

Criterion 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

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

4.A.1 – The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.

Academic units conduct program reviews every five years in rotation with a total of three college-level reviews scheduled per year. A relevant excerpt of each report is presented to the Finance and Budget (F&B) and Faculty and Educational Affairs (FEAC) committees of the Board of Trustees (BOT) by the dean of each college. These reviews include analysis of measures related to student success, operations, faculty workload, inclusive excellence, finances, and an overview of the unit's future strategic plan. The last six full college-level program review reports are available [[Sturm College of Law \(SCOL\)](#), [University College \(UCOL\)](#), [Morgridge College of Education \(MCE\)](#), [Graduate School of Social Work \(GSSW\)](#), [Josef Korbel School of International Studies \(JKSIS\)](#), [Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science \(RSECS\)](#)].

In the last five-year period, every college has been reviewed and discussed with unit-level leadership, senior leadership, and the BOT. In each review, the dean of the unit constructs a narrative based on comprehensive data provided by central administration. The deans and unit-level leadership contextualize the data and use them to inform their five-year strategic plans and identify areas of success, caution, and concern. DU's review process was highlighted recently in an *Academic Impressions* [webcast](#) on "[Strategies for Effective and Actionable Academic Program Reviews](#)."

The BOT receives a summary of all the program openings and closings from the last 10 years and a summary of the enrollment of all programs in the [Active Academic Program Report](#) each January [2017, 2018, and 2019 Active Academic Program Reports]. In January 2020, the BOT reviewed academic program changes from 2009-2019 and concluded that the University has been disciplined and conscientious in opening new academic programs and closing outdated, under-enrolled, and less competitive existing programs [2019 Active Academic Programs Report]. As indicated in this report, over the last ten years, 80 programs have been added and 70 have been closed. Some changes are re-launches of degree programs with different requirements, degree names, or major names, e.g., University College closed the MLS in Global Affairs and reopened it as the MS in Global Community Engagement. Some changes reflect truly new offerings, like the Executive PhD in Business.

The university has found it essential to create regular opportunities for deans to identify academic programs that may be struggling so that immediate interventions may be deployed. To this end, a [Key Performance Indicator Dashboard](#) (KPI) was created in January 2020 to provide deans with current data with built-in thresholds indicating vulnerable program performance.

4.A.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.

The DU [Undergraduate Transfer Policy](#) documents how all credit for prior learning, from Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) credit and other exams to experiential learning are evaluated for credit. It also maintains that only course work recorded on an official transcript per the [University's Transcript Acceptance Policy](#) will be eligible for transfer. Likewise, at the graduate level, the University clearly articulates policies regarding prior learning and credit in the [Graduate Bulletin](#). Ellucian Degree Works Transfer Equivalency provides tools to more efficiently determine how coursework from other institutions is assessed and applied at DU.

There are separate procedures for international transcript evaluation in order to maintain integrity and consistency and conversion to DU's evaluation/grading scale. At the graduate level, the institution employs an external credit evaluation through [Educational Credential Evaluators](#). At the undergraduate level, the [Office of International Student Admission](#) evaluates transcripts.

If students, parents, or other DU community members have questions about transfer equivalencies, they can use an [interactive system](#) to help them through their own unique situation. The university also has a [registration form for experiential learning experiences](#) to count for credit. The form must be completed and submitted to the Office of the Registrar prior to the experience in order to earn credit. An [online experiential learning approval module](#) is being introduced across campus, with 10 departments using the module as of April 2019.

Studying abroad is an important part of the DU experience for both undergraduates and graduates, with more than 150 programs offered in over 50 countries. The Office of Internationalization (INTZ) articulates study abroad guidelines for [course approvals](#) on its [website](#) and in the study abroad [Canvas handbook](#) for students. INTZ has created a comprehensive list of course equivalencies from international institutions that streamlines the transfer review process for students participating in study abroad. INTZ also regularly reviews and updates its Grades and Credits Translation Scale [[AY 2018-19 Updates](#)].

DU supports two ROTC programs, [Air Force ROTC](#) and [Army ROTC](#). While several specialized courses are taught at nearby institutions, the [Air Force ROTC courses](#) and the [Army ROTC courses](#) have DU course codes and are registered for resident credit.

4.A.3 - The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

The university ensures transparency in [undergraduate transfer policies](#) for our students and those who administer these policies. This allows for consistent interpretation and application throughout the institution and, as new types of learning opportunities emerge, allows for responsiveness in a changing educational environment.

