

Assessment Cycle 2025 – 2026

Institutional Research

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

The **Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources** is a responsive administrative service and support unit that provides University leaders with information to be used in strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making and human resource programs and services. The Office assesses, collects, analyzes, reports, and disseminates data on behalf of the University and supports all University units in assessment-based improvement efforts. Reporting of information is in accordance with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and federal and state regulations. The Office develops and delivers innovative human resource programs and services designed to support the mission of the University, including its core services and competencies such as staffing, employee relations, organizational and employee development, risk management, compensation and benefits, human resource information management, and regulatory compliance.

Within the **Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources**, the **Office of Institutional Research (OIR)** focuses on the analysis and provision of data to both internal and external constituents for the purposes of decision-making, accreditation, academic research, strategic planning, grant proposal and post-award reporting, as well as mandated governmental reporting. Strong ties with NSU's Office of Information Technology ensure that OIR continues to exploit the latest tools, data structures and methods to provide leadership and customer service in NSU's data analysis function. OIR works with functional departments to continuously improve processing and validation methods to promote data integrity. OIR also leads in designing enhanced methods to allow the most accurate and effective data sources for analysis and decision-making.

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Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (direct & indirect and quantitative & qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director;
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Institutional Research (OIR)

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. Provide expertise and support for strategic planning, assessment, program design, and continuous improvement.

Measure 1.1. IR will work with deans, department heads and other parties to provide a dashboard to assist with analyzing student course outcomes.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. In 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, OIR looked to provide more proactive assessment metrics for academic units. While 100% of all requests for assessment data were fulfilled promptly in prior years, departments were only requesting assessment data once a year in most cases. To facilitate more timely decision-making and analysis throughout the year, IR decided to work with several academic units to provide dashboards to assist with analysis throughout the year.

As a result, in 2025-2026, OIR developed multiple dashboards to assist in analysis of DFW rates at the course level, with the ability to study data by modality and year. Other dashboards provided a platform for analysis of outcomes for catapult courses (as defined by the Board of Regents' Meauxmentum initiative). In addition, OIR supported academic units with data studies supporting their development of proposals for new or expanded programs, including a Masters in STEM and BFA in Creative Writing.

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Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025-26 results, OIR will review student outcomes dashboards to develop generalized, selectable functionality through filtering and other methods, possibly including new types of visualizations available through Tableau's newest releases. These dashboards will also be assessed for opportunities to optimize performance and take advantage of new functionality, including accessibility features.

Measure 1.2. – IR will research and potentially join a new project with the University of Louisiana System to streamline the development and submission of IPEDS and Board of Regents reporting from a centralized repository.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. In 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, OIR determined that building tutorials for was not a sustainable activity given the pace of changes to dashboards and website technology. Instead, OIR has taken the approach to build more comprehensive tooltips, alt-text, and notes into the dashboards themselves.

As a result, in 2025-2026, OIR began to focus more efforts on consistent definition of key data elements and metrics at the institutional and system level. The evolution of data governance at the system level is foundational to the development of a centralized, system-level data repository.

The Council of Institutional Research Officers (CIRO), a ULS-chartered group, meets biweekly and a standing agenda item is data governance. NSU OIR participates and provides leadership in this group. During these meetings, CIRO members discuss and vote on definitions, values, formats, and usage of reporting terms to be used at system level reporting and dashboards.

These definitions are being used in a pilot project which seeks to build a common data repository (aka, data warehouse) at the system level. The pilot project has been underway for approximately one year. OIR has been involved during 2025-26 in development meetings, data governance discussions, and validation activities for the planned data warehouse.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the 2025-26 results, OIR will identify and define fields and automated processes to allow institutional BoR Completers reporting to be generated from a UL System-level common data source. The overall project is intended, over time, to streamline the development and submission of IPEDS and Board of Regents reporting from a centralized UL System repository.

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SO 2. Develop, provide, and maintain timely and accurate institutional data to internal and external audiences.

Measure 2.1. – IR will package an OIR Notebook in OneNote to house instructions for preparing mandatory federal reporting.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. In 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, OIR decided to package instructions for federal reporting in the IR OneNote instance.

