proactive support in the first year and transitions students to faculty advising thereafter. Participants reported that these changes, informed by data such as NSSE results, have improved advising satisfaction and strengthened early student engagement.

Curricular and academic quality are supported through established shared governance processes. Curriculum changes are reviewed through Faculty Senate committees, and departments are responsible for ongoing course and program improvement. The visit confirmed that direct assessment of student learning is embedded in promotion and program review processes and is supported by the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning. Faculty described multiple examples of programmatic improvement driven by assessment data, including revisions to quantitative reasoning in business programs and expansion of writing across the curriculum.

Institutional effectiveness is further supported through regular use of data dashboards, enrollment monitoring, and reporting to leadership and governance bodies. Participants described strong retention rates and a culture of data-informed decision-making. At the same time, institutional leaders acknowledged financial constraints, reliance on tuition, and compensation pressures. Evidence from the visit indicates that the university is actively addressing these challenges through effective enrollment management and recent state-supported funding adjustments.

The team also finds that UWL has maintained mission focus during a period of leadership transition. Institutional continuity is supported by strong shared governance, experienced faculty and staff, collaborative university culture and established planning structures such as the Joint Planning and Budget Committee. These elements contribute to stability and consistent decision-making.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL demonstrates a clear commitment to the public good through its academic programs, partnerships, and community engagement, consistent with the Wisconsin Idea. The institution's mission extends beyond campus to serve regional and state needs through workforce preparation, community-based learning, and public-facing programs.

The UWL Forward Strategic Plan reinforces this commitment, particularly through Pillar 1, "Driftless Difference," which emphasizes UWL's role as a regional benefactor and educational and cultural hub. During the visit, participants described ongoing efforts to strengthen community engagement and enhance connections between campus and the surrounding region.

The visit provided multiple examples of how the university contributes to the public good. Faculty and staff described community-engaged learning, partnerships with employers and K–12 schools, and workforce-aligned programming. The institution's impact is further reflected in graduate outcomes, with more than 80% of students remaining in Wisconsin, contributing to the state's workforce and civic life.

Participants also highlighted longstanding and emerging initiatives that extend the university's reach. These include the Small Business Development Center, which serves hundreds of external clients, and the Community Engaged Learning Program, which integrates employer-valued competencies into academic experiences. Faculty described applying disciplinary expertise to address regional challenges, including public health initiatives and sustainability efforts.

The institution also contributes to the public good as a cultural and intellectual resource. Public events, artistic programming, and use of campus facilities support community engagement. Participants noted that recent leadership has increased external visibility and strengthened relationships with regional partners, further reinforcing UWL's public mission.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that UWL's commitment to the public good is embedded in its academic enterprise and is actively advanced through partnerships, programming, and alignment with state and regional needs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL provides a range of opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural, and globally connected society. These opportunities are embedded in both curricular and co-curricular experiences and are supported by institutional priorities related to inclusion, belonging, and student success.

The institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in the UWL Forward Strategic Plan, particularly through Pillar 2, "People as Priority," which emphasizes creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Visit participants described efforts to strengthen belonging and support diverse student populations, including expanded advising, targeted student support services, and increased attention to equity in student outcomes. For example, the Disability Resource Center serves more than 1,100 students and uses data to identify and address disparities in student success.

The review team also heard interest in further aligning the composition of the student population with that of the state of Wisconsin, consistent with UWL's mission as a public university. This suggests an opportunity for the institution to continue expanding practices, resources, and strategies that support the recruitment, retention, and success of a more diverse student body. UWL demonstrated to the review team that it is responsive to campus input regarding diversity and global engagement. During strategic planning, stakeholders advocated for stronger emphasis on internationalization, leading to revisions in the final plan. This responsiveness reflects a campus culture in which diversity and global awareness are actively valued.

Students engage in civic and community-based learning through coursework, service activities, internships, and student organizations. Opportunities include community service projects, leadership activities, and engagement in areas such as public health, environmental sustainability, and social advocacy. These experiences expose students to diverse perspectives and social contexts and support the development of civic responsibility.

Additional examples illustrate how the institution approaches civic engagement in a diverse society. In response to state requirements related to free speech training, UWL developed a facilitated, discussion-based model involving trained faculty and staff, emphasizing dialogue and engagement rather than compliance alone. This approach reflects the institution's commitment to fostering meaningful civic learning experiences. The Chancellor invited the Vice Chancellor for Access, Belonging & Compliance to join the Cabinet emphasizing the university's strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Overall, the evidence indicates that UWL provides meaningful opportunities for students to engage

with diverse perspectives and participate in civic life, supported by institutional strategy and student support structures.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 1 Summary

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

The review team finds that UWL demonstrates a clear and publicly articulated mission that is broadly understood and consistently guides institutional practice. Across meetings with faculty, staff, students, and leadership, the team observed strong alignment between mission and operations. Student success is widely understood as the institution's central priority, and this focus is reflected in academic programs, advising structures, community engagement, and enrollment management. The institution's commitment to the Wisconsin Idea is evident in its role in preparing graduates for workforce and civic life in Wisconsin, with more than 80% of graduates remaining in the state.

The visit also identified ongoing challenges, including financial constraints, compensation pressures, capacity limitations, and the impact of state policy changes. While these factors may influence future planning and resource allocation, the team did not find that they undermine the institution's current ability to fulfill its mission.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that UWL's academic offerings, enrollment management, and operational decisions are intentionally aligned with its mission and are sustained through governance, assessment, and continuous improvement. UWL's mission is clear, broadly understood, and effectively operationalized across the institution.

The team notes that UWL has made intentional choices about its identity as a selective, residential public university and has aligned its enrollment management, academic programming, and student experience accordingly. At the same time, the institution demonstrates commitment to the public good through community engagement, workforce partnerships, and service to regional needs, and provides students with opportunities to engage in a diverse and globally connected society.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A. Integrity

Actions taken by the institution's governing board, administration, faculty and staff demonstrate adherence to established policies and procedures.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL faculty, staff, and administrators demonstrate adherence to financial, auxiliary, academic, and personnel-related policies and procedures established by the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents (UWSA BOR) and Wisconsin State Statute. Open forum participants described open lines of communication with the system office to work through questions or ambiguities in policy, as well as "communities of practice" for staff across UWSA universities by functional area to support consistent application of policies and procedures. Evidence of adherence to financial and auxiliary policies includes annual financial reports to the state at the system level (ACFR) and institutional level (Annual Financial Report), annual internal audits that detail oversight objectives and risks in a range of areas across university divisions, and annual BOR reports on auxiliary revenue fund balances. UWL posts information publicly on their website regarding State of Wisconsin open meeting and public records laws, along with links to associated meetings and clear instructions for requesting public records.