For example, DU awards transfer credit for Advanced Placement (AP) and higher-level International Baccalaureate (IB) exam scores that meet the criteria [[AP and IB Credit Form](#)]. For Colorado community college students, the university accepts courses that are a part of the system's general education curriculum and are [guaranteed to transfer](#) to DU's bachelor's degree curriculum. In addition, DU has developed Guided Pathways documents that allow students to graduate from a Colorado community college with a 60-credit associate degree with designation, such as an associate of arts in psychology, and enroll with junior status to complete a bachelor's degree. Some pathways include but are not limited to: [Biology](#), [Business](#), [Economics](#), [French](#), [History](#), and [Theatre](#).

The subject matter, the institution where credits were earned and the course grade affect the [transferability of credits](#) to the Bachelor of Arts Completion Program at UCOL. Usually, courses taken in baccalaureate disciplines of the arts and sciences are readily transferable. Credits from professional programs are considered on a course-by-course basis and are often transferable.

As stated in 4.A.2, the University also provides clear guidelines for transfer credit at the graduate level. Please see the [Graduate Bulletin](#) on graduate transfer policy.

4.A.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.

The University 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. All DU course proposals are managed in Courseleaf and faculty members can edit those courses by submitting a change [[Course Proposal and Course Change Instructions](#)]. Course rigor, pre-requisites, and expectations for student learning are determined by the faculty

and reviewed by the chair of the relevant department, then by the relevant dean, and finally by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. If a student attempts to register for a course for which they have not met prerequisite requirements, the student receives a notification that prerequisites have not been met. If an instructor or department wishes to override a prerequisite on a case-by-case basis for a student, they may do so via an online platform [[instructions](#) and [example](#)].

At the point of faculty hire, educational qualifications are confirmed within human resources. As detailed in Criterion 3.C, ninety percent of full-time faculty have a terminal degree. For departments who hire faculty without a terminal degree, each academic unit has developed a process/procedure for documenting the “otherwise qualified” status of individuals. As detailed in 3.C, all job offers and appointments flow through the provost’s office [[Resources for Faculty Hiring](#)]. Also detailed in 3.C is the process of faculty evaluation in line with the [Policies and Procedures Relating to Faculty Appointment, Promotion and Tenure](#).

DU does not offer dual credit programs linked to any high school. As a part of [The Early Experience Program](#), high school juniors and seniors enroll in un-modified university-level courses, which are assessed and administered within their home departments. Students are graded and receive college-level credit for these experiences.

4.A.5.- The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

As mentioned in 3.A.1, many of our schools and programs have external accreditations that help ensure the quality and rigor of programs. A list of all accredited programs can be found on the [Institutional Research website](#).

4.A.6- The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs fit 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).

The Office of [Career and Professional Development](#) (CPD) is committed to evaluating the success of graduates. The office enhances the career success of students and alumni by providing career education through coaching, programming, and resources; facilitating connections between students, alumni, parents/families, and employers; and offering experiential learning and/or professional development opportunities relevant to students and alumni at all stages of their careers.

To assess the success of graduates and to ensure DU’s degree programs prepare students for advanced study and career success, CPD, as well as individual units, collect and analyze numerous success indicators for our students including:

- First-destination outcomes rates
- Licensure acquisition

- Participation in fellowships and special programs
- Alumni career mobility

First Destination Employment Outcomes

In 2016, DU began participating in national post-graduation outcomes reporting following the guidelines developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). While the institution previously gathered first-destination outcomes data, aligning with these newly developed national standards allows DU to better analyze how its six-month post-graduation outcomes compare to national and regional data [[Class of 2018 Comparative Data](#)].

The first destination survey allows DU to identify the outcomes for recent graduates. For the class of 2019, 90.3% of undergraduates, 92.8% of master's students and 94.7% of doctoral students were either employed, continuing their education, or in military/service activities six months after graduation. In addition, the survey allows DU to understand information such as average salary, internship participation rates, job source, and more. The data collection process is comprehensive to and ensure that the data is representative of DU's student body [[Class of 2017 Outcomes Report](#), [Class of 2018 Outcomes Report](#), [Class of 2019 Outcomes Report](#)].