As a result, in 2025-2026, OIR reviewed instruction sets for IPEDS federal reporting. Basic instructions for all IPEDS reports are currently available in the IR OneNote, with the exception of ACTS which was just introduced this year. Additional examples, flows, and files are available on the shared N: drive for each report, and these will continue to be used in fleshing out the OneNote instruction sets. High-level FVT/GE reporting process was documented in the instruction set in 2025 even though the main stewards for that reporting are Registrar and Financial Aid.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025-2026 results, OIR will expand documentation of recurring processes in OneNote to include IPEDS ACTS and selected state reporting.

Measure 2.2. – OIR will work with the Board of Regents and University of Louisiana System to identify, align, and reconcile SSPS and Completer reporting with proposed Formula Funding.

Findings. Target met.

Analysis. In 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, OIR planned to work with BoR's Data Governance Advisory committee to firm up definitions for certain required SSPS and Completer reporting data elements as a prelude to modeling formula funding at NSU.

As a result, in 2025-2026, since OIR was unable to work with the BoR Data Governance Advisory committee (it has not been convened recently and is only convened at the request of BoR) OIR worked with UL System staff and CIRO to set up a data governance review process. At the same time, since NSU CFO has access to an annual report called *FY24 Outcomes Metrics and Summary – Board Approved.xlsx*, OIR has been able to review the mechanism for calculating funding. This workbook documents the parameters used to determine institutional funding in a series of 28 interconnected worksheets.

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OIR has not yet been able to untangle all the elements of the formula, but we know that almost all can be tracked back to Fall SSPS and annual Completers reporting. More work needs to be done to understand the detailed filtering and calculations BoR has designed. Although legislative discussions underway may modify the funding formula again in the coming years, the effort to understand the current elements will not be wasted as they are likely to be included in the future in some form.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025-2026 results, OIR will investigate and document the methodology used in determining the formula for as many elements as possible. Work will begin with the “Pell Completers” and “Adult Completers” and “GradLevel Completers”, then OIR will look into the “Progression” metric which is more complex.

SO 3. Conduct project-based research and analyses.

Measure 3.1 – IR will work with ElevateU to identify, define, and publish dashboard(s) in support of metrics necessary for grant-reporting.

Finding. **Target Met.**

Analysis. In 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, OIR learned that the ElevateU project required additional data points and disaggregations for annual and quarterly compliance reporting. The project has engaged a consultant who assists the team with consistent reporting and data gathering. OIR has been able to interact with this consultant to solidify the specifications needed for a full-function dashboard.

As a result, in 2025-2026, OIR developed, tested and published a consolidated dashboard displaying ElevateU metrics.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025-26 results, OIR will refine the ElevateU dashboard as required and freshen the data to include the most recent terms. OIR will also lead the data gathering and response to the upcoming Economic Impact Survey to be conducted through a contract with Lightcast and underwritten by the UL System.

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Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2025-2026. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through analyzing the AC 2024-2025 results and lessons learned.

SO	Measure	Key Evidence
1	1.1	IR worked with deans, department heads and other parties to provide a dashboard to assist with analyzing student course outcomes.
1	1.2	IR joined a new project with the University of Louisiana System to streamline the development and submission of IPEDS and Board of Regents reporting from a centralized repository. Initial deliverables have included data governance activities including system-level documentation.
2	2.1	IR packaged an OIR Notebook in OneNote to house instructions for preparing mandatory federal reporting.
2	2.2	IR worked with University of Louisiana System and CFO to identify the mechanism used by BoR to calculate funding elements, is studying the complex formulas and data sources as they align to SSPS and Completer reporting.
3	3.1	IR, with ElevateU team, identified, defined, and published a consolidated dashboard to provide metrics for grant-reporting.

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Plan of Action Moving Forward.

SO	Measure	Plan
1	1.1	OIR will review student outcomes dashboards created during the year to develop generalized, selectable functionality through filtering and other methods, possibly including new types of visualizations.
1	1.2	OIR will identify and define fields and automated processes to allow institutional BOR Completers reporting to be generated from a UL System-level common data source.
2	2.1	OIR will expand documentation of recurring processes in OneNote to include ACTS and selected state reporting.
2	2.2	OIR will investigate and document the methodology used in determining the formula for as many elements as possible. Work will begin with the “Pell Completers” and “Adult Completers” and “GradLevel Completers”, then OIR will look into the “Progression” metric which is much more complex.
3	3.1	OIR will refine the ElevateU dashboard as required and freshen the data to include the most recent terms. OIR will also lead the data gathering and response to the upcoming Economic Impact Survey, a research project to be conducted through a contract with Lightcast and underwritten by the University of Louisiana System.