Academic policies and procedures are clearly outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The Faculty Senate Articles and Bylaws note that the UWL Academic Policies and Standards Committee ensures "equitable application of standards by the undergraduate schools and colleges", "supervises administration of these standards ...", and formulates "procedures for hearing student appeals and petitions on academic matters not resolved by administrative offices of the university" (November 17, 2022, p. 19). Related to personnel, the university follows system-level recruitment and hiring processes as detailed in UW System Administrative Policy 1275 and on the UWL Human Resources webpage.

Mandatory training for employees is provided by UWSA to UWL employees on topics including FERPA, Title IX, Mandated Reporter, Preventing Sexual Harassment and Violence, Information Security Awareness, and Youth Protections. Employees are required to complete required training within 30 days of the start of employment, with the timing of recurrent training varied by topic (per

UW System Administrative Policy 1293). System-level conflict of interest policies based on Wisconsin law (UWS Chapter 8 - Code of Ethics, Regent Policy Document 2-4) are shared with employees by email, with a required signature from the employee and supervisor. During the open forum, participants shared that conflict of interest training is included in the employee handbook and highlighted in an annual blog post. The peer review team encourages the campus to consider adding more ongoing training opportunities related to conflict of interest for the campus community, to ensure clear and up-to-date understanding of this policy and associated reporting requirements.

The Office of Civil Rights & Compliance leads the implementation of policy related to discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence, working closely with campus partners including Student Life, Human Resources, and the Dean of Students Office. Clery Act reporting and annual CSA training comes out of the Student Affairs/Dean of Students Office. Open forum participants noted that strong collaboration between Student Affairs, Residence Life, and University Police as well as the consolidation of compliance concerns into the central Maxient system supports accurate and comprehensive reporting.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B. Transparency

The institution presents itself accurately and completely to students and the public with respect to its educational programs and any claims it makes related to the educational experience.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL presents itself accurately and completely to students and the public with respect to its educational programs and the educational experience. The university sends weekly newsletters and associated external news stories through their University Marketing and Communication (UCOMM) office, with information such as announcements, articles and stories, and a robust list of current and upcoming campus events. The publicly available university catalog details a list of undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as a roster of faculty and staff with their academic credentials.

The university catalog and the Admissions web page provide a detailed explanation of admission requirements, including both required elements (such as specific high school coursework) and factors considered as part of the holistic review of applications for admission (such as course rigor, GPA, extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation). The university's cost to attend website provides a detailed breakdown of tuition, fees, housing, food, books, and other program fees in one location, along with answers to frequently asked questions about student costs. During the focus meeting on enrollment, participants shared that the Financial Aid office provides information to all prospective students during campus visits, and works closely with Admissions to determine and provide financial aid packages to students.

UWL administers the NSSE survey on a regular basis, gathering information about student experiences at the beginning and end of their time at the university. The results provide mean scores on measures of students' perceptions of quality interactions and supportive environments during the first year and the senior year, allowing point-in-time comparisons to system and IPEDS peers as well as a view of the change in student perceptions from the start to the end of their UWL experience. Open forum participants referenced several ways in which these data have been used to identify areas of concern and inform improvements, including a new centralized advising model and the introduction of the EAB Navigate platform.

Open forum participants spoke often of the university's focus on undergraduate research and other high-impact practices, and this was affirmed through the range of research, study abroad, and campus involvement experiences students shared during conversation with the peer review team. The assurance argument also includes several examples of community engagement opportunities, leadership programs, athletic programs, themed living communities in the residence halls, and

undergraduate research opportunities that provide varied evidence of the focus on student success highlighted in the UWL mission

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C. Board Governance

In discharging its fiduciary duties, the institution's governing board is free from undue external influence and empowered to act in the best interests of the institution, including the students it serves.

Rating

Met

Rationale

In discharging its fiduciary duties, UWL's governing board is free from undue external influence and empowered to act in the best interest of the institution. The Universities of Wisconsin (UWSA) Board of Regents (BOR) is the UWL governing body and includes 18 members who serve the 13 system institutions. Members are primarily Gubernatorial appointees, including two UW system students. Regent Policy Document 2-2 details the expectations of Board members, which include remaining well-informed and participating regularly in Board and university activities. This policy document also highlights the need to adhere to the Code of Ethics for Public Officials and Employees and the Board's policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest, as well as required annual financial disclosure statements and full compliance with public records and open meetings laws. Chapter 19 of Wisconsin Statutes on General Duties of Public Universities applies to BOR members and along with Regent Policy 2-2 prohibits public officials discussing, voting, or taking any action on issues where a conflict of interest is found to exist.

Board meeting agendas, webcasts, agendas, and supporting materials are posted online and publicly accessible. During a recent (July 2025) meeting, the BOR approved the construction of the new \$194 million Prairie Springs facility, a project that many faculty and staff highlighted as important to students and the entire UWL community during conversations with the peer review team.

The UWSA BOR delegates operations of the UWL campus to the Chancellor, who works in consultation with the Cabinet, university faculty, and shared governance groups to manage the university operations and fulfill the university mission. University faculty are responsible for the curriculum, and the Faculty Senate has established comprehensive articles and bylaws that detail several standing curriculum committees and their functions. For example, open forum participants described the work of the Faculty Senate's General Education Committee to enact a substantial general education curriculum revision in 2025, and to incorporate updates based on Wisconsin Act 15 in 2026.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

The institution supports academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge as integral to high-quality teaching, learning and research.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Publicly available materials at the system and institutional levels document that UWL supports academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge as integral to high-quality teaching, learning, and research. Regent Policy Document 4-21 details the UWSA commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression inside and outside the classroom, including both rights and responsibilities in this regard for students and employees. The policy requires UWSA institutions to produce an annual report to the board documenting their efforts to uphold and communicate the principles upheld in the policy, along with any formal complaints of policy violations and the university response to address those concerns.