Applying this data allows DU to consistently achieve rates above the national average. Each year, CPD analyzes the first-destinations outcomes data to identify patterns for students who are employed or those seeking employment to determine if there are predictive factors that might allow us to be proactive with students around career planning and development. For example, CPD identified that students who graduate in November or March are more likely to report "seeking employment" six months after graduation. Utilizing that information, we created a [monthly outreach strategy](#) for these students upon graduation to provide enhanced support. In addition, the analysis has shown us that students who re-engage in career development activities regularly during their academic experiences are more likely to have secured outcomes within six months after graduation. Therefore, CPD set an aggressive goal that by 2025, 90% of students would engage in career development activities annually. In 2017, CPD began carefully documenting [student engagement](#) and reported the information to staff bi-weekly. CPD estimates that the team engaged 35% of undergraduates and 25% of masters students in 2016-2017 as compared 63% of undergraduate students and 36% of master's students in 2018-2019 [[FY19 Campus Advancement Culture Report](#)]. CPD uses information about less engaged students to conduct outreach to faculty regarding curricular integration and to develop new and relevant programming for those audiences.

CPD produces college-level reports that summarize outcomes data for each major and program at the undergraduate and graduate level. When national data become available each fall, CPD [benchmarks post-graduation outcomes rates](#) for all majors and programs so DU can clearly see how each program is performing in comparison to national averages. CPD staff also meet with department chairs to review data and brainstorm opportunities for greater collaboration around career development topics, employer outreach, and internship support.

In addition to collecting and analyzing first-destination employment information, professional units collect specialized reporting following guidelines specific to professional academic programs. For example, Daniels College of Business collects and reports data following the [MBA Career Services and Employer Alliance \(MBA CSEA\)](#) standards [[AACSB Fifth year Continuous](#)

[Improvement Report 2019](#)]. The American Bar Association (ABA) requires reporting on post-graduation outcomes for law degrees measured at 10 months after graduation [[SCOL 2018 Employment Summary](#)]. JKIS tracks the [employment rate, sector and position](#), as well as the [internship completion rates](#) for all graduates following the [Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs \(APSIA\)](#) guidelines, which require reporting on post-graduation outcomes by 12 months after graduation.

Licensure Acquisition

When applicable, academic units also track [licensure pass rates](#). For example, steady improvement has been made at GSSW, with an 85% licensure pass rate in 2013, a 90% in 2015, and a 93% pass rate in 2018 [[GSSW Pass Rates Summary 2015](#), [GSSW Pass Rates 2016-2018](#)]. As another example, the university's pass rates on the Certificated Public Accountant (CPA) test have remained steady from 2014-2018, ranging from a 65.3%-68.1% pass rate, approximately 11.65% higher than the Colorado average and approximately 16.67% higher than the national average [[CPA Pass Rates 2014-2018](#)]. 90% of students who receive a doctoral degree from Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP) become licensed psychologists [[Student Admissions Outcomes Data](#)].

Fellowships and Special Programs

The university, until recently, had a decentralized model of providing support for fellowships and special programs. However, since 2017, CPD staff, in collaboration with campus partners, have worked to increase the number of students securing Fulbright, Boren, and National Nuclear Security Administration's Graduate Fellowship, which have ranged between two to four awardees each year since 2016. These efforts have specifically led to [growth in the number of Fulbright applicants and awardees](#). Therefore, in December 2019, as a part of DU IMPACT 2025, DU committed resources toward a full-time staff member who will focus on fellowships, specifically, though due to the COVID-19 hiring slow-down, this position will be posted at a later date [[Job Description](#), [Fellowship Proposal](#), [Budget](#), [Evaluation Plan](#)]. Success metrics for this role could include an increase in the number of fellowship applicants and winners and enhanced diversity of fellowship applicants.

Student Peace Corps participation has consistently been between five to six students per year. Data from the class of 2019 reflects no Peace Corps volunteers, which is a concerning outlier that may be due to a recruiter change combined with a changing recruitment strategy and application cycle. CPD plans to work closely with the new recruiter to reverse the trend as the Peace Corps experience complements DU's mission and vision.

Alumni Career Mobility Survey

In 2019, DU committed to be a part of the first National Alumni Career Mobility (NACM) Survey to better understand the long-term success of graduates. This national survey collects data from alumni 5 years and 10 years post-graduation focusing on educational satisfaction, career pathways, career satisfaction, economic mobility, and community engagement [DU 2019 Report – forthcoming].

4.B - Core Component

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

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

Argument

4.B.1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

As articulated in Criterion 3.A, DU has clearly stated learning outcomes at the [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) levels.

The university assesses undergraduate general education as part of the larger undergraduate experience. Undergraduate student learning is a product of the student's academic work in major(s), minor(s), electives, and elements of the co-curriculum. The most recent common curriculum assessment results and recommendations for improvement regarding First-Year Seminar (FSEM), Analytic Inquiry – Natural and Physical World, Scientific Inquiry – Natural and Physical World, Analytic Inquiry – Society and Culture, Scientific Inquiry – Society and Culture, and Foreign Language components are available in the [2017-18 Assessment Report](#). The Writing and Advanced Seminar (ASEM) components are led and assessed by the Executive Director of the Writing Program [[University Writing Program Assessment Report](#)].

The [HLC 2014 follow-up report](#) documents the assessment process for the current Common Curriculum. As discussed in Criterion 3, the [General Education Review and Inquiry \(GERI\)](#) committee is re-designing the common curriculum, so DU has temporarily modified assessment efforts.

The university has annual processes to assess student learning and achievement of learning goals at the academic unit level. As detailed in Criterion 3.A.1, the [Office of Teaching and Learning \(OTL\)](#) offers [program assessment services](#) to continually improve student learning in each academic major. OTL coordinates annual program-level assessment processes where every program [submits a report](#) that details how assessment data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted; the interpretations the faculty made of the assessment data; and the actions the faculty took to facilitate continuous improvement in classes and curricula.

Annual academic assessment reports include [assessment blueprints](#) to create [curricula maps](#) that align required coursework with program learning outcomes. While the artifacts for program-specific assessment vary depending on unique program requirements, the process by which assessment is documented is increasingly more uniform. Departments complete and upload a [skeleton document](#) in [DU Assessment](#) to describe what student learning outcomes were assessed

and how assessment informed changes. For example, the [JD Annual Report 2017](#) demonstrates how the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) data were used to improve academic advising processes and how bar passage scores related to experiential learning activities in the curriculum. The [BS Mechanical Engineering Annual Report 2017](#) shows how Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam data were used to update curricula—embedding aspects of the exam through curricular and co-curricular activities—so that students can better prepare. The [Communication Management Annual Report 2017](#) shows how Instructor Insight data and Dropout Detective data were used to provide support for faculty and staff, while forms of indirect data, including faculty surveys and student course evaluations, informed continual improvements to the curriculum.

Many of DU's co-curricular programs are housed within Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence (CLIE). Each department head is responsible for completing the assessment for their area with the support and guidance of divisional leadership [[Behavioral Intervention Assessment Report](#), [Academic Advising Assessment Report](#), and [Disability Services Program Assessment Report](#)]. In addition, the strategic planning analyst supports the assessment for each department. Co-curricular programs within CLIE conduct assessment using the [Cultural Relevance framework](#) and [a report template](#). A diversity of data is leveraged, including national instruments such as the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory, attendance data, and satisfaction surveys. This practice allows co-curricular educators to design assessment processes that are meaningful, manageable, and measurable.

In addition, the [Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning](#) (CCESL) has established procedures for ongoing program assessment and refinement based on program learning goals. CCESL aims to increase students' critical thinking related to social change through community-engaged academic and co-curricular work. To assess this, students are asked to submit written critical reflections at the beginning and end of the academic year, which are scored using a [rubric](#). Over several years, students have continued to demonstrate development of critical thinking, as evidenced by statistically significant increases in critical reflection scores. Individual CCESL programs also have unique learning objectives. For example, to assess the Community Organizing Institute, a workshop designed to increase students' knowledge of community organizing principles for social change, students take a pre-and post-test [[Community Organizing Training Test](#)]. By comparing scores, CCESL determines if learning goals were met as well as any areas of weakness, using data to refine programming. CCESL summarizes key findings annually in public [end of year reports](#) and a detailed assessment report to the Office of the Provost [[2018-2019 End of Year Report](#)].

4.B.2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

To encourage use of assessment information that guides programmatic decisions and creates improvements in student learning, the director of academic assessment (DAA) provides feedback for each annual assessment report following a [rubric for reflection](#) [Examples: [Chemistry Feedback Report](#), [French and Francophone Studies Feedback Report](#), and [Philosophy Feedback Report](#)] and encourages departments to document decisions [Examples: [PhD Higher Education](#) and [MA Religious Studies](#) meeting minutes]. In 2019, when programs submitted their assessment reports, they included information about program improvements [Examples: [Chemistry BS](#)

[Report](#), [Marketing BSBA Report](#), [BA Italian Report](#), [Educational Leadership and Policy Studies PhD Report](#), [GSPP Forensic Psychology Report](#), [Master of Science in Management Report](#)].