Board policy specifically notes that each UW institution should include information about freedom of expression as part of their new student orientation programs. Site visit meeting participants shared that UWL took the initiative to develop an in-person discussion-based program titled Dialogue Matters, and have trained 35 faculty and staff to facilitate these sessions during new student orientation. This program is housed in the Center for Civil Dialogue and Engagement along with additional workshops and training sessions for students and instructors focused on civil discourse.

The Faculty Senate has issued and posted statements online in support of academic freedom, and information on freedom of thought and expression is included in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The Complaints, Grievances, Appeals, and Academic Freedom Committee of Faculty Senate details a process for hearing and acting upon grievances related to actions that are alleged to violate academic freedom.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E. Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application

The institution adheres to policies and procedures that ensure responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL adheres to policies and procedures that ensure responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. The university's mission statement expresses a commitment to fostering "curiosity and life-long learning through collaboration, innovation, and the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge". The process of discovering and acquiring new knowledge is supported by the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs (ORSP), which provides oversight for research compliance through mechanisms such as the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB), the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC), and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). OSRP provides access to CITI online training modules for compliance with Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) regulations, and shares ongoing information related to research ethics and safety with the university community through newsletters and one-to-one consultations.

The IRB meets monthly, and lists their policies, protocols, committee members, training opportunities, and answers to frequently asked questions on the IRB website. IACUC is accredited by the Association for Assessment & Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, completes annual USDA inspections, and details their policies, forms, protocols, applicable laws, and available training opportunities on the Committee website. The IBC is registered with the National Institutes of Health, and provides required biosafety training to all faculty, staff, and students who work with biological materials in their research or related work. The IBC website provides a detailed biosafety manual, protocols, applicable laws and policies, training modules, a list of IBC members, and the answers to frequently asked questions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 2 - Summary

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL, supported by UWSA and its governing board, demonstrates adherence to a range of policies and laws that uphold ethical and responsible conduct. These include annual financial reports and audits, regular compliance-related training opportunities and requirements, and administrative structures such as shared use of Maxient and online reporting forms at the institutional and system levels. Academic policies and procedures are publicly available in undergraduate and graduate catalogs. A range of external and internal communication mechanisms such as newsletters and websites, provide access to ethical and legal information to UWL students, faculty and staff; similarly admission and cost-to-attend web pages and accountability dashboards at the system-level provide transparent information to the public about educational programs and outcomes.

BOR and Regent policies and practices that detail Board expectations and state laws in areas such as financial disclosures, conflict of interest, and open meetings create the checks needed to ensure the governing board is free from undue external interest and empowered to act in the best interests of UWL and the students it serves. Faculty Senate statements, academic promotion structures, BOR policy 4-21, and robust training opportunities through the UWL Center for Civil Dialogue and Civic Engagement demonstrate the institution's commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. The Office of Sponsored Programs and the active oversight work of IRB, IACUC, and IBC work together to support the responsible and ethical search for knowledge that is central to UWL's mission.

3 - Teaching and Learning for Student Success

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

3.A. Educational Programs

The institution maintains learning goals and outcomes that reflect a level of rigor commensurate with college-level work, including by program level and the content of each of its educational programs.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL maintains rigorous academic standards through a formalized policy infrastructure and advanced curriculum management systems. Academic rigor is established in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, which explicitly define degree requirements. The institution manages curricular integrity via Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) software, which operationalizes a multi-level automated workflow. This system enforces a mandatory approval chain that starts with department chairs and moves through college curriculum committees, deans, and finally to the Records & Registration office, ensuring that no course or program modification bypasses institutional standards for academic depth.

The Faculty Senate (FS) Syllabus Policy further mandates that every credit-bearing course provide students with a syllabus containing standardized information, including specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), grading systems, and course expectations. This policy is enforced through templates provided by the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL), which were recently updated to include statements on Artificial Intelligence and Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI). For online modalities, CATL provides specialized training and Online Course Evaluation Guidelines to ensure that distance education maintains the same rigor and quality as traditional formats.

The sustained rigor of the academic programs is most clearly evidenced by post-graduation outcomes. UWL reports a 99% post-graduation placement rate in FY23 (based upon an 81% knowledge rate). Furthermore, professional programs consistently achieve superior results on national licensure exams: the Physician Assistant program has a 100% first-time pass rate, and the Physical Therapy program has maintained a 100% pass rate in most years since 2012. Additionally, standardized data from the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+) shows that UWL seniors achieved a value-added score higher than 81% of comparison schools, indicating that the curriculum effectively cultivates high-level critical thinking and analytical writing skills.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B. Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry

The institution's educational programs engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in practicing modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Intellectual inquiry is central to UWL's mission as a regional comprehensive university grounded in the liberal arts. The primary mechanism for ensuring all undergraduates engage in inquiry is the General Education program, which was redesigned as part of the Sustaining Excellence strategic plan and implemented in 2025. The learning outcomes in the new program prioritize written and spoken communication, quantitative literacy, intercultural knowledge, teamwork, creative and critical thinking, inquiry and analysis, problem solving, reading, civic engagement, and global learning.

Beyond the core curriculum, UWL fosters a robust culture of undergraduate research, which is a signature "High-Impact Practice" (HIP) for the institution. The Academic Affairs Division supports undergraduate research through the Student Research and Creativity Grant program, which awarded over \$210,000 in grants to students in FY24. This commitment is further evidenced by the Eagle Apprentice Program, which pairs high-achieving first-year students with faculty mentors. Effectiveness is demonstrated by the 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data, which reveals that 27% of UWL seniors report conducting research with a faculty member—a rate that is statistically higher than peer institutions in the system and national IPEDS benchmarks.

Faculty scholarship also serves as a catalyst for student inquiry. In FY24, the university recorded nearly \$3 million in external grants, many of which directly fund student participation in scientific laboratories and field research. Notable examples include NSF-funded projects in Physics and Biology that integrate undergraduate researchers into cutting-edge discovery. At the graduate level, students complete capstone projects, theses, or clinical experiences applying advanced research methods to professional issues.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C. Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL maintains a highly qualified instructional and support staff, with data from Fall 2025 showing that 86% of full-time instructors hold a terminal degree in their discipline. The university's Faculty Senate policies and the Articles of Faculty Organization dictate that tenured faculty must possess terminal degrees, while Instructional Academic Staff must hold at least a master's degree.