For example, in 2017, the Daniels College of Business (Daniels) marketing department redesigned its assessment process to engage more faculty in the department and increase ownership of assessment. Faculty currently use [an assessment template](#) that encourages recommending changes, following up with implementation, and checking back to celebrate improvements. For example, the MS in Marketing program now uses a common rubric for [written](#) and [oral communication](#).

In 2016-2017, there were significant curriculum changes within the Daniels BSBA core for undergraduates with the introduction of two courses: *Strategic Business Communication* and *Pioneering Business for the Public Good*. The course focuses on individual and team communication in the context of written, oral, and listening communication skills, concluding with a not-for-profit client project addressing Denver community issues. *Pioneering Business for the Public Good*, the culminating core course, challenges students to identify a real-world problem and use business tools and knowledge to address the issue. In addition to the assessment report data, Daniels relied on feedback from employers in deciding to focus on closing the gap for the communication and interpersonal effectiveness outcome [[BSBA Assessment Report](#)]. When data from student presentations revealed weaknesses related to the communications learning outcome, among them the ability to tailor one's speaking to particular audiences, the team discussed this and implemented increased formal training for presentations.

As another program-specific assessment example, in 2019, the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) made significant changes to their program and curriculum [[Proposed Program Changes PowerPoint](#)]. The changes included a reduction of required field internship credits from 27 credits to 21 credits and the removal of the *SOWK 4901: Applied Practice Evaluation Research* course requirement [[Email to Students](#), Implementation Plans for [Reduction of Hours](#) and [Research Credits](#), [Memo to Graduate Council](#)]. The changes were informed by national data of comparable MSW programs, GSSW's accreditation standards for Council of Social Work Education (CSWE), faculty guidance, community input from GSSW's field agency representatives, and by GSSW students' feedback regarding their experiences in their courses and field internships. GSSW regularly reviews data from surveys of field instructors in supervised internship learning experiences and from academic instructors for course-based learning. In addition, program administrators and lead faculty for all required courses review student input from course evaluations and from quarterly town hall meetings with students.

In 2013-2014, Materials and Mechanical Engineering (MME) introduced a one-quarter-hour course, [ENME 4900](#), to address both written and oral communication skills among its MS-level graduate students. Through assessment, MME recognized that while the skills were listed as assessed outcomes, the existing program did not offer opportunities to enhance skills, prompting the creation of the course so the students would learn techniques for effectively writing literature reviews and making oral presentations. The results have been positive. For example, for MS non-thesis students, from 2010-2012, there were six students with an average assessment for oral and written skills of 2.66 (on a 4-point scale with 4 being best). From 2016-2019, there were 21 students with an average score of 3.1 [[EMNE 4900 Results Summary](#)].

Additionally, recent MME assessment reviews revealed student understanding of experimentation and testing design fell below desired performance as evaluated during the senior design class.

These skills were taught primarily in a junior design sequence prior to all MME laboratory classes. With this finding, the faculty redesigned ME lab 1 and 2. All skills related to advancing the understanding of fundamental materials (heat transfer, fluids, statics/dynamics, controls) were placed in one-quarter-hour labs associated with lecture-based courses on those subjects. This aligned laboratory experiences with theory and placed the work into the sophomore and junior year, allowing more value to come from the junior-year design experience.

In 2015, the Department of English and Literary Arts, within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, began a program review and discussions about revising the undergraduate curriculum. The department had identified key areas of weakness in students' achievement of two program learning outcomes: identifying the formal qualities of key literary genres and understanding and applying significant theories, methods, and concepts of rhetorical and/or literary theory. In addition, the department identified fundamental issues, such as the shifts of major concentrations away from traditional literacy/historical study toward creative writing and the predominately British/American narrative of literary history, in addition to the need for greater flexibility in scheduling and course creation to accommodate faculty and student interests. After evaluation, the faculty created an "[Intro to the Major](#)" course with a focus on close reading skills, research methods, and an introduction to literary studies. The faculty revised the major in 2015-2016, presenting it to Undergraduate Council for approval in 2016-2017 [[Undergraduate Council Minutes February 2017](#)].

4.B.3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Historically, departments received feedback about program assessment every three years, but since 2016, departments now receive feedback every year from OTL. To increase participation from the DU community, OTL created the [Assessment Fellows \(p. 27\)](#) initiative and recruited 23 faculty and staff members to learn how to provide peer assessment consultations. Several AFs have also spearheaded additional initiatives such as reviewing and providing feedback on program assessment reports, co-developing and co-leading [assessment trainings](#), and serving on the [Assessment Groupware](#) committee to select a new technological platform for collecting, analyzing, and reporting assessment data more efficiently.

To increase participation in assessment reports, in 2018-19, OTL [created a new process](#) in which department chairs and associate deans are more involved, leading to a more intentional connection between assessment and program review. Now, after faculty share a program assessment draft with their department chair, the chair writes a cover letter [[MASPP Example](#)]. Then the associate deans review cover letters that inform their summary statements [[UCOL Example](#)], as discussed in Criterion 4.B.1. Finally, program assessment reports [are showcased on DU Portfolio](#). This practice has [increased participation by 63%](#).

Program assessment reports are submitted annually using the [program assessment skeleton template](#), and then reviewed by the DAA and AFs who provide feedback. The DAA created a [rubric for faculty reflection](#) to provide feedback about how faculty and staff can interact with direct and indirect data (collect, analyze, and interpret); use interpretations of data to continually improve student learning and transform curricula and pedagogical practices; dialogue about student learning; and create equitable distribution of assessment responsibilities.

The [June 2020 status report about assessment](#) and a report about [assessment and inclusion research grants](#) were released. These reports underscore the opportunity to further strengthen the culture of assessment on DU's campus. Therefore, OTL offers [Assessment Meetups](#), [trainings](#), and [exemplary assessment models \(p.12-18\)](#) to strengthen the culture of assessment and improve student learning. OTL is working to shift the culture so that assessment is integrated into the everyday activities of faculty and staff. For example, OTL piloted a [Program Re-Design Institute](#) 2019-20 to encourage faculty and staff to consider how program assessment can feed into [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#). OTL has selected the inaugural [Faculty Scholar of Assessment](#) to expand assessment support and cultivate [interdisciplinary partnerships](#) between departments so graduate students can gain experience facilitating focus groups and departments can gain additional bandwidth for assessment.

4.C - Core Component

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

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

Argument

4.C.1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.

With an [application to participate in the 2016 HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#), DU formally articulated a goal of increasing the fall-to-fall persistence rate.

To advance the HLC Quality Initiative, University Council on Student Success (UCSS) was formed. In April 2019, UCSS began formal discussion around the value of establishing an institution-wide goal for undergraduate student retention and completion. UCSS concluded that, at the undergraduate level, a retention goal of being at the median of its peers, based on IPEDS, is appropriate. The peer list has been determined based on a cluster analysis conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis (IR) using multiple factors [[Analysis of Peer Institutions](#)]. The most recent discussion resulted in a request for inclusion of endowment data to further refine the list [[Meeting Minutes](#)]. Because IPEDS data are only collected for undergraduate students, identifying the starting point for gathering and analyzing graduate level information is challenging without a uniform benchmark. DU is committed to better understanding how to help students succeed in their graduate programs [[FEAC Presentation 2020](#)].

In 2019, the Council surveyed associate deans and department chairs to determine if academic units track student retention and completion and whether goals have been established [[Survey Results](#)]. Results showed that 41.1% of respondents stated that their college/department/division tracks student persistence/retention/completion but only 11.8% of respondents stated that they had established specific goals relating to persistence/retention/completion. Additionally, 47.1% of

respondents stated that they would benefit from additional support for monitoring student persistence/retention/completion.

The University invested in student retention and completion efforts through the creation of an Office of Student Success within Academic Affairs. A Director for Academic and Persistence Initiatives position began in 2017 to coordinate the retention, persistence, and completion efforts at the undergraduate level. In 2019, that position was elevated to [Assistant Provost of Student Success](#) and the purview expanded to include graduate students. In 2019, DU hired a [Student Success Analyst](#) to develop tools, surveys, and internal reports to support the monitoring of student retention and completion at the college and department levels. In 2020, an [Associate Director of CRM Communications](#) was hired to support the adoption and implementation of a communications tool that will support advising infrastructure.