Recruitment is governed by the University Personnel System, which mandates merit-based, inclusive search committee processes reviewed by the Title VI/Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator.

UWL lives into its commitment to student learning as ranked faculty teach 12 contact hours per semester and instructional academic staff teach 15-16 contact hours each semester. This practice aligns with the recently implemented state policy Act 15, which mandates a faculty teaching workload of at least 24 credit hours per year and limits non-instructional assignments for faculty.

Faculty are expected to maintain currency in their disciplines and inform their pedagogy with evidence-based practices. UWL supports faculty development in a variety of ways, including grants, programming through the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning, and annual funding for professional development. UWSA Board Policy requires the establishment of student evaluation of instruction. Tenure-track faculty members undergo regular reviews by departmental personnel committees evaluating their teaching, scholarship, and service. Tenured faculty undergo post-tenure review every five years. For these reviews, tenured faculty members submit evidence reflecting their contributions in teaching, scholarship, and service.

External reviewers from Deloitte, contracted by UWSA in 2023, to review all system institutions, specifically identified UWL's "highly engaged faculty" and strong campus culture around student success as primary drivers of its high retention rates. Conversations on campus with students, faculty, and staff by the peer review team confirm this description and demonstrate their dedication to students.

Processes for hiring qualified academic staff are in place, ensuring that they are well-prepared for their roles on campus. Professional development opportunities are available for staff members as well, and annual reviews ensure the quality of their work. During the visit, the review team had opportunity to meet with a wide range of academic staff members. As was the case with faculty, it was evident to the team that staff are dedicated to students and work in a highly collaborative manner across campus.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D. Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching

The institution provides student support services that address the needs of its student populations, as well as the teaching resources and infrastructure necessary for student success.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL provides a comprehensive support infrastructure that is deeply integrated into the academic experience. A central piece of this infrastructure is Navigate360, which manages the Coordinated Care Network (CCN). This system operationalizes the "Progress Reports Online" (PRO@UWL) early alert initiative, which requires instructors of gateway courses to report early feedback on student performance. The use and enforcement of this system are clear: faculty response rates for these alerts have steadily increased to 90% in 2024–25, ensuring that students at risk are identified and supported by professional advisors and campus resources.

Student support is further expanded through professionalized advising, with 87% of first-year students now served by professional advisors. Specialized units like the Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC), the Writing Center, and the Public Speaking Center provide targeted academic assistance. Co-curricular support is also robust, with programs like It Make\$ Cents! (financial literacy) reporting that 97% of participants learned new skills to manage college debt. The effectiveness of these services is validated by NSSE 2023 data, which show that 76% of first-year students rated the campus environment as highly supportive—a figure statistically higher than the national sample.

Resources for teaching are equally prioritized. Information Technology Services (ITS) maintains over 280 tech-enabled learning spaces and achieves a network uptime of over 99%, ensuring infrastructure stability. Facilities such as the Prairie Springs Science Center (36 teaching and 23 research labs) and the renovated Wittich Hall (state-of-the-art business labs) provide specialized environments for success. CATL supports teaching effectiveness through the Inclusive Teaching Institute and grants for curricular redesign, ensuring faculty have the pedagogical resources needed to support a diverse student body.

While on campus, the visit team learned more about the expansion of the Prairie Springs Science Center, which will significantly strengthen UWL's academic infrastructure, adding 30 new STEM classrooms, laboratories, and collaborative spaces that will support student learning, cutting-edge research, and innovative curricula designed in close collaboration with regional employers. This \$194 million project has just begun and is slated for completion in 2029.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL has institutionalized a strong culture of assessment overseen by the University Program Assessment Committee (UPAC) and the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC). These committees provide standardized templates, reporting cycles, and rubrics based on the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment Transparency Framework to ensure consistency across all departments. Assessment is mandated not only at the program level but also for individual personnel; the Joint Promotion Committee requires ranked faculty to provide direct evidence of student learning assessment to be eligible for promotion.

The institution significantly strengthened its assessment efforts with the revised General Education program. The new learning outcomes are aligned with the AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and UWL will use the AAC&U Value Rubrics to assess them. This will ensure consistency in the review process and allow assessment data to be appropriately aggregated to enable broader analysis.

The university provides clear evidence of "closing the loop"—using assessment data to make improvements. For example, during the campus visit, the team learned that NSSE results indicated that satisfaction with academic advising was below that of peer institutions. An in-depth analysis led UWL to implement a Master Advisor Program for faculty and to implement the Navigate 360 platform. NSSE results in the subsequent cycles for the advising scale showed substantive gains in satisfaction, with UWL outperforming peer institutions on the most recent survey.

Furthermore, the UWL assessment website includes multiple examples of faculty using assessment results to modify and strengthen their academic programs. These examples include a cross-section of the academic units from the colleges, the Library, and the General Education program.

UPAC also ensures widespread participation in assessment through the Academic Program Review (APR) process. Programs must report assessment findings twice within each 7-year APR cycle, and these findings are appended to the final self-studies for dean and provost review.

It should also be noted that ranked faculty (tenured and tenure-track) are required to provide strong evidence of direct assessment in their courses as part of the promotion process. Conversations on campus indicated that this requirement has significantly strengthened the engagement of faculty in assessment and elevated the importance of using it to inform pedagogy.

It was quite evident to the visit team that the campus has a strong culture of assessment, with a mature process and widespread participation. Faculty, staff, and administrators were able to clearly articulate

how assessment results have led to substantive changes and supported gains in student learning.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL conducts a comprehensive Academic Program Review (APR) every seven years for each academic program. The process is governed by the Undergraduate and Graduate APR committees, which review a full record including a self-study, an external reviewer's report (for programs without external accreditation), a departmental response, and a formal evaluation letter from the dean. The Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs provides centralized oversight and hosts annual training sessions for department chairs to maintain the rigor of the process.

UWL provides evidence that this process is both pervasive and effective. Since 2018, the university has completed 46 reviews. As noted in the assurance argument, "Most program reviews since 2018 have received comments related to program assessment, including encouragement to continue specific program assessment practices, an emphasis on the improvements made by programs in their assessment efforts, or a recommendation to improve program assessment procedures." Furthermore, the committee has recommended a 3-year follow-up review for four of these programs specifically to address and improve their assessment procedures. This follow-up mechanism serves as a critical enforcement tool to ensure identified deficiencies are corrected and mitigates concern that a seven year APR cycle is longer than is typical.