4.C.2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.

At the undergraduate level, retention and persistence rates are analyzed comprehensively one, two, and three years after matriculation for fall first-time, first-year (FTFY) and transfer cohorts. Dimensions of analysis in these reports include demographics, admission qualifications, engagement, and financial need. Four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates are calculated six years after matriculation for FTFY cohorts and financial aid sub-cohorts. Completions are reported and analyzed each year by the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code, award level, gender, and race/ethnicity. General information on retention, persistence, and completions is available publicly in the [University Factbook](#), [Common Data Set \(CDS\)](#), and [peer analysis reports](#).

Detailed analysis reports are available to faculty, staff, and administrators through secure-access tools, such as the BOT [Executive Dashboard and Strategic Metrics Dashboard](#) and [Data Insights](#). Operational analysis of persistence and information on students at risk for attrition is available through *Illume*, a predictive analytics tool provided by Civitas Learning. Illume inputs over 200 variables to produce predictive models that provide better and earlier information to determine needs for intervention for students at risk. Using Illume, staff can then produce lists of at-risk students to share with Student Outreach and Support (SOS), if it is determined that individualized intervention is appropriate.

At the graduate level, IR has produced two dashboards for tracking retention and graduation rates for master's students and retention and completion rates (up to eight years) for doctoral students [[Master's Student Dashboard](#), [Doctoral Student Dashboard](#)].

4.C.3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

The Illume tool has created the opportunity for targeted outreach based on students' predicted likelihood to re-enroll in the next term. For example, the Office of Student Success has used this tool to identify students who have high GPAs but low likelihood to persist to the next term [[GPA Data](#)]. In addition, Student Success has leveraged Illume to promote academic resources known to improve students' academic experiences and overall persistence, including DU's Writing Center, academic coaching, and opportunities to earn additional credit during off-cycle terms. Student Success also has learned that, while students who perform poorly in the FSEM Program and in the

First-Year Writing sequence tend to persist to the next year, they are much less likely to graduate from the institution [[FSEM Data](#)]. DU encourages these students to participate in interterm courses or courses that may support their academic exploration, as DU takes the sign of struggling academically in first-year courses not as a sign of low aptitude, but rather a sign of lacking connection and purpose. The interterm program offers “[Finding Your Way](#)” and “[Unlearning to Learn](#)” courses to support students’ self-discovery.

At the undergraduate level, DU demonstrates similar persistence rates across demographic groups as reflected in [One-Year](#), [Two-Year](#), and [Three-Year](#) persistence reports and graduation rates [[DU Factbook](#)]. In the context of wanting to increase overall retention and graduation rates, this presents a challenge of where to focus energy and new programming. The data reveal observable differences in retention based on financial aid received. Therefore, DU has refined policies around departmental aid given to continuing students. These efforts could result in an average of \$1.4 million that can be re-directed and awarded to students [[Proposal](#)]. Previously, these awards would go unallocated and would rollover into the next academic year.

The most significant investments DU has made to increase student retention and completion are related to efforts in better supporting the faculty advising model and by purchasing the Inspire (CRM) tool from Civitas Learning. Inspire bridges advising and student support efforts across campus by centralizing advising notes, appointment histories, and outreach efforts for individual students. This provides an avenue for faculty and staff to both raise and resolve alerts for individual students and further build on the predictive modeling of Illume. In addition, Student Success has created opportunities to review policies that have created unintended obstacles to retention. DU is investigating a course repeat with grade forgiveness policy for undergraduate and graduate students and are examining late registration fees in order to create a more flexible environment for students to persist. At the graduate level, DU piloted a [Last Mile Funding Initiative](#), to provide students who are within two quarters of graduating small grants to help them make it across the finish line.

At this time, the academic units do not have a standard method to access the retention and graduation rates of their own majors, although the UCSS has reviewed graduation rates of juniors [[Undergraduates’ Time to Graduation Report](#)] and has not identified disparities. Academic units track retention in various ways. For example, UCOL employs a multi-faceted approach to inform current practice and ongoing improvement in student persistence, retention, and program completion. UCOL believes that improving persistence and retention begins at the prospective student inquiry/application stage, and has developed a high-touch pre-enrollment model that includes frequent personal outreach and communications [[Communications Plan](#)]. In addition, UCOL developed a robust data-analytics solution that provides comprehensive enrollment data and metrics at a micro and macro level [[All Enrollment Dashboard](#), [Program Specific Dashboard](#)]. UCOL also reimaged its approach to academic advising; developed a comprehensive onboarding and orientation course; implemented a student retention and success solution ([AspirEDU’s Dropout Detective](#)) in 2016 that alerts academic coaches of possible student academic challenges ([Example Drop Out Report](#)); and revised their career advising model.