Finally, the Faculty Senate recently adopted a new Enrollment Monitoring policy, requiring programs with low or declining enrollment to submit formal plans for deactivation, suspension, or advocacy, ensuring the university's program array remains sustainable and high-quality.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.G. Student Success Outcomes

The institution's student success outcomes demonstrate continuous improvement, taking into account the student populations it serves and benchmarks that reference peer institutions.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL demonstrates exceptional student success outcomes that are benchmarked against a formal list of 15 peer and aspirant institutions. The university consistently reports the highest first-to-second year retention rate (86.5%) and the highest six-year graduation rate (71%) among all Universities of Wisconsin comprehensive institutions. These outcomes are publicly reported via the UWSA Accountability Dashboard and internal Fact Books, ensuring transparency to students and the public.

The institution shows clear evidence of using data to drive continuous improvement. As part of its "Sustaining Excellence" strategic plan, UWL set ambitious goals of 90% first-year retention and 80% transfer retention. While still working toward the 90% mark, the university has seen its four-year graduation rate rise from 40% to 60% over the last decade, partly due to a higher percentage of incoming students with sophomore status and enhanced early-college engagement programs. Initiatives like the Re-Imagining the First Year of College Project led to the creation of the First Year Seminar (FYS 100), which has been linked to increased persistence rates among first-year and first-generation students.

UWL also demonstrates effectiveness in closing equity gaps. The filing documents that the four-year graduation rate gap between white students and students of color has narrowed since the introduction of FYS 100. Targeted support programs such as Hekima Scholars (for men of color) and the Eagle Mentoring Program (which saw 100% of its recent cohorts earn bachelor's degrees) provide evidence of effective interventions in fostering the success of underserved populations.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse exercises comprehensive institutional responsibility for the quality and rigor of its academic programs ensuring excellence across all levels and modalities of instruction. The university fosters a mission-driven culture of intellectual inquiry through a restructured general education framework, a robust undergraduate research program, and a mature assessment infrastructure that supports continuous curricular improvement. This commitment is bolstered by a highly dedicated faculty and staff, a proactive coordinated care model for student support, and a campus infrastructure that enhances the learning environment. Taken together, these commitments have resulted in retention and graduation rates that consistently lead the state system and outperform national peer benchmarks.

4 - Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

4.A Effective Administrative Structures

The institution's administrative structures are effective and facilitate collaborative processes such as shared governance; data-informed decision making; and engagement with internal and external constituencies as appropriate.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL demonstrates mechanisms of shared governance that facilitate decision-making across the campus community; these include the Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Council, University Staff Council, and Student Association. Collaborative planning efforts include at least six "Joint Committees" made up of representatives from the groups mentioned. One key joint committee is the Joint Planning and Budget (JPB) Committee. The UWSA BOR authorizes such practices through the role of the UWL Chancellor who is authorized to lead the institution in strategic planning and operational activities with the Chancellor's Cabinet and its associated administrative structure.

The BOR serves to convey and implement legislative initiatives such as the recently implemented ACT 15 which has created new teaching workload and general education policies at UWL. The legislature negotiated with the UWSA to establish an instructional workload of 24 credit hours per academic year for full-time faculty members and limits the percentage of instructional employees with reassigned activities to 10% (other than departmental chairs). It also aimed to ease credit transfer through a concomitant reduction of General Education credit hours from 42 to 36.

ACT 15 did provide an increase in base funding to support instruction which affords some relief for compensation described as a critical need in UWL's Assurance Argument and comments during the visit. The restructuring of faculty workload makes involvement in High-Impact Practices, such as undergraduate research, more difficult to accomplish. This is a challenge for an institution that is nationally recognized for its success in student-centered research practices. This recognition includes receiving the Campus-wide Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments (AURA) from the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR); UWL has also served as the host institution for CUR's National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) on multiple occasions.

While implementation of ACT 15 posed challenges to UWL, an open and inclusive atmosphere exists that facilitates responses to such unexpected legislative developments. The JPB, for example, has

been described as resembling a campus “town hall” with multiple designated participants from administrative units leading these biweekly discussions of budget and planning; anyone can attend these sessions, including online participants. The attitude of the campus community in approaching planning challenges like this appears cohesive and resilient in nature given feedback obtained on campus.

UWL’s communication and planning systems extend to enrollment management. Approximately a fifth of the institution’s budget comes from the State of Wisconsin thereby creating a strong dependence on tuition. The campus is physically limited in both physical size and capacity and on-campus housing was a frequently cited example of this circumstance that limits enrollment-originating tuition revenue. UWL nonetheless has balanced declining enrollment sources such as the number of transfer students, with high retention practices--reformed lower division student advising, to counteract the impact of this challenge. JPB and a streamlined enrollment management system that report to the Provost’s Office have been important to implementing practices and policies that have countered overall enrollment declines.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B Resource Base and Sustainability

The institution's financial and personnel resources effectively support its current operations. The institution's financial management balances short-term needs with long-term commitments and ensures its ongoing sustainability.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The UWL budget is dominated by tuition revenue with state tax revenue representing less than 20 percent of its total. UWL's participation in the state's Growth, Quality and Access (GQA) initiative afforded an investment in personnel that has now been supplemented by the recent ACT 15 legislation. Nonetheless, General Purpose Revenue (GPR) is the primary form of state revenue and UWL has one of the lowest GPR percentages among comprehensive universities in Wisconsin. Other sources of revenue may supplement GPR, including Differential Tuition that is often specific to a particular academic unit or program. Outcomes-based revenue is provided by the State on an annual basis as well. External funding sources include private sources as overseen by the UWL Foundation while grants and contracts are under the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP).

The UWL system uses a self-described centralized budget model that is credited with containing costs over time and enhancing funding balances in the face of unpredictable enrollment trends. UWL has also made long-term investments to create stability for the campus after investing in personnel through the GQA initiative. These actions, along with very strong retention levels at two-year, four-year and 6-year benchmarks, have stabilized the impact of changes in enrollment and overall declines in state funding. For example, the state has previously frozen undergraduate resident tuition but has also provided varying levels of funding over the last two decades. Outcomes-based funding has enhanced revenue to UWL but only enough to assist in offsetting annual mandatory cost increases for the institution.

Nearly three million dollars in external funding was awarded to UWL in FY24 through 75 grant awards, 15 from federal sources. In 2025, like other selected institutions in the country, UWL was designated as a Research College and University (RCU) by the Carnegie Foundation, meaning that the campus has spent an average of 2.5 million dollars on Research and Development activities over the previous three years. UWL has one doctoral program (Ed.D.) with a thesis component that could eventually qualify UWL for a High Spending and Doctorate Productivity ("R2") designation should the program produce an average of 20 graduates per year over a three-year span.

UWL has conducted multiple infrastructure projects that include the 16th Street Parking Ramp and Prairie Springs Science Center. These projects are guided by the UWL Master Plan. The planning process involves multiple planners and decision-makers with major projects involving state funds and/or tuition revenue and requiring legislative approval. Housing represents a "bottleneck" for enrollment on campus given that first-year students live in on-campus housing. Maintenance of living units is complicated by the fact that the temporary removal of any residential units for renovation

purposes must be made up for with temporary housing elsewhere on campus. A new residence hall constructed on campus would come as a major cost to the institution and with more responsibilities for enrollment management and planning activities.

Overall, there is evidence of communication among campus administrative units in planning expenditures that will sustain the institution's goals. These include multiple long-term sources of revenue such as GPR that can be supplemented with Differential Tuition (DT), and allow the institution to be nimble during short-term decision-making at the programmatic level. While ACT 15 will add base state funding to UWL, long-term decision making is centralized in nature and does not permit cabinet-level decision-makers to retain carry forward revenue, to support future investments. The DT system has been important in the Business college and others in funding new programs, examples include advising, and mentored research opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These alternative revenue sources benefit the planning and funding strategies of the institution along with integrated streamlining initiatives that include investments in software solutions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C Planning for Quality Improvement

The institution engages in systematic strategic planning for quality improvement. It relies on data, integrating its insights from enrollment forecasts, financial capacity, student learning assessment, institutional operations and the external environment.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL's new strategic plan (for the period 2025-2030), UWL Forward, has four pillars that include (1) "The Driftless Difference", (2) "People as a Priority", (3) "Elevating Excellence through Educational Innovation," and (4) "Mission-Driven Management and Mindful Stewardship." Preceding this plan was one with similar themes (called Sustaining Excellence) originally adopted for the period of 2016 to 2020, and sometimes referenced in the argument as covering 2016-2025; the extended time was due to the Great Pandemic. UWL Forward was forged over a two-year period and despite a change in the majority of cabinet-level administrative positions during the same period of time.

UWL Forward relies upon a commitment to data-driven decisions as assisted by UWL Institutional Research; this includes regular enrollment reports and discussions of such data at highly visible campus venues like the JPB which affords access and discussion opportunities. The Plan has both "Pillar Sponsors" (nine high-level administrators including from the President's Cabinet) and "Goal Leads" (19 administrators from across campus organizational units). The newly appointed Chief of Staff has indicated that recent discussions are considering an "extended cabinet" that, while still under formulation, might include additional campus leaders in these strategic discussions.

The regional significance of UWL's embrace of the "Driftless Difference," is well-understood by the campus community as a reflection of a destination point for those who know, or wish to know, the unique geographic and community setting in UWL's region. The concept aligns with the Wisconsin Idea that promotes the importance of connecting the local community to the educational process, providing regional workers and citizens. The "People as Priority," pillar is actively being pursued and includes new nationally standardized estimates for compensation levels for positions across campus. "Elevating Excellence through Educational Innovation," includes consideration of new curriculum and programmatic initiatives. Responses to ACT 15 demonstrate the campus's commitment to planning around new initiatives provided by the State that are intended to promote workforce development. The fourth pillar, "Mission-Driven Management and Mindful Stewardship," embodies UWL's extensive planning process with consideration of budgeting practices to ensure sustainability.

Campus discussions indicate a wide-spread understanding that the foundation for the four strategic planning pillars will benefit the overall financial stability of the institution and its ability to deliver on its mission. There is a focus on maintenance of integrative enrollment activities; involving multiple key groups engaged with enrollment management. Important to this activity will be continuing input from Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for

Admissions and Recruitment as reported to the Division of Academic Affairs (Provost). Factors that have been under consideration by these groups in the recent past include (1) first-to-second-year increases in retention, (2) transfer student decline, (3) international student decline, and (4) first-year cohort growth.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UWL has assembled both traditional and specialized administrative structures, such as Joint Planning and Budget Committee, that function effectively and transparently among the community members of the campus. Traditional shared governance practices are augmented by these existing structures. Indeed, the team learned how these governance structures have adapted to significant and unanticipated changes administered by the System that are responsive to new legislation that impacts faculty workloads, General Education requirements and funding.

UWL has an effective communication and decision-making processes.

In conclusion, UWL has accomplished a rapid but meaningful period of strategic planning despite numerous changes in higher administrative posts on campus. All administrative units are clearly well-informed on and committed to the four pillars of current planning process. The GQA initiative and more recent ACT 15 contributions in state-level funding have given the institution momentum but compensation has been repeatedly reported as a concern. Attracting and maintaining the quantity of quality-oriented faculty and staff members at UWL will be critical to its future success as an institution holding student learning at its center.

FC - Federal Compliance

Rating

Met

Rationale

1. Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

On UWL's website, under academic affairs, records and registration, there is a clear course credit hour policy. The minimum of 42 hours over the course of the semester earns one credit with the additional investment of 28 hours out of class. The credit hour policy is inclusive of different course types. Under the component contact hour policy there are clear expectations of credit hour to instruction time per week.

Because UWL is part of the larger Wisconsin System, there are clear policies governing all institutions within the system. The awarding of credit references the CFR, Title 34, Part 600.2 which states all institutions must have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit. UWL has standard meeting patterns of X number of minutes per x number of weeks that adhere to the 770 minutes/per credit/term.

The following syllabi were requested and reviewed to determine consistent student learning outcomes (SLO's) in courses with different modalities and taught by different instructors: 1619 Ryan M. Abnormal Psych, 1906 Jessica S. Abnormal Psych, 4562 Catherine M. Abnormal Psych, and 3085 Robert W. College Writing II, 1139 Judi B. College Writing II. The three Psych syllabi had the same SLO's and consistency in credit hour information. Similarly, the two College Writing syllabi were in alignment as well.