4.C.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.)

DU collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs in alignment with definitions and guidelines established for federal reporting in [IPEDS](#). Definitions of cohorts and practices for measuring and reporting retention, persistence, and completion are derived from instructions for the IPEDS [Fall Enrollment](#), [Completions](#), [Graduation Rates](#), [Graduation Rates 200%](#), and [Outcome Measures](#) surveys. Internal and external reporting and analysis of undergraduate student outcomes aligns with these surveys to ensure consistency and accuracy of institutional data across products and platforms, such as the Common Data Set (CDS), state compliance reporting, accreditation reporting, college guides, and ranking surveys.

In past years, persistence reports focused only on statistically significant differences among groups, but the practice was revised to include differences that may be *practically* significant, even if they are not statistically significant, for example if some sub-groups have especially small numbers. [[Fall 2019 EOT Persistence Results Summary](#)]. This led to concerns about misleading interpretations of the differences, as well as limited ability to inform actionable change based on the information. For example, the 2019 one-year persistence report shows a consistent finding that males and out-of-state students return for their second fall quarter at lower rates than the cohort average. DU students of color (87.4%) returned for their second fall quarter at higher rates than white students (85.4%). Also, first-generation students persisted at slightly higher rates (86%) than the overall cohort (85.5%). It is important to consider that while these differences may not reach statistical significance, these are meaningful differences in the experiences of these students.

Additionally, the Office of Student Success surveys students who do not return after their first year [Non-Returning Student Report [2017](#), [2018](#) and [2019](#)]. The non-returning student survey consistently indicates that about half of our undergraduate students who leave DU transfer to public institutions closer to home. Survey respondents often cite personal reasons and financial reasons as the motivation for leaving DU. In March 2019, Student Success began distributing the non-returning student survey to graduate students, but to date, have had very low response rates to the survey. Recently, an option on the survey for students to indicate whether they consent to outreach from our office was added, so that DU will have the option to conduct qualitative research with these students in the future.

Data for IPEDS reporting are DU's most precise measure of graduation rates. These data capture the four- and six-year graduation rates for each cohort, defined by their fall matriculation term, and are reported after the six-year mark. In rare instances, certain students may be later excluded from a cohort (e.g. armed service duty, death) and are not calculated in the graduation rate. The four and six-year graduation rates are calculated on August 31st, six years after fall matriculation. DU's most current four- and six-year graduation rates are for the fall 2013 cohort and were published in fall of 2019 [[Four and Six Year Graduation Rates Over Time](#)].

Four-year undergraduate graduation rates have steadily improved by an average of +1.09% annually from 2004 (56.4%) to 2013 (67.3%). Alternatively, six-year graduation rates have remained steady during the same period, averaging 76.97%.

When examining undergraduate graduation rates among sub-populations, such as white students, students of color, and Pell grant recipients, different trends emerge. First, it is important to note that the overall proportion of students of color increased from 2003 to 2012. In 2003, students of color comprised 13.54% of DU's undergraduate student population, and by 2012 this figure grew to 23.44%. Despite this increase, the graduation rates of students of color remain proportionally more affected by the loss or gain of each additional student, due to the relative overall size of this demographic group compared to white students and may explain some of the large fluctuations discussed below.

The four and six-year graduation rates of students of color have an overall positive trend. On average, the four-year graduation rate of students of color was -3.09% lower and the six-year rate was -3.78% lower than that of white students. However, the overall rate of annual improvement exceeded that of white students. The four-year graduation rate for students of color averaged +1.33% and the six-year rate averaged +0.97%, compared to 1.09% and 0.19% respectively for white students. This indicates that the two groups are on a path of convergence.

Pell-eligible students experienced an average annual +1.99% lift in four-year and a +0.9% increase in six-year graduation rates between 2003 and 2012. In 2003, Pell recipients graduated at -7.8% (four-year) and -6.8% (six-year) lower than the university average. By 2012 the difference between these rates shrunk to +0.3% and -1.7% respectively. This trend illustrates convergence between Pell recipients and the rest of the undergraduate population.