The tuition to attend UWL is under the "cost to attend" section. It is clear and differentiates undergraduate and graduate tuition with or without room and board. Undergraduate block tuition is inclusive of credits 12-18 per semester, while graduate is broken down by program and cost/credit hour.

2. Institutional Records Regarding Student Complaints

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the

other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL's policy for handling student complaints is documented in the student handbook. Should a student not find resolution through working with the department personnel, then they could submit an official complaint through the more formal channel. Their policy is to handle student complaints through faculty and department heads.

UWL has an accessible student complaint form that is used when an informal resolution is not feasible. The forms are kept on file in the Student Life Office and are addressed by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The procedure for handling complaints is outlined in this section of the website and it includes how the complaint is addressed, as well as the tracking system used. There is an annual report produced of all the complaints to identify any trends or areas of concern.

3. Publication of Transfer Policies

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL is part of a large system, which governs transfer policies. The UW-system has administrative policies including policy 135, Undergraduate Transfer Policy, which is articulated on the UWL website. In general, the UG transfer policy allows for student mobility between institution within and outside Wisconsin.

The UW-system policy statement on the admission of transfer students states each applicant will be reviewed primarily on their academic record, and secondarily on their work experiences, community service, etc. The policy is comprehensive and inclusive in publicly articulating the process for students transferring from other UW-system schools, Wisconsin technical colleges, and those who attained an Associate's degree. This system-wide policy is found on UWL's website, under academic affairs, admissions.

Furthermore, there is a clear process for how PLA is awarded for both undergraduate and graduate students. Students work with individual advisors to determine what prior learning exists and how that credit is transferred toward a graduate degree.

Articulation agreements are clearly identified on the UWL website. Those include agreements with Wisconsin Technical Colleges, other institutions within the broader UW-system, International partners, and four-year institutions outside Wisconsin. All of the links are active and connect to PDF's describing the agreement.

Students are able to utilize Transferology to determine what courses will and will not transfer. Students can create a free account to see how many courses and experience will transfer to UWL. Additionally, all admitted students receive a credit evaluation, which is accessible in the WINGS Student Center via a transfer credit report.

The UWL website, in alignment with the UW-system policy, also states that there are thresholds to the total number of transfer students that are accepted each year. Although, the ratios are not shared, it is clearly articulated that transfer admission is not guaranteed for international students.

4. Practices for Verification of Student Identity

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL offers distance education courses which require the assurance of verifying student identity. Similar to many institutions, and in alignment with best practices, UWL relies on multi-factor authentication (MFA). Students attempting to access the learning management system, but log in and authenticate via email or text. This method ensures the students within the courses are the registered students. Additionally, students are identified in person or Zoom in instances that go beyond the classroom, such as IT assistance or billing.

The MFA never involves the exchange of personal information such as a social security number or birthdate. There are also no costs passed on to the students using this method of verifying student identity.

5. Protection of Student Privacy

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The MFA ensures another layer of student privacy as well. Active students accessing their record must go through a multi-step authentication and therefore prevents third-party or others from gaining access. The protection of student privacy is also governed by FERPA-derived university policies that allow only authorized personnel the ability to view student data. Under Records and Registration, there is a dedicated webpage outlining FERPA and how it protects educational records from other employees, students, and family members.

The access to academic records via a transcript request is described in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. As stated, there is also publicly accessible information within the directory that is by default -turned on. However, students have the ability to limit the accessibility of that information as well.

UWL has a clear privacy statement which outlines what information is collected through web server data. Individual names or usernames are not collected, but the institution does collect geo-location information.

To ensure the policies are adhered to and employees are informed, all staff in the UW-system must do FERPA training that is then repeated every three years. Additionally, if the assignment at the

institution involves accessing student records, there is an additional training done that is approved by the manager. This training is more specific to what student information is being used day-day (i.e. financial information, student grades, admissions data). Each layer of student access requires manager approval.

6. Publication of Student Achievement Data

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL published student achievement data in the fact book on the website, which is publicly accessible via Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning. The fact book dashboards include up-to-date information on retention, graduation rates for both UG and Grad students, degrees conferred, UG first destination results, and graduate student enrollment.

First destination survey results are shared through the Advising Center and Career Services Office. The reports on each major, school, and college's employment rates post-graduation are placed into a PDF going back to 2019-2020. Additionally, internship data is publicly available as well.

Lastly, UWL shares institutional highlights – Accountability and Performance Measures, which inform the viewer of post-graduation successes, the connection to business and job growth, and salary information.

7. Standing With State and Other Accreditors

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL has authority to operate in Wisconsin through the Wisconsin State Department of Education. The institution is in good standing with 16 specialized/programmatic accreditors. All of these programs are visible on the website with links to the accreditor. There is also information on the specific review cycles for each program. As stated, there are no adverse actions or show cause orders with any of the specialized accreditors or the Higher Learning Commission.

8. Recruiting, Admissions and Related Enrollment Practices

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

UWL mandates trainings to all employees upon hire and specific to those directly involved with students. In addition to FERPA training, there are also modules on sexual discrimination prevention and child protections. Training records are monitored by human resources and follow-up notifications are sent to all non-compliant employees. These trainings are again part of the larger UW-system and monitored closely.

Those employees involved with the admissions of students and financial aid have a specific code of conduct. The UWL Admissions Office follows the Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission established by the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC). In addition to articulating this on the website, there is also a PDF of the NACAC standards. These standards largely address the prevention of the institution and its employees of misrepresentation during the admissions process. The financial aid office has a code of conduct congruent with the policy on institutional and employee relationships with educational loan lenders. There is strict language outlining what UW institutions and their employees are allowed to do and not do in regards to financial aid.

Finally and consistent with other UWL policies, the larger UW-system has clear workplace conduct expectations in Policy 1292. Section C describes the expectation to act ethically and with integrity. There is evidence that these policies are reviewed as well as seen here with a recent revision in August 2025.

Appendix A: Title IV Program Responsibilities

Complete this section **only if** the institution has submitted an Appendix A. Review any negative actions taken against the institution since HLC's last Federal Compliance Review and identify any implications for the institution's current compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements. Provide a detailed rationale for any Core Components identified as met with concerns or not met.

Rationale:

Mandatory Reporting: Fraud, Abuse or Failing to Meet Title IV Responsibilities

Federal regulations require HLC to notify the U.S. Department of Education related to the following item. Do not skip this section.

Title IV Program Responsibilities

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that the institution is failing to meet its Title IV, Higher Education Act program responsibilities (if the institution participates in Title IV, HEA programs)?

Answer (Choose one response and delete the other):

No

Rationale (If the team responded “Yes,” explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.):

Fraud or Abuse

In the course of the peer review team’s evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that the institution may be engaged in fraud or abuse?

Answer (Choose one response and delete the other):

No

Rationale (If the team responded “Yes,” explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.):

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Review Summary

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Federal Compliance

Met

Core Components Ratings

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A.	Mission Alignment	Met
1.B.	Mission and Public Good	Met
1.C.	Mission and Diversity of Society	Met
1.S.	Criterion 1 Summary	Met
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A.	Integrity	Met
2.B.	Transparency	Met
2.C.	Board Governance	Met
2.D.	Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression	Met
2.E.	Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application	Met
2.S.	Criterion 2 - Summary	Met
3	Teaching and Learning for Student Success	
3.A.	Educational Programs	Met
3.B.	Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry	Met
3.C.	Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff	Met
3.D.	Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching	Met
3.E.	Assessment of Student Learning	Met
3.F.	Program Review	Met
3.G.	Student Success Outcomes	Met
3.S.	Criterion 3 - Summary	Met
4	Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
4.A	Effective Administrative Structures	Met

4.B	Resource Base and Sustainability	Met
4.C	Planning for Quality Improvement	Met
4.S.	Criterion 4 - Summary	Met

Overall Recommendations

Accreditation Recommendation

Reaffirm Accreditation

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to Choose

Conclusion

The review team finds that University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) demonstrates a clear and publicly articulated mission that is broadly understood and consistently guides institutional practice. The evidence demonstrates mission alignment is sustained through internal and external governance, assessment, and decision-making practices. Student success is widely understood as the institution's central priority, and this focus is reflected in academic programs, advising structures, community engagement, and enrollment management. The institution's commitment to the Wisconsin Idea is evident in its role in preparing graduates for workforce and civic life in Wisconsin, with more than 80% of graduates remaining in the state.

In addition to providing clear guidance to assure that the institution's constituents act ethically, and with integrity by publicizing Board policies, state statutes and institutional policies governing the full range of university activities, from conflicts of interest to research practices and academic integrity, UWL has adopted a unique program. It provides training opportunities through the UWL Center for Civil Dialogue and Civic Engagement demonstrating the institution's investment in academic freedom and freedom of expression.

UWL exercises comprehensive institutional responsibility for the quality and rigor of its academic programs ensuring excellence across all levels and modalities of instruction. The university fosters a mission-driven culture of intellectual inquiry through its recently restructured general education framework, a robust undergraduate research program, and a mature assessment infrastructure that supports continuous curricular improvement. UWL delivers on its mission through highly dedicated faculty and staff, a proactive coordinated care model for student support, and a campus infrastructure that enhances the learning environment. Taken together, these commitments have resulted in retention and graduation rates that consistently lead the state system and outperform national peer benchmarks.

UWL benefits from traditional and specialized administrative structures that function effectively and support transparent decision-making within and among campus constituents. Traditional shared governance practices are augmented by these existing structures and their effectiveness was apparent in adapting to significant and unanticipated changes responsive to new legislation impacting faculty workloads and General Education requirements and distributing new funding.

UWL has accomplished a rapid but meaningful period of strategic planning despite numerous changes in higher administrative posts on campus. All administrative units are clearly well-informed on and committed to the four pillars of current planning process. Attracting and maintaining the quantity of

quality-oriented faculty and staff members at UWL will be critical to its future success as institution holding student learning at its center.

All Accreditation Criteria are met by UWL. There are no issues of Federal Compliance and UWL is fulfilling HLC's Assumed Practices and Obligations of Membership.

UWL is an Open Pathways institution with experience and interest in quality initiatives. The review team finds UWL is eligible to choose its Pathway.

INTERNAL



Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Worksheet

Review Details

Institution: University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Wisconsin

Type of Review: Open Pathway - Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

Description:

Review Dates: 04/20/2026 - 04/21/2026

No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Status: Accredited

No Change

Recommended Change:

Degrees Awarded: Associates, Bachelors, Doctoral, Masters, Specialist

No Change

Recommended Change:

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2015 - 2016

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2025 - 2026

No Change

Recommended Change: 2035-2036

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, Doctoral

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): None

The institution is limited to offer the following program(s), within the approved program levels listed above: Educational Specialist, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and Doctor of Education in Student Affairs Administration and Leadership

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

The institution has been approved for the Notification Program, allowing the institution to open new additional locations within the United States.

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Competency-Based Education:

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Pell-Eligible Prison Education Program:

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Accreditation Events

Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation: Open Pathway

No Change

Recommended Change: Eligible to choose with an option to select an Assurance Review or Student Success Quality Initiative.

Upcoming Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

No Change

Recommended Change:

Upcoming Branch Campus or Additional Location Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

No Change

Recommended Change:

Monitoring

Upcoming Monitoring Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

No Change

Recommended Change:

Institutional Data

Academic Programs Offered:

Undergraduate Programs		
Associate Degrees:	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Baccalaureate Degrees:	74	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Reduced-Credit Bachelor Degrees	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:

Graduate Programs		
Master's Degrees:	20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Specialist Degrees:	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Doctoral Degrees:	2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:
Certificate Programs		
Certificates:	36	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Change:

Contractual Arrangements:

26.0101 Biology/Biological Sciences, General - Master - MS in Biology: Nurse Anesthesia Concentration - Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare through the School of Nurse Anesthesia

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities

Branch Campuses:

No Branch Campuses

- No Change
- Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

Lombardi Middle School, 1520 S Point Rd, Green Bay, Wisconsin 54313 UNITED STATES

Logan High School, 1500 Ranger Dr, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54603 UNITED STATES

UW Health, 610 N. Whitney Way, Suite 440, Madison, Wisconsin 53705 UNITED STATES

Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin, 9200 W. Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53226 UNITED STATES

MacKenzie Center, W7303 County Hwy CS, Poynette, Wisconsin 53955 UNITED STATES

Patrick Marsh Middle School, 1351 Columbus Street, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin 53590 UNITED STATES

No Change

Recommended Change: