

Assurance Argument

Sterling College - KS

Review date: 4/6/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.
(This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

1.A.1

The mission at Sterling College was developed through a process appropriate for the nature of the institution, is broadly understood within the institution, and guides its academic, planning, and budgeting operations.

Sterling College's mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith" was created during the 1990-1991 academic year under the leadership of Sterling College's eighth President. The faculty was instrumental in the crafting of the statement. The mission statement was [approved by the faculty in February 1991](#) and unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees during its [February 1991 meeting](#). In [October 2015](#) and again in [May 2019](#), the Board of Trustees reaffirmed the mission of the College. The college's [Alma Mater](#), with lyrics penned in the 1960s, sung at opening [Keynote Convocations](#), [commencement exercises](#) and at events throughout the year, also supports the institution's Christ-centered mission.

The mission statement is crucial to the identity of Sterling College. The mission is prominently displayed in many publications, including the [academic catalog](#), [a printed piece](#) used by admissions, and it is [visible](#) in many office areas. On the website, "[What We Believe](#)" is the first option for "About" Sterling, and the page includes Sterling's statement of faith, mission, vision, core values, and learning objectives. In addition, prospective faculty candidates must prepare adequate written responses to [questions](#) about faith, servant leadership, and the College mission before being considered for employment with Sterling College. In 2017, Sterling College appointed a [Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning](#), created a [Faith and Learning webpage](#) with resources, and implemented several learning opportunities for faculty, staff, and students regarding the integration of faith and learning.

In support of its mission, the College adopts a [verse of the year](#) which provides a biblical theme to the living out of the College's Christ-centered mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith."

1.A.2

The College mission statement guides the development of [academic program objectives](#). The faculty in the academic programs have identified various program-level objectives with parts of the institutional mission statement. For example, program objectives which faculty associated with the "creative leader" aspect of the mission are marked with "CL." "TL" is used to identify objectives which correlated with "thoughtful leader;" "CTL" for "creative and thoughtful leader;" and "MCF" for "maturing Christian faith." Faculty have done the same with the College's [general education program objectives](#).

The College mission statement guides the development of [non-academic department mission statements](#). Within assessment worksheets, the department's mission statement is aligned with the College's mission statement.

Part of the mission is training "leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." The Theology and Ministry Department contributes to fulfilling this aspect of the mission. All students are required to take nine credit hours of General Education from the department, which often include [specific reference to the mission statement](#). The College also offers a variety of degrees through the department. The [Theology and Ministry curriculum](#) was redesigned during the 2017-2018 academic year and has begun being offered as of 2018-2019. The most noticeable change is adding a third on-campus major, Christian Thought, joining the previous offerings of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries. Sterling also has several interdisciplinary degrees in ministry, such as Business Ministry and Sports Ministry (the latter formally a concentration of the Christian Ministries degree). Moreover, in January 2019 Sterling received its first set of students in its [Master of Arts in Sports Ministry](#).

Sterling's Christ-centered mission goes beyond the Theology and Ministry Department. All full-time students are required to [attend chapel](#). Residential students who are enrolled full time at Sterling College must earn a total of 18 chapel/convocation credits each semester. Full time commuter students who live outside of Sterling must earn 13 chapels/convocation credits each semester. Successful completion of the chapel/convocation requirements is required for students to graduate from Sterling College. Beyond chapel, Sterling offers a variety of Bible studies, summer missions trips (domestic and foreign), and service opportunities (the biggest of which is "[Love Sterling](#)," focused on giving back to the town of Sterling). Campus ministry has two student-led [Worship Arts teams](#), called "Pursuit" and "Lift," that go to area churches and Christian schools to lead worship services for high school students. The wider Sterling College community -- students, employees, and alumni -- are involved in the spiritual life of the campus through programs like the "[Prayer Warrior](#)" and [Advent](#) devotionals led by Theology and Ministry faculty or students.

Some new initiatives have furthered one aspect of the mission or another. To help develop "creative and thoughtful leaders," the annual [Undergraduate Humanities Conference](#), which

began in spring 2017, gives students the opportunity to present their research in relation to a unifying conference theme, and also to interact with the invited plenary speaker. The Theology and Ministry Department organizes a [“Theology+” series](#), beginning 2018-2019, featuring a lecture-discussion on the intersection of theology with other disciplines, such as [Theology + Science](#). Every year, several academic departments hold [Departmental Chapels](#) which involve students, faculty, and staff.

Faculty have many opportunities to develop their strategies regarding how they contribute to the mission of the institution. Every August, faculty participate in a [Faculty Worship Service](#). During the school-year, [Faith and Learning Coffees](#) are held two or three times every semester. They give faculty and staff the opportunity to discuss current moral and academic issues in relation to their work with students. In the [Faculty Fellows Program](#), faculty gather to read and discuss theological and pedagogical books and apply new ideas to their teaching.

The institution’s student support services also reflect the stated mission. A number of support positions underscore the institution’s commitment “to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith”:

- A [Licensed Counselor](#) is qualified to counsel students from both secular and Christian frameworks. For the fall 2019 semester, the college began contracting with [WellConnect, a Student Assistance Program](#), in order to better serve the student body. WellConnect provides [on-campus and online students](#) with not only a 24/7 helpline for in-the-moment or short-term counseling, coaching, legal or financial help, but also a host of resources available on their website. One of the best parts is that this is available to not only enrolled students, but their household members as well. Another benefit of WellConnect is that employees are able to call and discuss, confidentially, concerns about a student.
- [Resident directors](#) of dormitories are equipped to nurture the spiritual growth of Sterling College students, leading Bible studies as alternatives to the traditional chapel program.
- A [Campus Chaplain](#) oversees the College’s chapel program and helps coordinate a number of ministry initiatives.
- The [Director of Health Service](#) (a licensed Registered Nurse) is available to help students with any [health concerns](#).
- The [Director of Career Services and First-Year Program](#) helps students and alumni find jobs and helps first-year students with their transition to College. The [Director of Academic Support & Student Engagement](#) closely monitors students on academic probation and manages all tutoring. These two positions staff [The Office of Student Success](#).
- [Athletic coaches](#) are encouraged to consider the spiritual and academic dimension of their athletes.
- The [Director of Online Programs](#) helps meet the academic and advising needs of the College's online students.
- The [Student Life Administrative Assistant](#) is the front line in responding to student issues and making referrals to the appropriate campus personnel or office.
- The [Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning](#) creates supportive resources, structures, and strategies to integrate faith and learning, focusing on the critical examination of academic content through the lens of a Christian student.

In addition, [numerous clubs or organizations](#) under the umbrella of the [Student Government Association](#) support students in their extra- and co-curricular endeavors. For example, during the 2018-2019 school-year, the following clubs existed on Sterling College’s campus: Arvada Club-davra; Campus Activities Board; Donut Club; T@SC; M@SC; FSPA; Dungeon Dwellers; Potato, Potato; Student Diversity; English Blend; and FCA. These clubs produce events such as Worship Night (Campus Activities Board) and poetry slams (English Blend).

The [College’s enrollment profile](#) is also consistent with the institutional mission. Though the College is a Christ-centered institution, and while faculty and staff embrace the College’s Christ-centered mission, the College does not require a signed statement of faith from its students. The school’s Christ-centeredness certainly attracts a large number of students who embrace the Christian faith, but the College realizes its mission in part by *developing* "creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." That is, the institution welcomes students of all backgrounds, and in the spirit of the [school’s original charter](#), it is “not in any sense sectarian."

Sterling College leadership also realizes that in order “to develop creative and thoughtful leaders,” students must be required to have some degree of academic ability. Consequently, the College is not an open-admissions institution. First year students who are admitted must meet minimum GPA and ACT or SAT requirements (2.2 high school GPA and ACT composite of 18, or SAT equivalent). Transfer students must have a 2.0 GPA of "transferable credit," but need not submit an ACT score if they are transferring in more than 12 credits or if it has been more than five years since their graduation from high school. [Students who do not meet these minimum requirements](#) must be approved through a selective [admissions committee process](#).

1.A.3

Planning and budgeting priorities align with and support Sterling College's mission to be a Christ-centered institution of higher education. Budgeting documents demonstrate that for the past nine years, the College spent, on average, 27% of its budget on instruction and academic support along with 24% of its budget serving students in their academic, social and spiritual pursuits.

Expenses	June 2010	June 2011	June 2012	June 2013	June 2014	June 2015	June 2016	June 2017
Instruction	2,676,110	2,762,970	2,877, 813	2,914,818	2,824,204	2,964,088	3,161,668	3,255,940
Academic Support	833,945	765,889	807,921	934,783	914,038	1,044,460	1,050,862	1,064,882
Student Services	2,667,384	2,873,837	2,894,784	3,024,315	3,153,679	3,308,752	3,894,105	3,823,381
Institutional support	2,544,144	2,733,709	3,281,917	2,472,693	2,712,346	2,896,106	2,993,397	2,817,449
Auxiliary Enterprises	3,163,520	3,149,073	3,213,684	3,337,519	3,512,961	3,867,501	3,809,606	3,753,090

Total Expenses	11,885,103	12,285,478	13,076,122	12,684,128	13,117,228	14,080,907	14,909,638	14,714,742
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Consistent with its Christ-centered mission, the College employs a [Campus Chaplain](#) who also supports cross-cultural mission experiences throughout the year through planned academic experiences such as budgeted [summer mission trips](#) and by [encouraging staff](#) to serve as mission team leaders by granting staff PTO days.

Moreover, the College's [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) is geared toward guarding, guiding, and enriching the academic ethos of the College by meeting the following objectives:

- Strengthen the academic profile
- Foster a vibrant spiritual community
- Grow enrollment strategically
- Manage regulatory and compliance commitments
- Develop sustainable giving
- Support outstanding faculty and staff
- Equip students for excellence
- Improve facilities, technology and infrastructure

The [2012-2016 Strategic Plan](#) existed to strengthen, enrich, and develop the academic program through a number of metrics outlined in 2012. Through focusing on this plan, the faculty profile has been strengthened, an [independent interdisciplinary major](#) was established and several successful [educational technology initiatives](#) have been implemented. Another example of the accomplishment of the strategic plan is the [Freeman Lecture Series](#). Sterling College now hosts an outstanding Christian speaker in both the fall and spring semesters who speaks to the value of servant leadership, a concept that is embedded in our mission. The lecture series is funded by a private donor whose desire was to see students challenged academically, spiritually and professionally.

Practical resources were applied to meeting some of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan objectives. For example, a [room discount](#) has been offered to students who qualify with exemplary ACT scores in order to meet the goal of strengthening new programs such as the [Honors program](#), which re-launched in 2012. Sterling is also the Kansas alpha chapter of the [Alpha Chi Honor Society](#), with an active membership on campus. While supporting top students is an important goal, the focus of the current administration is to resource all students who have chosen Sterling College rather than trying to increase student selectivity as a primary objective.

The strategic plan for 2016-2020 was developed by faculty, staff, and administration. It was approved by the board of trustees in May 2016 and guides the current planning and budgeting activities of the College through the year 2020.

In analyzing the [2012-2016 Strategic Plan](#) the college identified the need to expand the scope of the plan outside of academics. While strengthening the academic profile remains a primary goal of the 2016-2020 plan, [several other areas](#) are also addressed including the management of regulatory and compliance commitments. The ability to manage federal, state and local compliance issues in a timely, consistent and thorough manner will strengthen the College. In

addition, lack of compliance poses one of the greatest potential financial threats to the financial health of Sterling College.

Since the 2009 commission team suggested that the College needed to include broader involvement in the next strategic plan, the college engaged in a strategic planning process that included a broad spectrum of campus and community participants. Likewise, the planning for the [2016 strategic plan invited much broader involvement](#) than did the strategic plan which was in place in 2009. The perspectives of various internal and external constituent groups including employees, administration, the [National Advisory Council](#) and the [Board of Trustees](#) were sought. A valuable part of this process was the [strategic planning luncheons](#) for faculty and staff members that took place between November 2015 and February 2016. These luncheons gave employees input into mission-critical initiatives that had been proposed and allowed them to propose new programs or services that would better serve our students or constituents with the end result being the current [2016 - 2020 Guard and Guide Strategic Plan](#).

To correct the non-consultative administrative style of the mid 2000s, the College has reinstated monthly [faculty as a whole meetings](#). In these meetings, faculty are informed of administrative and academic issues and concerns and are asked to contribute feedback and opinions regarding potential changes. [The Rafter 360](#) proposal is a good example of how academic decisions by administrators are not made without [consulting and informing](#) faculty.

In addition to the faculty as a whole meetings, [department chairs](#) meet regularly each month to discuss issues related to faculty governance at the department level. Over the past six years, the College has become much more consultative in its administrative style by involving a larger number of community stakeholders in the day-to-day challenges facing the College.

Since the 2009 visit, the Constitution and Bylaws of the faculty council have been revised by the faculty and approved by the President. The [2011 Constitution and Bylaws](#) which was updated slightly in May 2018 (see the [Current Constitution](#) and [Bylaws](#)), guarantees a consultative administrative style. It sets up a reciprocal framework whereby the faculty have a means of offering recommendations to the President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the administration can communicate with a representative body of faculty.

New [Faculty Council members](#) are elected each academic year by the faculty, without influence from administration, so those members truly represent the faculty.

Within the faculty governance standing committee structure, faculty have the ability to appoint [ad hoc committees](#) to look at specific matters assigned to them by any faculty committee. Recent ad hoc committees have included the faculty handbook revision committee, the department restructure committee, and a committee considering changes to faculty rank, compensation, and tenure.

Sources

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1.B.1 and 2

So that both internal and external constituents may easily access them, all mission documents may be found on the College's website, in the [Academic Catalog](#), in the [Faculty Handbook](#), in the [Employee Handbook](#), in the [Student Handbook](#) and in the [Board of Trustees By-Laws](#). In addition, prospective students to Sterling College receive a [Faith Brochure](#) from Admissions with both the Mission and Core Values stated. The mission documents include the following:

[Mission Statement](#)

"To develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith."

[Vision Statement](#)

"To be recognized as the finest Christ-centered, servant leadership development-focused, liberal arts experience in the Great Plains."

[Core Values](#)

Our core values flow out of our mission and vision and are the pillars which guide our relationships with students and community and strategic partners. The statement which introduces the core values acknowledges the need for integrity and quality and the role the institution plays in a larger society. Sterling College's core values were formally adopted by the Board of Trustees at the February 2000 Board meeting, and reaffirmed, along with the mission, vision, institutional learning objectives, and the faith and belief statements, at the [February 2009](#), [October 2015](#) and [May 2019 Board](#) meetings.

The value of "faith" helps to define our mission as a Christian College. "Calling" makes clear that Sterling College is committed to the future success of our most important constituents --

students. "Learning" and "integrity" emphasize the College's commitment to high academic standards. "Service" acknowledges the commitment the College makes to servant leadership and to the benefits the institution and its members make to society. And finally, "community" acknowledges the diversity of the world in which we serve as members of the body of Christ and the attitude of respect we should carry in that service.

[Our Priorities](#) and [Our Process](#)

The College's statement of priorities articulates the framework by which the institutional mission is fulfilled and identifies both internal and external constituencies. The College's statement concerning its operational process describes our institutional identity as a primarily residential Christian liberal arts College and our commitment to high academic standards.

Our [Statement of Faith](#):

Sterling College's statement of faith is foundational in the assessment of how well it develops leaders who "understand a maturing Christian faith." The College's definition of faith is the basis for items related to "[a maturing Christian faith,](#)" in the assessment of the Sterling College general education core. While the College respects the theological diversity within the Christian community (abiding by the original charter's vision of being "not in any sense sectarian"), it is unapologetic about its Reformed Christian heritage, with a Statement of Faith that is distinctively Protestant. Faculty and staff candidates applying to Sterling College must respond to a [series of questions](#) which enable the President, Vice Presidents, and other leaders of the hiring department to evaluate the missional fit of the faculty candidate.

1.B.3

Institutional Learning Objectives

The mission documents, mission, vision, core values, priorities, process, and statement of faith described above are the basis for the faculty-created and Board-approved [Institutional Learning Objectives](#). The Institutional Learning Objectives are the basis of [program objectives](#) developed by faculty in the individual academic program areas which are assessed annually by faculty at the course and program level. To support the mission of the college, a [Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning](#) was appointed in 2017 and information about this initiative is available on [the college's website](#).

Collectively, the institutional learning objectives underscore the College's commitment to the high academic standards necessary for sustaining and advancing excellence in higher education, as stated in the College's [Philosophy of Education](#). The institutional learning objectives formally and publicly state the student learning goals for which the College holds itself accountable. Most importantly, they become the practical way Sterling College lives out its mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith."

Sources

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

1.C.1 and 2

Sterling College understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society by addressing its role in a multicultural society and exhibiting attention to human diversity in its processes and activities.

The Sterling College mission—"to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith"—implies that graduates will serve their greater communities through leadership and a life of faith. Meeting the leadership challenges of such a diverse world requires creativity and thoughtfulness, and the Sterling College curriculum equips students with knowledge about the world and its cultures. [Institutional-level](#) and [program-level learning objectives](#) for students are aligned with curricula, and institutional objective 2, "The Sterling College graduate will demonstrate understanding of relationships between his or her chosen area of study and the world and its cultures" and [general education objective 10](#), "experience and value civic and intercultural engagement" explicitly underscore the College's intentionality about addressing its role in a multicultural society.

In order to meet those objectives, many courses at the institution incorporate a diversity or multicultural experience. A few highlights include:

- The Honors Program offered a course in 2018, [HR289: Civil Rights Movement](#) that involved [travel to key Civil Rights landmarks](#) in Tennessee and Alabama.
- In the Athletic Training Program, students are required to obtain [clinical observation hours](#) at a general medical/family practice facility which allows students to work with patients from a variety of cultures, beliefs, backgrounds, financial situations, insured states, ages, and genders.
- Education students have many opportunities to interact with diverse populations, and during their Kansas Performance Teaching Portfolio ([KPTP](#)), they must identify multicultural students within their clinical placement, address adaptations and accommodations, and create assessments based on student need.
- History majors must take [HI261](#), [HI461](#), both Topics in Non-Western History courses, which includes engagement with the history of a particular region of the world that is different in culture from our own. Topics for the class have included History of the Middle East, Latin American History, and History of Japan.

- The Language and Literature department has a number of classes which incorporate readings and discussion of literary works produced by ethnic minorities, non-U.S. writers, and/or women. Classes include [LL356: Young Adult Literature](#), [LL 289: African Literature](#), [LL289: Native American Literature](#), LL251 and LL252: [World Literature I and II](#) and [LL151: Introduction to Literature](#).
- The Theology and Ministry department has a number of classes which challenge students with diversity issues, such as [TM340: Gender and Ethnic Issues in Ministry](#), TM363: World Religions (offered previously as [TM262: World Religions](#)), TM365: Urban Entry (previously [TM209: Urban Entry](#)), and TM438: Theology and Society (previously [TM489: Applied Theology](#)). These courses reflect variously on issues of race, gender, class, politics, culture, religion, and social location.

Beyond the classroom, our academic departments have implemented and initiated other activities and programs that carry out our commitment to educate for a multicultural society. We provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to learn about diverse cultures from a variety of perspectives. These efforts, listed below, also respond to a stated opportunity in the 2016 Assurance Argument (1.S):

- The Honors Program hosts educational opportunities for students to learn about injustice and racism in our society, such as a guest lecture titled [“The Murder of Emmett Till”](#).
- The Language and Literature Department invited [Marwa Ghazali](#) to campus to speak about the Somali Civil War and African Refugee Stories.
- The Undergraduate Humanities Conference in 2018 featured [Jemar Tisby](#), President of *The Witness: A Black Christian Collective*, who gave a lecture titled “A Racial Reformation.”
- The Art and Design Department invited [Yvonne Osei](#), a German-born Ghanaian artist, to give a lecture, “Who Discovers the Discoverer?” in April 2019.
- In Spring 2019, Faculty Council approved the creation of an ad-hoc [Faculty Diversity Committee](#). This committee will research diversity issues and recruit staff and students to participate.
- The Student Diversity Club started in the 2017-2018 school year with the [support of a faculty advisor](#) and has hosted gatherings for students such as “Salsa Night” and a film viewing of *The Hate U Give*.
- The Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning [received a grant](#) from the Lilly Fellows Program that will provide diversity training for all faculty from 2019-2021, beginning with faculty attending the [CCCU Diversity and Inclusion Conference](#) at George Fox University in October 2019.

Early in the Academic Catalog, the College declares its commitment to [non-discrimination](#). Each syllabus is also required to include a [non-discrimination](#) and an [accommodation statement](#).

Other mission documents also serve as evidence that the College understands its role in a multicultural society. The Sterling College core values are introduced by [a pledge](#) that underscores the College’s commitment to diversity. In its declaration to labor in “active, vital partnership with church, community, and strategic partners,” the College not only acknowledges but also embraces its role in a diverse world. Recognizing that partnership with church,

community, and strategic partners is “vital” implies an organizational awareness of diversity’s importance, for these constituencies can be as diverse as the world itself.

Furthermore, the [core value of community](#) specifically recognizes the diversity of Sterling College learners and other internal constituencies, for the College has defined this value as “mutual respect amid diversity as members of the body of Christ.” Likewise, Sterling’s [institutional learning objectives](#) includes the goal that “The Sterling College graduate will: ... Demonstrate understanding of relationships between his or her chosen area of study and the world and its cultures.” Through this organizational definition, the College publicly welcomes the diversity represented within the campus community. Demographically, Sterling College is much more diverse than the surrounding community. According to 2018 census information, [Rice County](#) has a minority population of 6.2%, while in fall 2018, minority enrollment at Sterling College was 38%. This is in keeping with the national average. In 2018, the [U.S. Census Bureau, “Quick Facts”](#) estimated that 60.7% of the population is non-Hispanic white and 39.3% is minority. The ethnic diversity of Sterling College also [compares favorably](#) with the other Kansas Independent College Association (KICA) colleges.

[Enrollment data](#) over the last ten years shows the increasing value Sterling College has put on attracting minority students.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Minority Students	17%	20%	19%	20.5%	23%	25.5%	31%	31%	36%	38%	37%

The College states in its mission document titled ["Our Priorities"](#) that its “curriculum, activities, and student support services are designed to encourage and develop the skills necessary to understand our world and create positive change in it.” Understanding of the diverse world in which we live cannot occur without learning activities that promote understanding of such a diverse world. The College recognizes the responsibility to familiarize students with and teach them about cultural issues they may encounter while they work to create positive change in a diverse world.

The “Our Priorities” document also states that the College seeks to “cultivate a Christ-centered worldview through which students are able to explore and understand themselves, their faith, their *environment*, and their *heritage*” (emphases added). Implicit in this statement is the College’s understanding that its student body represents a number of environments and heritages.

As stated in the mission document titled ["Our Process"](#):

"The College works to achieve its priorities through the learning experiences of the liberal arts curriculum and through faculty/student interactions. The liberal arts curriculum is designed to build breadth and depth of understanding through a general education core, specialization in a major, and attention within majors to career preparation."

As noted above, Sterling College views “civic and intercultural engagement” (general objective 10) as necessary for a “breadth and depth of understanding.”

In addition to having formal statements that underscore how the College values human diversity, a number of institutional and academic activities also underscore that the College understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society. Below are brief summaries of a few of these activities:

- - The Education Department awards a [Diversity Scholarship](#) every year.
 - The College promotes and supports a number of [mission trips](#) every year, to countries that include China, Ghana, Panama, and others.
 - The College regularly sends students to Washington, D.C. to participate in events hosted by the [National Student Leadership Forum](#) which “encourages students to be better individuals as well as leaders by challenging their decision-making, values and beliefs systems using the platform of servant leadership.”
 - [Tuition Remission](#) for one course per semester for students over age 60.
 - In 2015, the College introduced the annual [Peacemakers Convocation](#) which occurs during [Black History Month](#) each year. It affords students, faculty, staff, and community members the opportunity to hear from African American leaders who have been transformative in local, regional, and national culture.
 - [Special missions chapels](#) are common at Sterling College. During these chapel services, students hear other students discuss their experiences with peoples from across the world.
 - In [ED205: Cultural Diversity in Education](#), a required course for all Education majors, students demonstrate their understanding of a maturing Christian faith by exploring the relationships between current cultural values and their impact on American classrooms.
 - Students who participate in a College-sponsored mission trip are required to take [TM107: Training for Cross-Cultural Ministry](#).
 - Similarly, students in the Athletic Training program must take [AT420: Psychosocial Intervention](#) (or [AT541](#)) which familiarizes students with relevant psychosocial problems that student-athletes may encounter.
 - Ten ministry-teams students participated in the [Global Leadership Summit](#) in fall 2015.
 - In December 2018, Student Life and several Sterling College faculty organized an [Open Forum Discussion on Race](#) that allowed students to share their experiences and concerns on campus and in the community.
 - In spring 2014, a group of Sterling College students spent their spring break in Wilmington, Delaware working with [Urban Promise](#), a ministry which serves children and youth in urban settings. We continue to have a connection with this ministry, including listing them among our [Job & Internship Opportunities](#).
 - We have sent students to the summer internship program at Yellowstone Theological Institute, whose President has delivered Chapel messages at Sterling and also written [a musical composition for our band](#).

- In fall 2019, Student Life launched an initiative to provide training, [Diversity Awareness for Students](#), to all students.

Student life has also expressed its value of diversity in its [Community Life Covenant](#). The first statement of the covenant, which all residential students, regardless of age or residency status, must sign is "I will endeavor to live in the spirit of honesty, integrity, and harmony, valuing the rights of others and the contributions of those who come from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and racial/ethnic origins."

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1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

Through its actions and decisions, Sterling College demonstrates its commitment to the public good through its engagement with identified external constituencies and communities of interest.

1.D.1

In a number of ways, Sterling College's actions and decisions reflect an understanding that, as an educational organization, the institution serves not just its internal constituencies but also the public. In recent years, the College has transitioned from having a [National Advisory Council](#) (NAC) comprised of twenty-two friends and supporters of the college to [Academic Advisory Boards](#). These boards work directly with respective academic disciplines along with the faculty and the students to provide external wisdom, accountability, and networking.

Since 2009 the College has facilitated the annual [Love Sterling](#). Occurring one Saturday every April, Love Sterling brings the College and the community together to improve city, business, and residential buildings and properties. The event secures between 200–300 volunteers, many of them Sterling College students, who spend a Saturday engaged in cleaning and light construction projects in the Sterling Community. At the end of the day, all volunteers gather at Sterling Lake for a dinner and a celebration of the work that has been accomplished.

The College also makes its facilities available to the local community and groups passing through Sterling. The Sterling Public Schools (USD 376) [utilize the College's football field and track](#) for junior high and high school sporting events, and the College hosts a high school basketball [tournament](#) every January, bringing eight boys and girls teams to the campus and community and providing a valuable learning opportunity for students in the Sports Management program who are taking [SM315: Sport Public Relations](#). The [Kansas Christian Ashrams](#) host a retreat on the College's campus every summer. Other groups that use the College's facilities include [Rice Country Kids' Camp](#) and the [Sterling High School National Honor Society](#). The [College cafeteria is open](#) to community members during regularly scheduled meal hours and law enforcement eat for free.

The college hosts a number of lectures that are open to the public. The most notable is the Freeman Lecture series, on servant leadership, which occurs once each in the fall and spring. Also prominent are the [Oscar Schmidt Lectures](#) on the free-market economy, and the [Peacemakers Convocation](#) on racial reconciliation. Departments and other offices on campus also initiate public lectures. For example, since 2014, once per semester the Criminal Justice program has hosted a [keynote speaker](#). The Language and Literature Department has brought in a number of speakers, including the [Man Booker Prize-finalist Chigozie Obioma](#) in the fall of 2016. In 2016, the education department hosted the [Santa Fe Children's Literature Festival](#). Over 1500 students and their teachers were on campus September 15, 2016 to hear readings and talks by children's author Christine Taylor-Butler and children's illustrator Brad Sneed. The Theology and Ministry Department hosts [an annual fall conference series](#) (starting in 2017) that has been well attended by the public, as well as members of the college community. On April 29, 2019, the Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning partnered with Humanities Kansas to offer a symposium, [“Virtues of Place: Wendell Berry and Rural Kansas”](#) which was free and open to the public.

The Sterling College arts programs have a long-standing tradition of support, cooperation, and partnership with area high schools. For over 30 years the Sterling College Theatre department has hosted an annual [Theatre Workshop](#) which features active and informative workshops in the morning (including sessions on stage combat, scenic painting skills, choreography, auditioning and several others) followed by an afternoon performance of the spring main stage show – which is traditionally a classic from Shakespeare to Tennessee Williams. A major undertaking organized by the College Admissions Office, the Theatre Workshop has brought crowds of 200 to 500 high school students to campus each year. The Sterling College Music department hosts a [Composer Series](#). Each fall a professional composer/arranger is brought to campus to work with Sterling choirs and select high school students. The two- to three-day event culminates with a concert conducted by the guest composer/arranger. Given Sterling’s rural location many small high schools in the area do not have active theatre programs. [Sterling theatre and art students](#) have assisted area high schools in providing leadership from directing to scene design and construction to choreography. Schools who have benefited from Sterling’s theatre and art assistance include smaller schools like Little River and Inman to larger schools like McPherson, Goddard, Campus, Clearwater, and Andover.

Sterling College has hosted [high school debate and forensics tournaments](#). In the spring of 2019, thirty Kansas high-school students attended an [“Experience the Sciences”](#) day at Sterling College. In November 2018, the Language and Literature Department offered a [Young Writers Contest](#) to high school students and hosted over 20 students for a writing workshop.

Sterling College faculty, staff, and administration serve the community in various capacities. The [music faculty](#) avail themselves to area high schools and junior highs as clinicians to help prepare choral and instrumental groups, ensembles and soloists for performances and contests. In addition they have worked with strong high school students in providing private lessons. The Language and Literature faculty also [visit high school classrooms](#) in the area. The Theology and Ministry Department faculty often serve as guest preachers or teachers at local churches. A number serve in various professional and voluntary roles outside of the College. For example, Hans Nickel (Assistant Professor of Sports Management), among other roles, is currently the

[Chair of the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference's Executive Committee](#) (2019-2021), having served as Chair-Elect before that (2017-2019), and he also served on the [Faculty Athletics Representatives Association of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics](#) (2017-2020, chair: 2018-2019). Ken Brown (Vice-President for Academic Affairs) served as President on the [local school district's Board of Education](#), while Asst. Professor Larry Brownlee now serves on the BOE. Many others give of their time and talents, as well.

Students, likewise, serve in various ways. The student [Worship Arts Teams](#), Pursuit and Lift, perform at churches, Christian high schools, camps, and other venues. Sterling has a rich tradition of missions trips, both domestic and foreign, that serve those with various needs in tangible ways. For example, in the spring of 2017, a Language and Literature faculty member [took six students to Nepal](#) where they provided educational and spiritual programs at schools and churches and collected information in villages about their water supply.

Academic programs also interact with the community. Many majors require a service project of some kind, often a one or two credit-hour class such as the Art & Design Department's [Service Project Lab](#). Students in the Writing and Editing major complete Advanced Composition and Research, which requires a [service project](#) that draws attention to local stories and resources and culminates in a presentation open to the public.

Additionally, students in the Athletic Training program, one of the premier athletic training programs in the region, [serve the local communities through internships and practicum experiences](#). Sterling College, along with the Rice County Healthcare Foundation, Sterling High School, Lyons High School, and Little River High School reached an agreement that began in 2015. The [agreement](#) sends Certified Athletic Trainers to the high schools in a Graduate Assistant position through Sterling College. This renewable two-year agreement provides ATs at the high schools for coverage of all home practices, home contests, and away football games.

The Sterling College [Office of Financial Aid](#) travels to numerous Central Kansas high schools to offer high school students and families an opportunity to learn about financial processes and procedures and to receive help completing their FAFSA.

Sterling College hosted a [Sterling College Education Day](#) in February 2016 in which 45-50 future educators from area high schools and community colleges, in addition to our own education students, attended sessions on various aspects of the education classroom and heard a presentation by the Kansas Teachers of the Year.

The Education Department has [agreements](#) with Sterling, Lyons, and Hutchinson school districts to provide para-educators and students to assist in special-needs classrooms when appropriate.

1.D.2

As a [not-for-profit institution](#) (501c3), the institution is not obligated to investors. Moreover, although it is a faith-based institution, the College is proudly non-denominational and thus has no denominational or "parent-organization" responsibilities.

1.D.3

The College also engages with external constituencies and responds to their needs. The institution is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, and its Chandler Board Room in the cafeteria has been the meeting place for the local [Rotary Club](#) for decades. The [Kansas Retired School Personnel](#) group meets in Chandler Board Room four times a year. Furthermore, up until 2018, the College allowed the [Kansas Department of Commerce's Office of Rural Opportunity](#) to maintain a regional office on campus.

A number of other examples of the College engaging with and responding to the needs of external constituencies are listed below:

- The College maintains [articulation agreements](#) with [various community colleges](#) throughout the state to facilitate the transfer of their students to Sterling College.
- The College has an articulation agreement with [Emporia State University](#) that guarantees Sterling College Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting admission to Emporia State University's Master of Accountancy program when those graduates have a 2.75 GPA and score a 450 on the GMAT.
- The College has an articulation agreement with [Southwest Baptist University's](#) Doctor of Physical Therapy program that guarantees that graduates from the health science major will have their prerequisites for the DPT program at Southwest Baptist fulfilled.
- In fall 2018, the College finalized an [articulation agreement with Wichita State University](#) in Biomedical Engineering and Industrial Engineering, by which students would receive training and gain bachelor's degrees from both institutions.
- Every Thanksgiving, [a free community dinner](#) is held in the College's cafeteria.
- For over 20 years, Sterling College hosted an annual "[Sleepless in Sterling](#)" youth retreat for the churches within the Southern Kansas Presbytery and the facilities are still open to them. The event brought over 100 youth to campus for three days and two nights and utilizes much of the campus.
- The College makes its swimming pool [available to the public](#), and because it is the only pool in the county open during the fall and spring, is used by people from Sterling and Lyons.
- The track around the football field is also available for [community use](#) when the complex is not being used by USD 376 or the College for events.
- The student news website, [MySC.TV](#), is published throughout each academic year, keeping the community informed about events and affairs at the College.
- Two major College/community events happen each fall: [Homecoming](#) and [Warrior Fest](#), each of which are big draws for community and friends of Sterling and Sterling College.

Sterling College works with a number of parties and is affiliated with various organizations that enhance its capacity to provide quality higher education.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities ([CCCU](#))

Sterling College is one of approximately 180 Christian institutions around the world that belong to the CCCU. The purpose of the CCCU is to help colleges and universities more effectively

integrate faith in learning. Through its Best Semester program, the CCCU offers students who attend member colleges the chance to study both abroad and at various locations within the United States. The organization coordinates and sponsors professional development events for the faculty and staff of member institutions, and it offers publications, research, and other helpful resources to aid professionals who work in Christian higher education. Employees of member institutions may also subscribe to CCCU-sponsored electronics mailing lists and dialogue about important issues with experts at other colleges and universities.

Kansas Independent College Association ([KICA](#))

Sterling College is one of 18 member colleges of the Kansas Independent College Association. The KICA "develops and enhances the competitive standing of its 18 member independent, non-profit, regionally accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities and strives to assure opportunity and choice in higher education for all students. The KICA provides another avenue of support for Sterling College administrators as the College competes with larger Kansas Regent colleges and universities.

The KICA exists to:

1. provide facilities and services for advancement of higher education;
2. advance interests and effectiveness of members;
3. improve efficiency of operations for members;
4. develop additional sources of revenue
5. maximize the advantages of geographic proximity; and
6. promote collegiality.

Through the KICA, Sterling College is able to offer an [education endorsement in Special Education](#). The Special Education (SPED) courses are taught at the McPherson offices of the KICA, but the courses and program are approved by the Academic Affairs committee and Faculty Council at Sterling College. Sterling College education faculty are involved in the hiring and evaluation of the SPED faculty, and Sterling College enrolls students and transcribes the credit for the SPED courses Sterling College students take.

The KICA allows the College to participate in a cooperative benefits program for employees, participate in joint professional development opportunities with other KICA institutions, and provides electronic mailing lists so that staff and administrators of member institutions can communicate with each other easily.

[The Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture](#)

Sterling College is one of 27 colleges that have partnered with the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture to provide college students with internships in a major urban area. The Chicago Center specializes in coordinating Chicago-based internships with students' academic areas of interest. The partnership has been especially helpful to the College's Education department, as it allows students to complete their student teaching while encountering cultural diversity they

would not otherwise encounter in central Kansas. Consequently, students develop skills necessary for responsibilities in an urban environment.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

In January 2017, Sterling College [entered into a strategic partnership](#) with the Presbytery of the Great Plains of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). Sterling College and the EPC share a desire to assist students in developing a devoted heart, a courageous mind and a purposeful soul based on faith in Jesus Christ. The partnership is based upon a shared commitment to biblical truth as pursued within the reformed and evangelical tradition.

The partnership allows for Sterling College to attend and support the EPC and the Great Plains Presbytery at events and by making facilities, faculty, students and research capabilities available through events that further the missions of both parties. The Great Plains Presbytery will encourage churches to pray for the College and encourage youth in their congregations to consider Sterling. Sterling College groups such as choir, ministry and teaching teams from the College will visit member churches of the Presbytery.

Lilly Fellows Program (LFP)

In 2015, Sterling College [joined the Lilly Fellows Program](#), a network consisting of 100 church-related colleges and universities. The mission of the LFP is “to strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning in the twenty-first century.” The LFP hosts an annual national conference on a topic related to the integration of faith and learning, which the Sterling College Lilly Faculty Representative has attended since 2016. The conference also includes an Administrators’ Workshop, which is open to senior-level administrators and provides resources and training for leaders in church-related colleges and universities.

Since becoming a member of the LFP network, Sterling College has applied for and received two grants which have supported faculty development in relation to the institution’s mission. A grant awarded for the 2018-2019 academic year was titled [“Understanding Christian Faith,”](#) and an approved grant to be funded for two years beginning in fall 2019 is titled [“Mentoring for Community, Diversity, and Hospitality”](#).

In summary, Sterling College demonstrates commitment to the public good. Particularly through facility sharing, but also through service and strategic partnerships, the institution is intentional about meeting the needs of its identified external constituencies.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

The mission of Sterling College is articulated publicly, is current, and identifies and guides the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the College's higher education programs and services it provides to the community.

The mission of Sterling College, "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith," was created and approved in 1991 through a process which included a broad section of the campus culture. The [mission has been reaffirmed most recently in 2019](#) and permeates the culture of the College. The mission documents are clear and drive the academic enterprise of the College and informs not only institutional learning objectives, but also departmental and course objectives and is visible across campus.

All employees are required to affirm the mission of the College upon application for employment and fulfilling the mission of the College is a stated objective of every job description. The alignment between the College's mission and its activities is strong. The core values are integrated across the campus community and help create a learning-focused campus culture.

The College's enrollment profile and selectivity process underscores its commitment to academic achievement. Simultaneously, the College provides adequate resources to help students who are ill-prepared for College work find success. The College shows a commitment to diversity through its diverse student population and through its educational and cross-cultural mission opportunities.

The strategic planning and budget processes support the mission of the College and assure that the academic focus of the College can be fully realized. When appropriate, the strategic planning and budget processes involve a broad representation of the campus.

Without compromising its academic purpose, Sterling College also reaches out and serves the community, locally as well as globally, through local service projects and global mission trips. The College embraces its responsibility to the local community to allow public access to the library, athletic facilities, and cultural events.

Opportunities:

As the 2016 Assurance Argument stated, the student population is quite diverse at Sterling College, and yet few faculty and staff come from racial and ethnic minority groups. Of the 43 full-time and pro-rata faculty in 2019-2020, only 9% are minorities. Considering the diversity of

the surrounding community, the College could do more to diversify its faculty and staff. The 2016 Argument also stated that the 31% of the full-time and pro-rata faculty were women, a number which has since increased. For the 2019-2020 school-year, 51% of full-time and pro-rata faculty are women. Additionally, in 2018, a woman was appointed to the position of Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs.

As stated in the 2016 Argument, the College should consider developing an Intercultural Engagement general education requirement. While many majors and programs have integrated diversity and cultural awareness into their curriculum, a more widespread commitment and openness to "intercultural engagement," as it is expressed in the general education objectives, is needed. Just as we have a Writing Intensive requirement for all programs, a requirement within each program regarding Intercultural Engagement would also strengthen the College's efforts in this area. The new ad-hoc [Faculty Diversity Committee](#) is expected to research opportunities within the curriculum to promote diversity.

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2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

Argument

Sterling College identified Integrity as one of its [six core values](#) along with Faith, Calling, Learning, Service and Community. The [employee handbook](#) describes the core value of integrity as “Integrity in scholarship, the arts, athletics and all other co-curricular activities”.

The role of the Board of Trustees at Sterling College is outlined in the [Board Policy Manual](#). Board members must be “...accountable to its stakeholders and the general public for competent, conscientious and effective accomplishment of its obligations as a body”. The board commits to [“Ensuring financial solvency and integrity through policies and behavior”](#).

Financial Integrity

The Board operates with three subcommittees, one being the [Financial Impact Committee](#). The purpose of this committee is to “develop and recommend to the Board those financial policies, plans, and courses of action that provide for mission accomplishment and organizational financial wellbeing”. Fundraising policies, plans, and major efforts are scrutinized by the committee. This committee annually reviews the [financial statements](#) and hears the auditors' comments for the previous fiscal year to ensure compliance, integrity and solvency. The full board [votes annually to accept](#) the findings of the independent audit.

In addition to Board oversight, the Business Office, under the direction of the [Chief Financial Officer](#), employs generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and “maintains its accounts in accordance with the principles and practices of fund accounting”. Fund accounting is the procedure by which resources for various purposes are classified for accounting purposes in accordance with activities or objectives as specified by donors. This practice of fund accounting adheres to regulations and restrictions imposed by organizations outside and within the institution.

In 2018, the College instituted an approval system for purchases. Directors and vice presidents must review and approve all purchases by the utilization of a Purchase Order System. If there is a question as to the nature or amount of a purchase, the subordinate employee must provide an explanation. Some faculty and staff may have authorization to use a Sterling College credit card.

These purchases are validated by vice presidents and directors through an online approval portal called Concur.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an integral part of the ongoing health of Sterling College. The [Academic Affairs Committee](#) (AAC) [meets regularly](#) to oversee curriculum changes, new course additions and policy changes as proposed by the faculty. This committee serves as a sounding board for academic changes to ensure there is accountability in curriculum and policy revisions. Motions are forwarded to the [Faculty Council](#) for [final approval](#). Faculty Council provides another layer of integrity to the SC academic model.

The College displays integrity in upholding its internal [academic status policies](#). There are four levels of academic discipline that are in place for students who fail to maintain academic standards: academic warning, academic probation, academic suspension, and academic dismissal. Details of each action are included in the [Academic Catalog](#). Since Fall 2014 seven students have been dismissed.

Academic Discipline	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-2019
Academic Warnings	43	16	20	26	27
Academic Probation	51	43	45	69	69
Academic Suspension	29	29	41	58	54

Another example of how the College operates with integrity in the realm of academics is with the [Academic Integrity Policy](#). “Sterling College faculty and students form an academic community committed to the Biblical principles of justice and honesty, and to the core values of faith, calling, learning, integrity, service, and community. Our commitment to academic integrity requires that each student and faculty member be responsible for creating an environment of trust and respect in which the search for knowledge, truth, and wisdom can be successfully accomplished”.

Academic regulations are presented to our students in a variety of formats. Formally, all new students are informed about academic honesty/dishonesty issues through the [new student orientation program](#) and [Family Reference Guide](#). The [academic appeals process](#) is outlined in the academic catalog should students choose to appeal a policy, grade or file a formal complaint. The [Student Life Handbook](#) outlines housing regulations and the school’s alcohol and drug policy.

Sterling College faculty are held to a high standard of academic integrity as outlined in the [Code of Professional Ethics](#) section of the faculty handbook which states, in part:

“We, the faculty of Sterling College, recognizing that the education profession must accept responsibility for the conduct of its members, agrees to judge our colleagues and be judged by them in accordance with this Code. We adopt the following three statements edited from the Council of the American Association of University Professors as premises for our Code: 1) The

faculty's responsibility to defend its freedoms cannot be separated from its responsibility to uphold those freedoms by its own actions; 2) Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators and trustees the following obligations: a) to respect the dignity of others; b) to acknowledge the right of others to express differing opinions; and c) to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off campus. Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive to learning and to evenhanded treatment in all aspects of the teacher-student relationship. We affirm that the spirit of this Code is grounded in the Christian ethic of love for all persons and in individual responsibility to God and people. To this end, the aim of the Code is to encourage responsible actions, sensitivity, and mutual support among all members of the academic community”.

Personnel

The Director or Assistant Director of Human Resources meets with new employees to review employment policies and serves as a resource to current employees on new or existing policies. The Director of HR reviews the employee handbook annually and revises as needed. The [employee handbook](#) (which is provided upon orientation, as revisions are made, and always available in each employee's "HR" tab on my.sterling) includes the following integrity statements for employees:

- Personnel in a superior-to-subordinate [relationship](#) may not be related to each other (Nepotism Policy)
- Employees are prohibited from having outside business dealings with companies affiliated with, or who are major customers/suppliers of, the college
- Transactions with officials of the college are adequately controlled and disclosed in the records; the college's [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) requires any such transactions should occur in an "arms length" business format and as approved by the President's Cabinet.

The College identifies itself as an [equal opportunity employer](#), within the limits of its stated mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." The policy "applies to all persons, without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, handicap, marital status or sex, except where sex is a bona fide occupational qualification" (such as resident directors in men's or women's dormitories).

The employee handbook also underscores the College's intolerance toward [sexual harassment](#). At the start of each academic year, every employee receives a [Title IX Education & Campus Resources brochure](#) via email, and new employees receive the brochure in their new employee packet. It defines sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, stalking, and gender discrimination and includes an outline of the College's [Sexual Misconduct Policy and Complaint Procedure](#).

In 2015, the College named a Title IX Coordinator who reports directly to the President. In an effort to gain further knowledge and experience in the area of Title IX administration, the Title IX Coordinator has attended [trainings and educational seminars](#) on current regulations, and trends within the discipline. In addition to in-person trainings, the College is a [member of ATIXA](#), and as such, the Title IX Coordinator has access to a host of [additional training](#)

[materials](#), and support to further train members of the College community. During the 2018/2019 academic year, the College changed the way that By-Stander and sexual harassment intervention trainings were administered. In addition to in-person trainings and written materials the College partnered with Get Inclusive to offer Campus Save & Title IX training to students and employees. The training, internally referred to as “Shield Training”, resulted in a [99.1% completion rate](#) for the fall 2018 initiative and has continued to show satisfactory completion rates in subsequent semesters.

In order to strengthen its position against sexual harassment and misconduct, the College employs a part-time [Life Coach and Sexual Assault Advocate](#) to help the victims of sexual assault find resources and healing. The College also participates in bystander education, provides a [Circle of 6 link](#), and offers a resource to file a complaint or report a concern on the [Student Life resources page](#) of the College website.

Employees are annually given the College's [Alcohol and Drug Policy](#) which details the College's commitment to The Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989. The policy includes a description of the student alcohol and drug policy as well as information for employees regarding the College's commitment to "safe, healthy, and efficient working conditions." Sterling College believes it is important to have a strong alcohol and drug policy and promote it to all employees and students. [Biennially](#) the program is evaluated and assessed of the program's effectiveness.

Both the [employee handbook](#) and [faculty handbook](#) outline grievance procedures. The staff handbook provides an opportunity for an informal complaint "through the open door policy" which means that any employee can talk to any administrator he/she feels is best equipped to deal with the concern. A more formal grievance procedure includes a written complaint to the Director of Human Resources or Title IX Coordinator dependent on the nature of the complaint.

The Registrar [instructs and reminds employees](#) how to comply with FERPA requirements. Students are also advised regarding their FERPA rights:

1. Given to them in the student handbook every year
2. Posted on the Sterling College [website](#)
3. New students fill out the [FERPA form](#)/notified at orientation
4. Receive an [annual notice](#) from Registrar's office via email

The [organizational chart](#) illustrates the College's accountability structure. All persons in charge of co-curricular and non-academic activities report to the Cabinet member from their respective divisions, and Cabinet members report to the President of the College. Because of Sterling College's focus on servant leadership, the College utilizes an inverted organizational chart structure, which shows the administration at the base, supporting the rest of campus.

The [President's Cabinet](#) meets bi-weekly to discuss issues which have arisen since the previous meeting, as well as institutional planning and strategy. On the weeks that the Cabinet does not meet together as a whole, the President holds one on one meetings with each of the members of his Cabinet. Additionally, during the 2018/2019 academic year a [“Weekly Cabinet Update”](#) was

created and is sent out to the Presidential Cabinet on a weekly basis. The update outlines data points such as current enrollment numbers, new student deposit numbers, Advancement giving totals, and financial updates from the Business Office. When an employee has an issue which he/she believes should be addressed by the Cabinet, the employee brings that issue to the appropriate Vice President who will bring that issue to the Cabinet.

Faculty have an official structure for communicating with the Cabinet through their committee structure. Academic issues are dealt with in the [Academic Affairs Committee](#), Faculty personnel issues are dealt with in the [Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs Committee](#), and motions from those two committees are brought to [Faculty Council](#), a representative faculty body, for final faculty approval. Decisions by the faculty needing Cabinet or Board approval are taken to those bodies by the [Vice President for Academic Affairs](#).

In 2018 the [Staff Welfare Committee](#) was formed and led by the Director of HR. The group meets monthly and serves as an avenue for staff concerns to be brought to Cabinet. The group also developed [Sterling College Staff Connections \(SC²\)](#), a time for staff members to meet monthly to hear from different departments on campus, ask questions, and highlight “good news moments” from across campus.

During selected Board Meetings, employees have a chance to interact informally with the Board, as they eat in the cafeteria and explore campus. Employees are further kept informed on what is happening through [campus coffees](#) offered periodically throughout the semester, and hosted by the Office of the President, and [all-employee meetings](#) held the week after each Board Meeting.

Employees have a time for community building during beginning of the school year festivities and a [Christmas Luncheon](#) in December. During each of these gatherings, the President addresses employees. The weekly email newsletter, [Campus Events](#), (formerly [The Hub](#)), further keeps employees informed on campus happenings.

The Board has access to all press releases distributed by the Office of Marketing and Communications before they are publicly released through [SharePoint](#) and access to athletic press releases within a few hours.

[All-Faculty meetings](#) are held once a month to keep them informed on changes or requests, and [department chairs](#) also meet once a month to [discuss](#) governance issues on a departmental level. Each department also holds regularly scheduled [department meetings](#). The [Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs](#) and [Academic Affairs](#) committees meet once a month to discuss relevant issues and proposals. Any motions brought from these two committees are then sent to [Faculty Council](#), a representative body, for action and/or approval. Ad-hoc committees are appointed by the standing committees, as needed.

Auxiliary Functions

Sterling College maintains relationships of integrity and ethical business practice through its many auxiliary services including, but not limited to, food service, bookstore, transportation services, physical plant, and informational technology. Many of the vendors that serve the

college are local businesses located within 60 miles of Sterling. The College has outsourced many of its functions, including its food service and much of College travel, in order to bring greater efficiency and value to our students.

One area that the College continually strives to improve is cash flow. There are times within the school year where delays in federal funds cause delays in accounts receivable being paid immediately. The College seeks to be a good partner and to act with complete integrity with regard to keeping our accounts current. Administrators of the college have been proactive to communicate with vendors when these situations arise.

Sources

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- STULIF - Sexual Assault Advocate Life Coach Job Description - 2019
- STULIF -Family Reference Guide - 2019
- STULIF_2019-2020 Student Handbook.pdf
- STULIF_2019-2020 Student Handbook.pdf (page number 11)

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

2.B

Sterling College presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public regarding its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships through many documents available on the institution's web page. The information contained in these documents is reviewed and updated at least annually, as detailed below.

The [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) academic catalogs are reviewed annually by department chairs and department personnel for accuracy in course rotation, course descriptions, and program requirements. The catalog also contains academic calendars for both [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) students, for both on campus and online programs. Information for students regarding their [FERPA rights](#), [institutional accreditation and associations](#), [admission standards](#), [educational expenses](#), [financial assistance information](#), [a summary of student life guidelines and expectations](#), and a [directory of trustees](#), [administrative staff](#), and [faculty](#) are all updated each year by the appropriate offices to remain current with changing personnel, costs, guidelines, and policies. Though the undergraduate catalog is linked here, the same holds true for the graduate catalog. In addition to catalogs from previous academic years, both catalogs are publicly accessible [online](#).

Sterling College's website, [Sterling.edu](#), features a [responsive design](#); the website automatically optimizes for the best viewing experience based on what type of device a user is accessing the site with. The Office of Marketing and Communications works with individual departments to make changes and to update information on individual and department web pages on an ongoing basis.

The web site includes specific tabs for students, alumni, and parents, and includes an ["About"](#) tab which [represents the college clearly](#). The page includes menu links to [What We Believe](#), [History](#), and [Frequently Asked Questions](#). The website also bears the [HLC Accreditation stamp](#) as well as disclosing the specialized accreditation status of the [Education](#) and [Athletic Training](#) programs.

Sterling College is also active on social media sites, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), Snapchat and [Flickr](#).

Since 2009, Sterling College has made significant steps toward efficiency in representing itself in the eyes of students and the public, most notably, through the College's [mobile app](#), [project request form](#), [website edit request form](#), and [news release request form](#).

Through the Sterling College [mobile app](#), Sterling College students, staff and faculty now have an easy-to-access informational hub, a campus map, bookstore link, social media, chapel announcements, a digital copy of the Student Handbook, the academic calendar, and Sterling College contact information. The Sterling College app significantly lowers communication barriers between the College and its constituents by placing information at their fingertips.

Through the [project request form](#), the [webpage edit request form](#), and the [news release request form](#), Sterling College improved its capacity to organize and address information updates on behalf of the students, faculty, staff and public. Members of the public and students are free to submit information updates and page edit requests via online form frameworks, which are organized and addressed by the Marketing Department. While Sterling College addresses update requests on a year-round basis, its marketing department makes an annual push for updated academic and admissions information edits. Requests include, but are not limited to, academic programs and requirements, financial aid and cost updates, faculty and staff announcements, and news stories, which are available to the public.

In Spring 2019, [informational videos](#) were introduced on academic major pages. Each video provides a brief overview of the respective major, including visual clips from each academic department.

[The Marketing and Communications Office](#) includes a full-time Director of Marketing and Communication, a Web and Visual Arts Specialist, and a Creative Director. It also employs [student workers](#) through campus employment and work study. The student workers assist in photo and video coverage, graphic design, and miscellaneous tasks that enhance and expand marketing capacity. With a well-qualified marketing staff, the College is able to centralize marketing efforts into one office.

The Sterling College Athletic Department operates and maintains [scwarriors.com](#) in order to better communicate values and goals to respective students and members of the public. Today, the site serves as a vital resource for current and past student-athletes, media, and perspective students and their families. The website is managed by the Athletic Director's office with primary responsibility served by the [sports information director](#). The website is hosted through the use of an athletic website content management system, [SIDHelp](#), which has been a valued partner and allowed the Athletic Department to have a fresh, responsive website that delivers news in an efficient manner. The Office of Marketing and Communications works in coordination with the Athletic Department to deliver athletic accomplishments and notable news to the greater Sterling College community through collaborative news releases, promotional materials, and event planning and management.

Scwarriors.com received an overhaul during the spring 2018 semester, improving on the website's ease of navigation and information accessibility. The main page integrates with several of Sterling College's social media outlets, which reinforces Sterling College's transparency.

While all other departments are supported, the Office of Admissions and the Office of Advancement generally have the largest marketing output and therefore, the Office of Marketing and Communications invests a larger share of time collaborating with these departments.

The process for making Admissions marketing materials for Sterling College is collaborative effort between the Office of Admissions and the Office of Marketing and Communications. Traditionally, the two offices first meet to discuss content and design. Then, the designer begins work on the layout, color and media elements, while the copy is written internally by the marketing staff. The Office of Academic Affairs is consulted for input and accuracy regarding the College's academic offerings. After the copy has been written and approved by the Office of Marketing and Communications and verified by the Office of Admissions and Academic Affairs the project is launched and completed.

The [student handbook](#) is updated annually upon review by the Student Life Office. Various departments are required to verify departmental information is correct or if any changes need to be made. Policies that define what is permitted as a Sterling College student are reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. Changes, such as, off-campus housing requirements and student life policies are presented for board approval prior to implementation.

Student handbooks [available on Sterling.edu](#) and within the [Sterling College mobile app](#). While students are able to print the handbook from the website or request a copy from the Student Life Office, to save on cost and waste the College stopped printing copies for each student following the 2016-2017 academic year.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

The Board of Trustees of Sterling College is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

2.C.1.

The Board embraces the [mission and vision](#) of the College and [believes](#) that "the moral owners to whom the Board feels accountable are the current and future students, employees, alumni, and donors of Sterling College." And that "the primary beneficiaries of our services are the students, parents, alumni and community of the College."

The [Board Policy Manual](#) clearly defines a board member's [job description](#) is "...to lead the organization toward the desired performance and ensure that it occurs". The board also makes the following commitments to preserve and enhance the institution as follows:

- Determine the mission, values, and major strategic goals/outcomes and hold the CEO accountable for developing a strategic plan based on these policies. 3.2.1
- Determine the parameters within which the CEO is expected to achieve the goals/outcomes. 3.2.2
- Monitor the performance of the organization relative to the achievement of the goals/outcomes within the executive parameters. 3.2.3
- Maintain and constantly improve all on-going policies of the board in this BPM. 3.2.4
- Select, fairly compensate, nurture, evaluate annually and, if necessary, terminate a CEO, who functions as the board's sole agent. 3.2.5
- Ensure financial solvency and integrity through policies and behavior (including help as volunteers in fundraising). 3.2.6
- Require periodic financial and other external audits to ensure compliance with the law and good practices. 3.2.7

- Evaluate and constantly improve performance as the governing board and set expectations for board members' involvement as volunteers.3.2.8

In the [Summary of Motions Passed](#) by Sterling College Board of Trustees, the board has recently [reaffirmed its commitment to the college's mission, vision and core values](#) (May 2019). Review of this document verifies the knowledge and approval of the board for annual audits, changes in tuition, investments and capital projects.

2.C.2.

Since 2018, the Board of Trustees conducts business via [three standing committees](#); the [Financial Impact Committee](#), which deals with areas such as audit, budget, tuition, advancement, legal issues and capital projects; the [Student Impact Committee](#), which oversees student life, enrollment, spiritual life, and academic affairs; and the [Executive Committee](#) which manages the recruiting, training and professional development of board members.

These three committees represent the priorities of the institution. [The Summary of Motions Passed](#) by the Sterling College Board of Trustees demonstrates that the committee structure helps the Trustees deliberate and make decisions about priorities that preserve and enhance the institution.

During meetings, the Trustees hear from members of the President's executive Cabinet as well as from student leadership. As stated in [Article XIV, Section 4](#) of the trustee *Bylaws*, "The Chair of any committee, with the consent of the Chair of the Board, may request the President of the College to assign an Officer of the College or a member of the administrative staff to serve as a liaison between the committee and the office of the President, and the President shall designate such a person to perform that service. Such liaison person shall assist the committee in the carrying out of its duties." Board policy ensures that the interests of internal constituencies are heard at each meeting. Because a member of the President's Cabinet attends each meeting of the standing committees of the Board, the Board is kept informed of the operations of the College, and the College can seek advice and feedback from the Board.

Trustees also gather valuable information from external constituencies such as alumni, donors, state and federal representatives and various professional organizations. Board members represent the college in business, non-profit, medical, agricultural and volunteer organizations throughout Kansas and the country. The varied life and professional experiences of our board members gives them additional wisdom as they weigh the relevance and timing of constituent requests.

2.C.3.

[Article XVI](#) of the *Bylaws* is the Board's policy about conflicts of interest, and [Addendum C](#) of the *Board Policy Manual* contains more detailed information about how the Board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors or other individual or parties. Board members sign a [conflict of interest certificate](#) annually. In addition, during the audit process, key

administrative and board members are surveyed concerning any activity that could be considered a conflict of interest with regard to the finances of the college. This was last done in June 2019.

Another policy that protects from undue influence being placed on decision making is the [Nepotism Policy](#). This policy prohibits board members or employees from supervising "...family or household members or have audit or control functions over family or household members."

2.C.4.

The Board delegates day-to-day management of the College to its employees and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters. In fact, the [Board Policy Manual](#) was developed and [approved](#) by the Board in May 2019 in part to delineate between trustee and president obligations and responsibilities. [Article VIII](#) of the *Bylaws* grants the President the authority to perform the following duties:

- Provide leadership for all departments of the College, including all activities in the Board areas of academic, business, student life, and institutional advancement, exercising such supervision and direction as will promote their effectiveness;
- Provide leadership to the faculty by: presiding or assigning someone to represent him at all meetings of the faculty; recommending to the Trustees all continuing contracts to, and promotions of, the faculty; and in consultation with the faculty recommend to the Trustees the academic program of the College. Consistent with the College's statement of faith, all hiring of administrative and faculty personnel will be limited to those persons able to commit to and identify with the institution's stated Christian faith perspective and who demonstrate in their personal and professional life evidence of a lively and enduring relationship with Jesus Christ;
- Set salaries and job descriptions for all college employees;
- Report in written form annually to the Trustees regarding the work and condition of the College.

[Pages 14 through 20 of the Board Policy Manual](#) outline the delegation of day to day authority to the Chief Executive in the areas of finance, academics, compliance, student life, advancement, marketing and communications. In short, the Trustees act responsibly, understanding their role and allowing the institution's employees to manage day-to-day affairs.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

Sterling College is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Section [2.10.1](#) of the Faculty Handbook underscores the institution's commitment to academic freedom.

Similarly, section [2.10.1.1](#) of the Faculty Handbook specifies that the college librarians have academic freedom as they determine what materials should be selected, circulated, or discarded, and to guide students in the use of resources.

The Faculty Council and Academic Affairs Committee meetings are open to all employees. Moreover, after each trustee meeting, the President gathers all employees to debrief the campus community about significant business conducted during the Board meetings.

Students, of course, also have freedom in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. In previous years, the student newspaper, [The Stir](#), allowed students make editorial decisions and produce content under the supervision of an advisor. Due to a lack of student interest [The Stir](#) was not produced for two years but in October 2019, [The Observer](#), was launched in its place. This was in part to encourage and rebrand student journalism efforts and provide an improved platform for student expression. Additionally, students publish an annual literary journal, [The Great Plains Review](#). A campus club, [The English Blend](#), encourages students to write, read, and perform their written work, and an annual student-led [film festival](#) showcases films that students have written and directed. Furthermore, student leaders are invited to [address the Board of Trustees](#) during their spring meetings..

The College opens its [chapel](#), [convocation services](#), and lectures to the public, and the strives to feature guest speakers who represent different perspectives within the Christian tradition. On campus speakers have included the [Federal District Attorney for the District of Kansas](#), the [Kansas Secretary of Corrections](#), a [poet laureate](#), and other [famous authors](#), [artists](#), pastors, teachers, [writers](#), business leaders, and entrepreneurs.

Two years ago, three departments, History, Literature, and Theology, began the annual Sterling College Humanities Conference, in which top students in each major were encouraged to present their research on specific themes, such as [Science and Faith \(2017\)](#), [Reformations \(2018\)](#) and [Justice \(2019\)](#).

In addition, The Theology department has initiated a bi-annual seminar called [Theology Plus](#) which attempts to integrate theology with various other disciplines such as science, literature, and math. Professors or staff members are invited to join their theological colleagues in discussing issues, which dissect both their disciplines, such as translation, causation, and pre-determination.

Another interdisciplinary venture has recently begun between the Art and Literature Departments, called [The Silent Conversation](#), in which students from both disciplines presented their artistic interpretations on a specific theme.

In Fall of 2018, the English Department, in collaboration with the Admissions Department, initiated a [Visiting Professors program](#) for [local high schools](#). Professors were invited to give [workshops](#) on *Beowulf*, Old English, and Writing Poetry to six area high schools.

Faculty and students are also encouraged to express themselves through off-campus writing and conference presentations. The Language and Literature Department takes students to [annual literary conferences](#) in which they [present](#) papers that they have written during the year.

Each year, Psychology students attend the SWPA convention and often [present posters and full sessions](#) on their research. In 2019, five student research proposals were accepted as conference presentations—the greatest number to date. Many other examples could be cited, but the evidence shows that Sterling College encourages and supports faculty and students in their pursuit of truth and learning.

Sterling College also recognizes that ethnic diversity is an important aspect of the freedom of expression. A new student club, Shades-Student Diversity Council, formed in the fall of 2018, to raise awareness of student diversity. Additionally, in December of 2018, the college held its first [discussion forum on racial awareness](#), and an ad hoc faculty diversity committee was formed.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2.E.1

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

Sterling College has defined the core value of [learning](#) as "a love of learning and dedication to the pursuit of truth." The "pursuit" of truth cannot occur without academic integrity. Recognizing the importance of integrity in learning, the College has adopted [integrity](#) as another core value and approved an institutional definition of integrity that underscores a commitment to managing knowledge in a responsible manner: "Integrity in scholarship, the arts, athletics, and all other co-curricular activities."

The faculty- and Board-approved [Faculty Handbook](#) provides clear ethical guidelines pertaining to faculty members' acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. Specifically:

[2.10](#) of the *Faculty Handbook* addresses Academic Freedom, Code of Professional Ethics, Use of Copyrighted Material, and Harassment and Discrimination.

[2.6.1](#) calls for faculty members to "order and evaluate their personal and professional development in terms of their commitment" to "the advancement of knowledge, the intellectual growth of students, and the improvement of society."

[2.11.1](#) provides the possibility of a sabbatical for a faculty member who has worked for six consecutive years at Sterling College for the purposes of research, academic improvement, or other approved project.

[2.11.2](#) Faculty Development Funds are available "to facilitate and nurture the professional growth and academic enrichment of faculty members." Since academic year 2015-2016 Sterling College faculty have used \$51,899.15 from these funds.

Each faculty member has \$400 per year available for his or her use, but the faculty member may elect to pool three years worth of funds, \$1200, in order to attend a more distant conference.

While \$400 per year is still not adequate money per faculty member, it is considerably better than the funding in 2009. As seen in the table below, faculty have exponentially used this funding to better themselves professionally.

Year	Funds Distributed	Funds Available
2009-2010	\$3,603	
2010-2011	\$3,171	
2011-2012	\$6,000	
2012-2013	\$10,386	
2013-2014	\$6,144	
2014-2015	\$7,242	
2015-2016	\$16,652.71	\$15,000
2016-2017	\$12,843.54	\$15,000
2017-2018	\$14,509.95	\$15,000
2018-2019	\$7,892.95	\$9,891

In addition to the professional development opportunities and policies for faculty, the *Faculty Handbook* also provides provisions for [educational leave](#) (2.11.3) and describes the guidelines for the College's [Forgivable Loan Program](#) (2.11.6) so that faculty without terminal degrees may pursue those degrees with assistance from the college, without sacrificing their faculty development funds.

While the College has not implemented campus-wide support for professional development of staff, many key staff divisions routinely participate in professional development opportunities. The financial aid office staff, for example, has participated in many training opportunities. Sterling College is an active member in the [Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#) (KASF AA), the [Rocky Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#) (RMASF AA), and the [National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#) (NASF AA). The financial aid staff participates in appropriate training and attends conferences held by KASF AA, RAMSF AA, and did attend Federal Student Aid (FSA) conference in 2017. In-house training is utilized by viewing webinars presented by the Department of Education and other higher education entities.

Likewise, the registrar and admissions offices belong to the [Kansas Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers](#) (KACRAO). The Registrar and Assistant Registrar attend the annual conference. As members of [KICA](#) (Kansas Independent Colleges Association) both the financial aid and registrar's offices meets regularly with local members for collaborative training and networking.

The training the Registrar's Office and Financial Aid Office participate in ensures that the staff in those offices conducts its work with integrity, especially in the handling of student academic and financial information.

Recognizing that professional development opportunities for staff have not kept pace with the professional development opportunities for faculty, the [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) included a goal to "establish professional development policies for all employees." The Staff Welfare Committee has also made it priority to encourage internal staff training through presentations at several of the monthly meetings.

2.E.2

Students at Sterling College are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources. Upon faculty request, the library staff will visit classes to instruct students in the responsible search, evaluation, and use of sources. The library staff is also equipped to assist students with research. Online and on-campus students may access library help and resources through the [Mabee Library](#) web portal, which includes [research guides](#), [citation](#) and [plagiarism avoidance assistance](#), and [links to databases](#).

In [GD105: Foundations of Servant Leadership](#), taken during a student's first semester at Sterling College, students are given access to a copy of the [Academic Catalog](#), which includes information regarding [Academic Status](#) and [Academic Integrity](#), including the [Student Academic Appeals Process](#).

Unless students have received credit for College Composition I before enrolling at Sterling College or are assigned to LL095: Basic Writing, all incoming first-year students are required to take LL101: College Composition I during their first semester or when they become eligible to do so. Course objectives in [LL101](#) specifically address integrity in research.

In addition to the research instruction students receive in LL101, all students are required to complete two [writing intensive](#) courses, one of which must be in the [student's major](#). In order to be designated "writing intensive," a course must include library search strategies and clear guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism.

Students may also seek citation and anti-plagiarism help from the Writing Center, which is staffed with student writing tutors and conveniently located in Mabee Library.

If a faculty or student research project involves human subjects, [an application](#) must be made to the Institutional Review Board.

2.E.3

Sterling College has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

The Academic Integrity Policy and related procedures are outlined in the [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) Academic Catalogs, is referenced in [each course syllabus](#), and is followed. To support the faculty in enforcement of the policy, the institution provides access to [TurnItIn](#) and a faculty member serves as a local resource for faculty in their use of the technology.

The Academic Affairs Office began [analyzing data](#) in the Fall 2015 semester after observing an apparent increase in the number of reported violations. Discussions related to clarifying the procedure, this data, and strategies to better inform and train students in preventing violations, are [ongoing](#).

This data illustrates that the College enforces its policy on academic honesty and integrity. Upon confirmation of a violation, and following the appeal process outlined in the academic catalogs, a [letter](#) is sent to the student from the Academic Affairs Office. For undergraduate students with a first-offense, a meeting with the AVPAA or VPAA is scheduled to go over the policy, what constitutes a violation, strategies for preventing a second or third offense, and to answer any questions the student may have. The student's signature is requested on the [statement of student responsibility](#) to acknowledge that the student understands the repercussions of an additional violation.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

Sterling College operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions by establishing and following policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff.

Integrity is one of the College's core values, and the College seeks to practice integrity in all of its divisions. The Board has explicit instructions regarding its operations and any conflicts of interest individual members may have.

The College hired a full-time Title IX Coordinator and has plans to replace the HR Director during the 2019-2020 academic year to ensure that ethical practices are followed in the hiring and training of new employees and in the treatment of current employees and students. The College is an equal opportunity employer, within the limits of its stated mission.

The College provides training for employees regarding the College's intolerance of sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, stalking, and gender discrimination. The College has a stated policy for handling sexual misconduct complaints, and that policy is shared with all employees.

The College provides Title IX training for all employees and has a visible "Warriors Speak Up!" campaign on campus to encourage employees and students to speak up when they witness or hear about any inappropriate or violent speech or acts.

The College follows FERPA guidelines and communicates those guidelines and student rights to employees and students.

The College has a clear organizational structure which employees can follow when seeking to offer suggestions or express complaints to the administration.

The Academic Catalog, the Student Handbook, and the College web pages are kept current with respect to the College's programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

The Board of Trustees of Sterling College is autonomous and acts in the best interests of the College and its constituents.

Sterling College is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning and supports faculty and students in their research and the presentation of that research. Under the supervision of a faculty advisor, students have freedom of expression through the campus newspaper *The Observer*, the *Great Plains Review*, campus art shows, and theatrical, musical, and film productions. A diverse set of speakers is hosted through department and program functions, the chapel program, and convocations and special lectures.

The College demonstrates its commitment to responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge through its academic integrity policy, instructions for responsible use of material posted in the Faculty Handbook, support from Mabee Library staff, and its recent subscription to turnitin.com.

Opportunities:

The College has begun training for faculty relative to the standards adopted for writing intensive courses, and the training should continue, especially as it relates to academic integrity issues and responsible use of sources. Faculty should continue to be encouraged to use turnitin.com, not just as a plagiarism checker, but as a teaching tool for students to understand how to use resources responsibly in a writing project.

The College needs to continue a commitment to the professional development of all employees and to create a plan which will serve the professional development needs of all employees.

Components Needing Organizational Attention:

The 2009 evaluation team recommended that "the College...develop an integrated marketing plan that links all parties in a common strategy. The College has been moving in that direction since 2010, but fully achieved an integrated marketing plan with the hiring of a full-time Director of Marketing and Communications. All campus marketing materials now flow from one source, achieving a more harmonious face to the public and a more collaborative climate on campus.

The visiting team further recommended that the College "should develop a more intentional professional development program for faculty, staff, and administration." The College has made progress in this area, increasing the funds available to faculty for professional development and creating a flexible distribution of the funds for faculty who wish to attend a conference which requires larger funds for travel and housing, but the College needs to continue to improve the funding for professional development for all employees.

Sources

There are no sources.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1

Sterling College assures that its degree programs are appropriate to higher education and that its courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to a bachelor's and master's degree.

The college publishes an undergraduate [credit hour policy](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog which is followed for all modes of delivery and guarantees that a credit hour earned online or on campus, during an interterm, summer, or full semester requires an equivalent amount of work. A similar [graduate credit hour policy](#) exists in the Graduate Academic Catalog.

The college also publishes and follows an [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) course numbering system which outlines the general expectations for each level of class. Courses with a course number of 000-099 do not earn credit towards a degree.

The undergraduate [baccalaureate degree requirements](#) are published in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In part, those requirements state:

- Candidates must have completed 124 credit hours (no more than 65 credit hours from a two-year college), with a cumulative GPA of 2.00.
- Candidates must have completed at least 32 credit hours at Sterling College.

- A minimum of twelve credits in a student's major must be taken at Sterling College; a minimum of six credits in a minor must be taken at Sterling College.

The college requires that no more than 65 credits toward a baccalaureate degree be taken at a two-year college to guarantee that graduates from Sterling College have sufficient number of upper-level courses to warrant the awarding of a baccalaureate degree. Further, the college guarantees that a graduate's degree includes a minimum number of credit hours from Sterling College.

Sterling College requires a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00 and a minimum of 2.5 in the declared majors and minors. Education majors must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50 and a minimum of 2.75 in both major and licensure requirement classes to graduate.

[Graduate degree requirements](#) are published in the Graduate Academic Catalog, outlining the requirements for all candidates who seek the degree of Master of Arts or Master of Science.

3.A.2

Since the last reaffirmation of accreditation by the HLC, Sterling has submitted Substantive Change Requests to offer both a Master of Arts in Sport Ministry, as well as a Master of Science in Athletic Training. Both degree programs were approved by the IAC of HLC on May 1, 2017. Thus, the College currently offers 24 bachelor's degree programs, and 2 master's degree programs. In an effort to articulate and differentiate the learning goals for both undergraduate and graduate programs, the College follows the Faculty Council Bylaws which state that the Academic Affairs and Graduate Committees are charged with ensuring that all undergraduate and graduate offerings are "relevant to the academic standards and programs of the college." The approval process for all degree programs shows that the faculty at Sterling College take seriously the mandate within those Bylaws. Furthermore, the master's degree in Athletic Training is accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Athletic Training Education ([CAATE](#)).

3.A.3.

The College ensures its program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery. The institution offers four online bachelor's programs, two of which are also offered residentially. These two online programs, History and Elementary Education, have the exact same curricula and program-level learning objectives, as their residential program counterparts ([History](#) and [Elementary Education](#)).

Criminal Justice Administration and Organizational Management are online degrees not offered residentially, but they are still assessed according to the same process as on campus programs.

Sterling College also offers the on ground Pre-K-12 Licensure Program online and the opportunity for students who already hold a bachelor's degree in a licensure program, to take courses online which may lead to [secondary education licensure](#) in that major field. The post-baccalaureate [Special Education Add-On Endorsement](#) is also available online. [Online](#)

[history](#) students may couple their History major with the professional education curriculum and pursue secondary education licensure in history.

All of these education licensure programs offered online meet the same rigorous requirements required of on campus programs and are accredited by the Kansas State Department of Education ([KSDE](#)).

At the graduate level, Sterling offers its Master of Arts in Sports Ministry, solely online.

Every class taught at Sterling College is expected to have a syllabus which conforms to the [syllabus template](#). Every online syllabus additionally includes [information unique to online delivery](#), including: online learning behavior, respect and etiquette, and a specific participation requirement. Sterling College Online staff review each syllabus before each course begins. All syllabi must include the required textbooks, instructor's contact information, office phone number, office hours, and their Sterling College email address. Adjunct instructors are not required to provide office hours, but are available to help students by appointment. Also included is the course description and course objectives aligned with course activities and assessments. Courses which fulfill education licensure requirements must also include the connections to the appropriate KSDE standards. In addition, the grading policy for the course must be clearly evident. Each syllabus must also include a statement about academic integrity, instructor attendance and late work policies, statement of nondiscrimination, disability accommodations, and any other classroom management issues unique to each class or instructor, such as a cell phone or tardy policy. The syllabus must also include a course outline, although the detail of that outline can vary greatly from instructor to instructor.

[Sample Online Syllabus](#) (CJ230 - Online)

[Sample Campus Syllabus](#) (CJ230 - Campus)

Sterling College has offered dual credit with [Sterling High School](#) for many years, and has added [Berean Academy](#) (Elbing, KS) to its offerings during the '17-'18 academic year. Each year before school starts the Sterling College Admissions Office sends an informational letter and forms detailing the dual credit program to the parents of Sterling High School and Berean Academy juniors and seniors. Additionally, the Vice President for Enrollment and the VPAA make a presentation to interested parents/students regarding each of the school's potential dual credit classes to describe the program and go over admission processes. After seven to ten days, the dual credit forms along with a master promissory note and enrollment card are submitted to each high school's office. The high school principal or school counselor must approve each student. The packets are then processed through the Sterling College Admissions and Registrar's Offices.

Dual credit courses must abide by the syllabus policies of Sterling College and must include the same information regarding objectives, assessments, academic integrity, and other relevant information for the high school classroom, as do the equivalent courses taught either online or on campus at Sterling College. The determination of the faculty qualifications for dual credit

instructors is covered in 3.C, but in brief, the College has carefully vetted the instructors of all courses offered in all modalities, and verifies those each academic year to ensure compliance.

[Sample Dual Credit Syllabus](#) (BI110/L, Sterling High School)

Many education students take their content methods course through the Kansas Independent College Association (KICA), comprised of 20 independent, non-profit, regionally accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities. Students enroll and pay for those courses through Sterling College, and the academic quality of those courses is monitored by the Sterling College Education Program (STEP) and the education programs of other institutions in the KICA. The KICA education courses fulfill the program objectives of the STEP program which may lead to education licensure for the student.

[Sample KICA Methods Course Syllabus](#) (ED467)

The degree programs at Sterling College are appropriate to higher education.

Sources

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3.B.1

As a four-year [Christ-centered liberal arts](#) institution, Sterling College maintains a general education program that reflects how the institution values the benefits of a liberal arts education. The Sterling College liberal arts experience has Christian values woven into it. Students must complete [37–40 credit hours](#) of general education courses in order to earn a degree from the college. As students complete these credit hours, they engage with course content in traditional liberal arts subjects: fine arts, literature, natural sciences, social sciences, history, written and oral communication, mathematics, analytical reading, physical fitness and health, civic and intercultural studies, and critical thinking.

Sterling College also requires students to complete ten credit hours related to the college's Christ-centered mission. All students must take an introductory course called [GD 105: Foundations of Servant Leadership](#). In this course, students gain an introductory understanding of what the institution means in the [vision statement](#) of the College by "servant leadership development-focused" and how the College values the integration of faith and learning. In GD 105, students are introduced to the concept of Jesus as the ultimate servant leader. In the general education curriculum students are also required to complete [three courses](#) related to Bible and theology: [TM102: Introduction to Old Testament](#), [TM103: Introduction to New Testament](#), and [TM366: Basic Christian Doctrine](#).

3.B.2

The general education curriculum at Sterling College is grounded in the [institution's mission documents](#), which include a mission statement, a vision statement, core values, a statement of priorities, a statement of process, a statement of faith, and institutional learning objectives. The general education curriculum has [five overarching purposes](#): to provide students with general knowledge about God's created order, to develop in students certain intellectual skills, to promote in students civic learning, to encourage students to apply their learning, and to teach students about Christian faith and servant leadership. Four of these overarching purposes were adapted from the essential learning outcomes proposed in the [LEAP initiative \(https://www.aacu.org/leap\)](#) by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

All students, whatever their major program, complete all general education objectives and take the same general education curriculum. Some of the general education requirements include choices; for example, TA130: Oral Interpretation, CM101: Public Speaking, and TM245: Homiletics may meet the public speaking GE requirement. Students may fulfill their general education requirement with a program requirement; for example, English majors may use any of the literature classes they take for their major as their general education literature requirement.

3.B.3

The college's [GE objectives](#) and [major program objectives](#) underscore that every degree program engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information, in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work, and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

As [GE objectives](#) and [program curricular matrices](#) demonstrate, objectives align with five [institutional learning objectives](#).

Assessment of the general education curriculum involves multiple direct and indirect assessment measures. Beginning with the [fall 2009 Institutional Assessment Report](#), student-learning data about the general education curriculum was informed by the following:

- results from a national standardized test
- the Sterling College General Education Examination
- course reports

Beginning the 2009-2010 academic year, the Measure of Academic Proficiency Progress (MAPP), now called the ETS Proficiency Profile, was adopted for GE testing. Unlike the formerly used CBASE, the ETS Proficiency Profile may be administered online, allowing all students seeking a degree at Sterling College to complete the assessment. Students in all Basic Christian Doctrine classes take a class period to complete the ETS Proficiency Profile. The goal is that 50 students, over the course of the year, take the ETS writing exam and the rest of the students take the multiple-choice question test which measures critical thinking, reading, writing, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Standardized tests related to general education provide valuable data about learning objectives that are common to GE curriculums throughout the country and they provide the College with a picture of how its students compare to students at other institutions.

However, standardized tests do not assess every general education objective that might be specific to the Sterling College GE curriculum. Therefore, beginning fall 2011, the GE Chair worked with the Director of Institutional Assessment to create the [Maturing Christian Faith \(MCF\) exam](#) to measure student's progress toward the GE objectives related specifically to the [Our Statement of Faith](#) of Sterling College. All graduating students are invited to take the survey via SurveyMonkey. Even though these questions provide the College with indirect data, they are nonetheless a valid measure.

In addition to the ETS Proficiency Profile and the MCF survey questions, the GE Chair also uses course based grades to provide more data on the efficiency of our general education curriculum. The [assessment of the general education](#) curriculum is added to the data compiled for the [Institutional Assessment Report](#) so that faculty and administration can have a general idea of how well students are meeting the general education objectives. The information can be used to make corrections or improvements in curriculum and/or how the curriculum is presented.

Because each program is required to have at least one [writing intensive class](#), every degree program offered by Sterling College engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information and in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work. The [guidelines](#) for writing intensive classes guide faculty in how to approach major writing projects within their discipline.

In addition to the collecting, analyzing, and communicating of information through writing, most programs require an appropriate capstone project for their major. In [music](#), a senior may give a senior recital. An [art](#) senior organizes and participates in a senior art exhibit. All students, in whatever program they are majoring, are expected to develop skills adaptable to changing environments. Institutional objective 1 includes that "the Sterling College graduate will demonstrate sufficient content knowledge to be successful in his or her chosen profession or advanced academic endeavors," and institutional objective 2 states that "the Sterling College graduate will demonstrate understanding of relationships between his or her chosen area of study and the world and its cultures." Programs must assess how well their students meet these (and other) institutional objectives each year in a [program report](#) submitted to the Associate Dean.

3.B.4

Institutional objective 2 addresses the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and eventually work. Within the [Undergraduate Academic Catalog](#), the College states that "Every major is designed to produce in the student:

- *knowledge of the discipline's content and methods*, including
 - historical and philosophical background,
 - range of subject matter,
 - central principles,

- generally accepted unifying perspectives (theories, laws, methods, systems, and models).
- *continuing development of skills related to the discipline's content*, including
 - acquiring information for producing creative projects,
 - analyzing synthesizing, and evaluating primary source material,
 - writing and speaking critically and creatively,
 - pursuing advanced study and/or a career.
- *values relating the discipline to world-view perspectives*, including
 - relating discipline-specific knowledge to other areas of inquiry,
 - applying ethical guidelines to discipline-specific activity,
 - relating discipline-specific content to Christian faith,
 - using discipline-related information to provide voluntary service to the community."

These goals flow generally from the institutional objectives and each program's objectives flow from the institutional objectives. A few notable examples of specific projects or readings that students do within their major which acknowledge the diversity of the world in which we live are:

- Art and Design students study a variety of practitioners both historic and contemporary including some variety from eastern and ancient cultures.
- Education and Athletic Training students are required to complete observations hours which expose them to subjects from a variety of cultures, beliefs, backgrounds, financial situations, ages, and gender.
- [HI101 and HI102: History of World Civilization I and II](#) students have the opportunity to interact with social and cultural traditions from around the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam.
- [LL151: Introduction to Literature](#), a popular General Education option for meeting the literature requirement, includes reading and discussion of literary works produced by ethnic minorities, non-U.S. writers, and/or women.
- [TM340: Gender and Ethnic Issues](#), a course taught in the Theology and Ministry department, students discussed causes of racial division and "racialization" in the US, looking at a historical perspective on race relations in the US and how those contribute to the situations we face today.
- [TM363: World Religions](#), a course taught in the Theology and Ministry department requires students to read primary texts of major world religions, including the primary texts of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism.

Students have an opportunity to engage a diverse world not only in their course work but in different programs and opportunities offered on campus. While it is not a requirement for graduation, many Sterling students look forward to participating in one of the college's [mission trips](#), traveling to places such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru, and share their experiences on these trips with the broader campus community in a missions chapel each fall. Before participating on a missions trip, students must take [TM107: Training for Cross-Cultural Ministry](#), a one credit course which "examines the area of global interconnectedness of Christian ministry, exploring the challenges of multi-ethnic cultural diversity. The focus is on preparing students for

cross-cultural ministry opportunities, in the United States and abroad. Through a theological and anthropological study of key dimensions of cultural differences, students are enabled to foster international relations and better avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings." Students may further reflect on their cross-cultural experiences by taking the two credit [TM108: Cross-Cultural Ministry Reflection](#), which requires students to participate in "an intentional debriefing and written reflection on the trip expressed in a paper that gives a report on the trip and applies the taxonomy of key dimensions of cultural differences to the mission trip." Since 2010, 420 students have participated in a cross-cultural mission experience through the campus ministry office at Sterling College.

The [Peacemakers Convocation](#), which is associated with Black History Month, features a speaker who addresses diversity issues, specifically related to the African-American community.

The [Honors Program](#), an academic related experience, also engages its students with the diversity of the world. Recently, because the Director was able to participate in a study session in Japan regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 2014, students have participated in a number of events related to Japanese history and culture such as taking a trip to Johnson County Community College in Kansas City to attend [Japan Fest](#). Most recently, the Honors Program completed a trip to Selma, AL, providing opportunities to directly study the voting rights movement, and the activism that generated national attention for social justice, culminating in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In the spring semester of 2019, Faculty Council convened a faculty ad-hoc committee on diversity to explore ways to improve how Sterling College shows hospitality to students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, languages, and genders. In spring 2019, an efficient process and objective for the diversity initiative was developed. At Faculty Council's request, the President's Cabinet approved convening additional ad-hoc staff and student committees, which formed a [joint task force](#) with the faculty committee in the fall semester of 2019. The joint task force began collecting individual survey data from students, faculty, and staff to assess campus climate and institutional strengths and weaknesses. Based on data, individual working groups are now exploring and implementing specific improvements on campus. For example, our Latino Hospitality Working Group has already implemented changes to the campus website, tutoring services, and new student orientation to better serve ESL students. Additional working groups are: 1) developing position papers on rationale and best practices for Christian diversity work; 2) forming a proposal for establishing a diversity office on campus; 3) exploring curricular changes to facilitate better diversity education; and 4) planning awareness and advocacy programming starting in the spring 2020 semester.

3.B.5

While Sterling College continues to value teaching above more research-oriented institutions, we still value research and creative expression and encourage faculty and students to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge in their fields. The brief list below highlights only a few of the wide array of research and creative projects both faculty and students at Sterling College participate in:

- Professor of Psychology Dr. Brian Mills authored and beta-tested “*Stepping Stones to Success*”, a life skills curriculum targeting low-income families at risk for homelessness.
- Professor of Biology Dr. Jonathan Conard and two alumni published “[New observations of porcupines at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Stafford and Reno counties, Kansas.](#)” Through the Kansas Academy of Science, 2016.
- Assistant Professor of Language & Literature Dr. Mark Watney presented a “*Seminar in Beowulf and Old English*” at four central Kansas high schools in Fall 2018/Fall 2019, as part of the Sterling College Visiting Professors’ program. Dr. Watney also has two recent academic publications: First Place - The Jacques Maritain Prize for Nonfiction in 2017 for “*Dappled Things: A Quarterly of Faith and Ideas.*”; and “*The Strange Gift of Alzheimer’s: Lessons my Dying Father Taught Me.*” (The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture).
- Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies Dr. Tim Gabrielson has presented at six international professional conferences since 2017, published two book reviews during that time, and has two forthcoming peer-reviewed journal articles in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* and *The Bible Translator*.
- Assistant Professor of Theology & Ministry Dr. Glenn Butner authored multiple monographs and journal articles in peer reviewed journals including: *Journal of Markets and Morality*; *Review and Expositor*; *Priscilla Papers*; *Journal of Reformed Theology*; and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.
- Through Sterling’s annual [Undergraduate Humanities Conference](#) in March of each year, and since 2017, Sterling College has had 29 students present original research presentations in an environment and format usually only offered in graduate schools.
- Bethany Jenkins (SC student) presented her paper “[Savior of Humanity: An Indication of Christlikeness?](#)” at the Culture, Criticism, and the Christian Mind Conference at Dordt College, IA, in November 2017.
- Kaitlyn Little (SC ’18) presented her paper “*Literature that Creates Faith in Quanzhou, China*” at the Southwest Conference on Christianity and Literature, Oklahoma Baptist University, September 2018.
- Derrick Hogan, (SC ’18) presented his paper “[The Tempest: Caliban’s Opening Speech Interpretations](#)” at the Shakespeare Literary Festival at Newman University, KS, in April 2017.
- Shelby Stowe (SC '19) has presented several NSF-funded research projects at conferences including: the Indiana Undergraduate Mathematics Research Conference (2017); the 20th Annual Nebraska Conference for Undergraduate Women in Mathematics (2018); Mathematics Institute for Secondary Teaching (2018); and the Tenth international Symposium on Biomathematics & Ecology – education and Research (2017). She has also co-authored a paper/publication "Modeling Control Methods to Manage the Sylvatic Plague in Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Towns", from [Natural Resource Modeling](#).

As can be seen, the faculty and students participate in a wide variety of activities which support our mission by contributing to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1

In 2015-2016, Sterling College employed 42 full-time faculty, two pro-rata faculty, and 31 adjunct faculty (which varies according to semester). As of 2019-2020, Sterling College now employs [43 full-time instructional faculty, two pro-rata](#), and 36 adjuncts (varies). IPEDS from 2010-2014 showed that we had averaged 39.2 full-time and 29 part time faculty per year, with a student:faculty ratio of 13:1. From 2016 to 2019, those numbers have risen to an average of 45.0 full-time and 34 adjuncts, with a student:faculty ratio decreasing to [11:1](#).

Each full-time faculty member is expected to teach [27 credit hours per year](#), usually as 12 credits in the fall, 3 credits over interterm, and 12 credits in the spring. Exceptions exist; some faculty are given a load reduction because of auxiliary duties, such as directing a play, coaching forensics, or serving as the Director of the Honors Program; others are given a load reduction as required by an external accrediting body, such as the CAATE (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education) and the KSDE (Kansas State Department of Education) for our Sterling Teacher Education Program.

In order to effectively transition to their position as full faculty members, new faculty are expected to participate in [New Faculty Orientation](#) which is held in August as a two-day retreat and then continues through the fall semester with [monthly lunch meetings](#) led by the New Faculty Mentoring Director, covering topics such as using the Learning Management System

(LMS), advising, assessment, and academic alerts. New faculty members are also assigned a faculty mentor outside of his/her discipline and are expected to rely on their department chairs as another mentor. Additionally, to ease the transition to the College and the associated load, new faculty members are given 3 credit hours of load release during Interterm (thus reducing total load to 24 cr./hrs.) for their first year at SC. This release allows them to spend Interterm planning and developing their preps for their spring-term courses.

The faculty-as-a-whole meets at a [2-day Faculty Retreat](#) and a [1-day Faculty Professional Development Day](#) (in August prior to the launch of the fall semester) and monthly throughout the year at regular all-faculty meetings to remain current with any changes and to offer feedback on any potential changes.

In addition to classroom responsibilities, faculty serve on both faculty and institutional committees, advise students, meet with prospective students, and have course and program assessment responsibilities. These responsibilities are clearly outlined in the Faculty Handbook, [2.6.2 - 2.6.3](#).

Faculty oversight of the curriculum is ensured not only through professional qualifications but also through thoughtful process. When faculty develop and revise curriculum, they must first submit proposals if revision includes course additions, course-sequencing changes, changes in graduate requirements, or modifications to program goals or objectives. Through the [Academic Affairs Committee](#), a standing committee of the Faculty Council, faculty propose program curriculum changes and help form academic policies, such as policies regarding credit hour definition and academic integrity.

According to the College's [Guidelines for Proposing Curricular Changes](#), three main criteria should inform the Academic Affairs Committee's evaluation of proposals:

- how and if the proposed changes strengthen the affected program(s);
- the feasibility of the proposed changes in light of staffing and capital requirements; and
- how and if the proposal adequately addresses potential concerns related to the program unit(s).

The Guidelines for Proposing Curricular Changes also list the documentation that must be included with proposals sent to the Academic Affairs Committee and ensure that all curricular changes are thoughtfully evaluated by multiple parties before they are implemented. The presentation of curricular changes to the Academic Affairs Committee fosters not only valuable faculty discussion but also feedback from the Registrar, the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs, the General Education Chair, and all required members of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Of the 42 new full-time faculty hired between the academic years of 2009-2010 through 2014-2015, only 17 (40%) remain employed as full-time faculty in fall 2015. For the academic years from 2016-2017 to 2019-2020, only 20 new full-time faculty were hired (one of which was in a newly created position), of which 16 (80%) still remain employed as of the current date. ***Sterling is seeing a decrease in the number of resignations of FT faculty and an increase in the***

longevity of those faculty, which creates continuity for students as well as the faculty who remain employed at SC.

At the time of the last HLC visit (2016), only fifteen faculty (34%) had been teaching full time for 5 years or more, and only 4 (9%) for ten years or more, resulting in a lack of senior faculty leadership positions on faculty committees. Four years later, the 5-year tenure has increased to 17 (39%), while the 10-year tenure number has increased to 11 (26%). Furthermore for the '19-'20 academic year, 28 out of 43 FT faculty have extended contracts, equating to 65% of the faculty with 3-year contracts. ***The tenure of Sterling FT faculty is increasing steadily, with over half of all faculty having extended 3-year contracts.***

3.C.2.

The [faculty](#) at Sterling College are appropriately credentialed, including those in the dual credit program at Sterling High School and Berean Academy, as well as those who teach education courses through KICA. The [attached table](#) shows what degrees current full-time or pro-rata Sterling College faculty have earned.

Those faculty who do not have a graduate degree in their teaching field, must be (or have been) approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, through the Faculty Welfare committee, where the candidates education, credentials, and experience is evaluated. The procedures in the Faculty Handbook are followed, and as updated in fall 2015, when the VPAA revised and clarified the procedure for verifying faculty qualifications. The Faculty Welfare Committee approved the revision in January 2016, and the new policy went into effect February 2016.

The College makes exceptions to the requirement for graduate degrees only in extreme cases, *and only temporarily*, as those individuals finish their degree programs. In these cases, the College has [required the instructor](#) to pursue graduate degree/hours in the teaching field as a [condition of employment](#), they must be continually enrolled until achieving the required degree/hours, and the VPAA monitors the instructor's progress each semester. As a general policy, the College seeks to hire appropriately qualified and credentialed faculty. A completed example of this process is evident within the initial hiring of an adjunct who held a master's degree, but did not have 18 graduate credit hours in the field ([initial Faculty Hiring Qualifications Form](#)). An [initial Program of Study](#) was created in Fall 2015, where the instructor/College agreed to the documented plan for obtaining the required hours. In Fall 2017, the faculty member had achieved those required graduate hours as outlined in the [documented and updated Program of Study](#), and a new/final [Faculty Hiring Qualifications Form](#) was documented and approved in January 2018 by the VPAA/Faculty Welfare Committee, after the completion of the required graduate hours, to document that the faculty members was now fully qualified to teach the assigned courses.

An area of concern for the 2009 team was the low percent of Sterling College's faculty holding the doctoral degree, which stood at 35% in 2009-2010. By 2015-2016, the number had risen to 43%, and currently for 2019-2020 it stands at 37%. However, an additional two full-time faculty are within/beginning their doctoral program studies, and one his terminal degree program.

2009-2010: 44 full-time faculty; 15 with doctorate; 5 with terminal degree = 35% or 45%

2015-2016: 42 full-time faculty; 18 with doctorate; 6 with terminal degree = 43% or 58%

2019-2020: 43 full-time faculty; 16 with doctorate; 4 with terminal degree = 37% or 47%

[Institutions in the Kansas Independent College Association \(KICA\)](#) average 60.5% doctoral/terminal degrees, with a range of 18% on the low end and 100% on the high end. At 47%, Sterling College sits behind the mean as well as the KICA median (66.2%).

The College supports a forgivable loan program for faculty which provides financial assistance to those faculty who are working on doctoral/terminal degrees. [Faculty job descriptions](#) also state that the College prefers candidates with doctoral or terminal degrees.

3.C.3

Teaching at Sterling College is evaluated via three main methods: course reports, classroom observations, and IDEA evaluations.

[Course reports](#) provide faculty with an opportunity to evaluate their own instruction. As an important step in the College's assessment plan, all faculty complete a course report each year evaluating and reflecting on how well students have fulfilled the program objectives in their courses.

[Classroom observation](#) reports are completed by department chairs, associate VPAA, and/or VPAA yearly for every faculty member who has not yet received an extended contract, including adjuncts. This means that every faculty member is observed and receives feedback on his/her teaching at least once per year for his or her first three years at the college. The observation reports become a part of each faculty member's permanent file and may be referenced for consideration of promotion and reappointment.

[IDEA evaluations](#) are completed online by students. These evaluations are standardized, and scores are norm-referenced against scores from other institutions. In addition to providing data about the teaching effectiveness of individual instructors, IDEA reports provide data about how teaching at Sterling College compares to teaching at other colleges and universities. For faculty members who are not employed on extended contract, the long form of the IDEA evaluation is given in every qualifying course they teach. Faculty who are on extended contract choose one course per semester for IDEA evaluation, and their students complete a shorter form of the survey. Like classroom observation reports, IDEA results become a part of each faculty member's permanent file, and they may also be used in consideration of promotion and reappointment.

In addition to the three evaluation methods explained above, department chairs review faculty members' course syllabi at the beginning of each semester. Any concerns or omissions can be identified and corrected early on.

Classroom observations and IDEA evaluations allow the College to address three [Types of Evaluations](#) described in 2.7.1 in the Sterling College Faculty Handbook.

- Initial evaluations, conducted in each of the first three years of full-time employment
- Focused evaluations, conducted in the fourth year or on the occasion of review for promotion
- Developmental evaluations, conducted every third year for faculty on extended contracts

Other evaluations may be conducted when special circumstances indicate a serious weakness in classroom management or teaching may exist. The VPAA, in consultation with the President, will determine the scope and focus of the evaluation.

3.C.4

Sterling College supports professional development for its faculty so that the faculty remain current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles. Faculty development funds are provided by the College under [2.11.2 in the Faculty Handbook](#) to facilitate and nurture the professional growth and academic enrichment of faculty members. In collaboration with the VPAA, the Faculty Welfare Committee is responsible for the allocation of these funds, which can be used for travel, hotel, and fees to attend a professional conference or for professional membership dues. Each full time faculty member has access to funds each year but can pool three years of individual professional development funds for use in one year. Faculty submit the Professional Development Fund Request form to the Faculty Welfare committee for approval. The College has continued its commitment to reserving \$400 per faculty member for professional development use, although during the recent drop in enrollment, budgets were reduced accordingly campus-wide. More on Faculty Development Funds can be found in 2.E.

While [forgivable loans](#) are not, strictly speaking, faculty development funds, those funds do provide significant benefit to the faculty who are seeking doctoral degrees. As reported in 2016 and since 2010, the college distributed \$59,280 to faculty to off-set the financial burden they face for tuition, books, and fees in completing their doctoral education. Since 2010, that number distributed has risen to \$91,313.

In addition to off campus opportunities for professional development, faculty retreat and professional development days are used as a time to develop the pedagogy and relationship skills of all FT and pro-rata faculty. In the past few years, faculty have discussed topics related to teaching that include, but are not limited to:

- [summer pedagogy group study](#), where faculty and administrators read a pedagogically relevant book, gather three to five times to discuss its implications at Sterling College, and develop implementation strategies for their own courses. Examples include:
 - [book study](#) and [lessons](#) from *Make it Stick* (2017), which resulted in a [workshop](#) for all faculty at the 2017 Fall Faculty Development Day,
 - *Creating Significant learning Experiences* (2018),
 - and in conjunction with the [Diversity Task Force](#), *Between the World and Me* (2019).

- flipping classrooms;
- integrating critical thinking and writing into the classroom;
- understanding and engaging Generation Z students;
- an [Engaging Modern Learners Workshop](#), led by Dr. Christiane Price (national authority on innovative teaching techniques for engagement, and 2012 Carnegie Foundation Outstanding U.S. Professor at the Baccalaureate level);
- continuing our efforts toward the effective [integration of faith and learning](#), led by the Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning, which include:
 - [Faculty Worship](#) services,
 - the [Faith & Learning Faculty Fellows Program](#),
 - and [Faith & Learning Faculty Coffee's](#).

3.C.5.

As stated in the Faculty Handbook, [2.6.2.1.g](#), All Sterling College full-time faculty are "expected to keep a minimum of 10 hours per week (two hours per day advised), to be available to students, colleagues and administration. Virtual hours are also highly recommended for effective communication between faculty and students." Faculty office hours must be clearly visible on the [syllabus](#), listed on [schedule sheets](#) filed with the Academic Affairs office, and posted on the instructor's office door.

While adjuncts are not required to keep a minimum number of office hours, they are encouraged to be available after class to students by appointment and are provided access to a space in Mabee Library in which to meet students and hold office hours, if they choose.

3.C.6

[145 qualified professional staff](#) (full-time, part-time, and full-time and pro-rata faculty) are employed at Sterling College and ensure that day-to-day functions of the college run smoothly, including technology services, building and grounds services, financial aid services, registrar services, library services, and student life services, among many other services the college needs in order to function as an institution of higher learning.

The President is assisted in leadership by eight members of the [President's Cabinet](#) who, with the exception of the athletic director and CFO, hold the executive title of Vice President. Each member of Cabinet oversees specific aspects of the college: enrollment, student life, athletics, advancement, academics, financial services, and operations. The Cabinet meets together bi-monthly to plan and report on the day-to-day functions of the college and, in consultation with the faculty and Board of Trustees, to make plans for the future success of the college. In the week between regularly scheduled Cabinet meetings, Cabinet members meet individually with the President in one-on-one formats, for individual and specific discussions within their areas of responsibility.

Staff members at Sterling College who provide student support services are appropriately qualified. The following job descriptions of key student support personnel illustrate the commitment Sterling College has to hiring qualified staff.

- [Director of Career Services and First Year Programs](#)
- [Campus Counselor](#)
- [Director of Academic Support and Student Engagement](#)
- [Director of Financial Aid](#)
- [Campus Health Director](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Athletic Training Staff](#)
- [Director of Worship Arts](#)
- [Chaplain](#)
- [Resident Director](#)
- [Student Accounts Coordinator](#)
- [Life Coach and Sexual Assault Advocate](#)

The specific qualifications and experience required for each position are appropriate for that position. Each prospective staff member is required to submit the following:

- Cover Letter
- Resume
- A completed [Application for Employment](#)
- A completed [Staff Faith Questionnaire](#)
- A list of three professional references

Before an employee can begin working at Sterling College, he or she must pass a [background check](#).

Many staff offices participate in significant and necessary professional development. For instance, the registrar belongs to [KACRAO](#), and the entire office staff attends the annual conference. The registrar also belongs to the [KICA](#) (Kansas Independent Colleges Association) registrar's group where she receives and gives registrar support and assistance.

The financial aid staff also goes through appropriate training and attends conferences held by [KASFAA](#), [RAMSFAA](#), and [FSA](#). In-house training is utilized by viewing webinars presented by the Department of Education and other Higher Education Entities. Sterling College is an active member in [KASFAA](#), [RMAFSA](#) and [NASFAA](#).

The campus nurse keeps current in her field by attending the American College Health Association ([ACHA](#)) Conference.

All employees -- faculty, staff, and administration – continue to participate in campus emergency preparedness training at the beginning of each academic year and are given a [booklet](#) which addresses what to do in various emergencies, such as tornadoes, active shooter, bomb threats, fire, hazardous material spill, or medical. In addition, all employees must complete [Title IX](#) training, online, through a partnership with [GetInclusive](#). Starting in August 2020, the college has plans to implement mandatory [online FERPA training](#) for all employees (staff and faculty), which will be continued annually prior to the launch of the new academic year.

Academic advising is provided by a faculty member in the student's area of major study. Students create an academic plan in [GD105: Foundations of Servant Leadership](#). Advisors are provided the [General Education Planner](#) to assist advisors and advisees in fulfilling students' general education options. Students in online programs are also provided academic advising, either through program faculty, as with education students, or through the Registrar in cooperation with academic department personnel. [The Academic Advising Handbook](#) serves as a resource for both advisors and advisees.

Advisors use an [online JICS system](#) to enroll students in classes where they also have access to the student's transcript and degree audit. Requirements for graduation, general education, major, minor, and writing intensive, are published annually in the Academic Catalog which students and advisors both have access to.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

Argument

3.D.1

Sterling College continues to offer and expand on its co-curricular support services for students' success.

Within the Office of Student Success, the College employs a full-time [Director of Career Services and First Year Program](#) who provides career advice to students individually, in groups, or as an invited guest to classes and is a resource for students looking for internships. The director also coordinates the first year program to assist new students in their success at Sterling College. Also in the Office of Student Success is the [Director of Academic Support and Student Engagement](#), who partners with campus administrators in providing stronger relationships with the students we serve, and is committed to planning, processing, and developing retention efforts to create academic growth, promote achievement, and encourage students to use their talents, skills, and abilities to pursue meaningful careers and service to others. As of late, increased attention is targeting the rising number of first-generation college students, as well.

The [Campus Health Director](#) supports the health of students by encouraging healthful eating, distributing and maintaining first aid kits to campus offices and providing blood pressure checks, flu shots, assistance with minor illnesses, and recommendations to local health care providers when necessary. This person also works closely with a Sterling-based doctor, as a medical consultant. With few exceptions, treatments are free to all SC students.

[Counseling Services](#) by a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor are also available at no charge to students. The counselor provides services to improve [students'] academic performance

and their emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Sterling College is affiliated with [WellConnect](#), a free and confidential well-being online resource for students and faculty that provides information, screenings, and support to promote student mental health and emotional well-being. Coaching is also available and provided by a Sexual Assault Advocate, who is a certified Life Coach through the World Coach Institute, and Sexual Assault Advocate through the Center for Legal Services at Kansas State University.

3.D.2

Sterling College provides learning support services and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

In order to be [accepted for enrollment](#) at Sterling College, an incoming freshmen must have a 2.2 cumulative high school GPA and a minimum ACT composite score of 18 or SAT composite score of 940. With these requirements, some students may come to Sterling College inadequately prepared for college writing and college math. Students with an ACT in English of 17 or below (or the equivalent SAT) are enrolled in [LL095: Basic Writing](#). On the first day of Basic Writing, students are given the ETS Writing Proficiency, and students who score a 4 or above are transferred to [LL101: College Composition I](#). Students must pass Basic Writing with a C- or better in order to move to College Composition I. Basic Writing does not meet the general education English requirement and does not count toward the 124 credits required for graduation.

Students who do not meet minimum ACT requirements to enroll in a desired math course must take [MA095: Intermediate Algebra](#). Like Basic Writing, Intermediate Algebra does not meet the general education mathematics requirement nor does it count towards the 124 credits required for graduation.

The College's [Academic Support Office](#) tracks the attendance of all students and alerts coaches when athletes or probationary students have missed class. Each day, instructors are encouraged to [report student attendance](#) to the Academic Support Office each class meeting through the learning management system. Faculty may also submit an [Early Alert](#) form if a student is having a significant or sudden academic or personal issue in class. The attendance reports and early alert forms allow the VPAA, faculty, coaches, other co-curricular leaders, and Student Life staff to work together when students begin to exhibit academic behaviors that may indicate intervention is needed.

If a student is involved in any campus activity/sport and falls under minimum GPA requirements, their director/coach receives an [Academic Action Plan](#), who is expected to fill out the form with the student (electronically). Students, guided by their director/coach, must check 3 of the 6 available academic plans offered. The student will then carry out those 3 plans, and return to their director/coach for review. These plans may include having individual meetings with their professors to signing up for appropriate tutoring. The director/coach then returns the completed forms to the Academic Support Office. Any student not involved in a campus activity or sport is contacted by their Resident Director, or by the Academic Support Office. This process better ensures keeping students accountable for their own success.

The Academic Support Office also offers tutoring services, general academic counseling and advising, and a course titled [GD104: Academic Success](#) which helps at-risk students develop the skills necessary to succeed at Sterling College. Students may enter Sterling College with a designation of "at-risk" if they have been accepted through the [Admissions Committee](#) appeal process, or if they have been placed on [academic probation](#) because of a severe deficiency in grades.

Moreover, the College continues to offer the Writing Center, conveniently located in Mabee Library, staffed with peers who have demonstrated strong writing ability, supervised by the Director of Academic Support in cooperation with Language and Literature professors, which offers walk-in times and appointments for any students of whatever writing ability who desire writing-specific assistance.

The Academic Support Office provides free and scheduled one-on-one [peer tutoring](#) featuring a vast variety of subjects. All tutors are selected based on professor recommendation, grade point average, and subject-content knowledge. They also undergo a personal one-on-one training with a professor in the subject they will be tutoring in. Tutoring arrangements can be made through the Academic Support office. Although the Academic Support Office does not offer walk-in times, all students have access to 24/7 online tutoring via [Tutor.com](#). This platform is easily accessible on Canvas (LMS), and has been tailored to allow each student to have a personal account without the need of signing into Tutor.com—this has been integrated with their Canvas log-in. Each student has five hours of professional tutoring. This includes an online Writing Center drop-off, which allows for students to receive feedback for essay in less than 12-hours. If a student were to use up their allotted online tutoring time, the Academic Support Office will release more hours upon request.

In addition to the support Sterling College provides to under-prepared or at-risk students, the [Sterling College Honors Program](#) provides alternative general education and other enrichment courses and activities in history, literature, and philosophy to students with an ACT over 25 and a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher. With an objective to "engage students with significant ideas, trends, and works of literature, so that they will use that understanding to serve others and the world," the general education alternatives are taught in small seminar groups so that students have the opportunity to engage the texts and issues in a discussion format rather than a lecture setting. The Honors Program is lead by a Director of the Honors Program who is assisted by an Assistant Director.

3.D.3

When students first enroll at Sterling College, they are given an opportunity to select a major so that they can be advised by a faculty member who is most knowledgeable about the student's likely field of study. All students create a [graduation plan](#) in [GD105: Foundations of Servant Leadership](#), whether that is two years, as a transfer student or four years, as a freshman, which can be used as a guide in advising appointments with faculty. Students in online programs also have access to academic advising, either through program faculty, as with education students, or through the Registrar in coordination with academic department personnel.

Advisors use an online JICS system to enroll students in classes where they also have access to the student's transcript and degree audit to make sure that students remain on target in their program goals. [Requirements for graduation](#), general education, major, minor, chapel attendance, and writing intensive, are posted in the Academic Catalog which students and advisors both have access to. In addition to minimum grade point averages for graduation, students must also pass LL101: College Composition, ES101: Concepts in Physical Fitness and Health, their speech course, and their math course with a [minimum of a C-](#).

As discussed in 3.D.2, [2.6.2.2 in the Faculty Handbook](#) describes the importance Sterling College places on quality advising:

"Advising requires a genuine and sustained concern for the students' academic, personal, and professional growth, each faculty member is responsible for the following:

- advising new students of the essentials of the academic liberal arts program, planning class schedules, and monitoring their adjustment to the College setting;
- advising departmental majors in setting academic and professional goals, ensuring that the College and departmental requirements are understood and met, and overseeing their professional and personal development; and
- directing all students who need professional and/or academic assistance to the appropriate office or person."

3.D.4

Sterling College provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning.

Technological Infrastructure:

Sterling College now partners with a local technology company to manage its information technology. The [contracted partner](#) is a local business and oversees all aspects of information technology on campus and directs the planning, acquisition and implementation of business, educational and institutional hardware, software and storage purchases. In addition, this group oversees network support, telephone support and manages the information portal for staff and students. The partner reports to the Vice President for Administration and Institutional Initiatives.

In October 2018, Sterling College conducted an [IT audit](#) through an independent consultant. In part, the results of that audit prompted the College to outsource its technology services. The [improvements](#) are organized in four major categories: Student Services, Educational Services, Infrastructure and Security.

The contracted partner tracks and documents all help tickets. Since the official on boarding in April 2019, the College has generated an average of 322 tickets per month or approximately 14.6 per business day. However, since October, the average number of tickets generated each month

has dropped to 207. This drop can be, in part, attributed to the simplification of the server environment and the successful implementation of a new learning management system.

Faculty have access to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) through an institutional subscription which has improved the ease of grading because the system marks common grammatical errors with notes for how students can correct those errors. TurnItIn also has originality detecting software so that students and faculty can check that sources used in the course assignment have been properly cited. Those faculty who use the system have also been able to more easily enforce the College's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

[mySterling](#), a JICS system, is used by faculty to [record attendance](#). The College launched [Canvas](#) in fall 2019 as its new learning management system. Like many learning management systems, it includes portals for students to take online tests, submit homework or essays, find the syllabus or handouts, and participate in online classroom discussions.

In 2012 the College contracted with [InterDesign](#) to conduct a campus-wide space assessment. Board, faculty and staff continue to use the results of this study as a roadmap for campus improvements. As a result of this study, a \$25 million capital campaign was launched in 2015 that includes three major construction projects. First, a 32,000 square foot addition is currently being built onto the Gleason Physical Education Center. Four academic programs are based in this building, Exercise Science, Health Science, Sports Management, and Athletic Training. The College will create a Center for Sports Medicine which will include new and larger treatment facilities, three new classrooms including an exercise physiology lab, and twenty offices for coaches and professors. The Center is home to the College's first campus-based master's degree.

After the current phase is complete, a 34,000 square foot Science and Academic Center will be constructed. This building will add state-of-the-art labs, classrooms, equipment and office space for our science and mathematics staff. Finally, a third phase will renovate Thompson Hall, the current home to the College's departments of business, mathematics and natural science. This renovation will provide 18 faculty offices, update multiple classrooms, update all ADA requirements and provide 25,000 square feet of renovated space and 1,000 square feet of new construction.

Mabee Library is home to over fifty bibliographic databases and over 88,000 volumes of resources, including books, magazines, newspapers, academic journals, CDs, and DVDs. In addition, users have access to many other resources through Interlibrary Loan. The library is located in the center of campus and is equipped with public use computers, a computer lab, color printers, and study rooms. Available equipment for check-out includes small laptops, projectors, DVD players, scientific calculators, and headphones. When regular classes are in session, the library is open from Sunday through Thursday until midnight and until 5:00 on Fridays. Off campus access is available, so students can search the catalog, request a book from inter-library loan, and read full-text articles from anywhere. As a recipient of a South Central Kansas Library System Grant, we grant community members a community borrowing card upon request which entitles the user to:

- borrowing privileges for all books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials in the circulating collections;
- assistance in identifying and retrieving appropriate materials;
- access to wireless internet and library computers;
- faxing services; and
- inter-library loan services.

To help maintain the most useful collection of resources, the Director asks faculty to provide feedback regarding the usefulness of the library and to help evaluate holdings to make sure physical space and budgets are being utilized efficiently.

Three library staff and 5 student workers are available to assist library users, and library staff often provides library and research instruction to classes upon faculty request tailored to the specific discipline or research project.

The library also includes individual study rooms, a video conference room, a computer lab, computer stations, academic support services, the writing center, the IT department, and other study areas. Additionally, the Alumni Center of the Sterling College Alumni Association is located off the foyer of the Mabee Library and further enhances the use of the library services.

In regards to performance space upgrades, and most recently in the fall of 2019, new funds in the amount of \$50,000 were designated for LED lighting and sound board upgrades to Culbertson Auditorium, replacing the aging lighting infrastructure. In addition to those upgrades, many instrumental upgrades were made to the vocal and instrumental music departments, in light of new faculty additions that are rejuvenating those programs. Furthermore, many enhancements were made to bring restroom and other facilities into full ADA compliance.

3.D.5

Sterling College guides students in the effective use of research and information resources. Students are provided with instruction on evaluating, choosing, and properly using and citing sources in [LL101: College Composition](#) and the two [writing intensive courses](#) required for graduation.

The staff of Mabee Library is also a valuable resource in guiding students in the effective use of research and information resources. In addition to visiting classrooms and providing individual instruction in the library, the Mabee Library web sources include [resources listed by academic program](#), a list of [databases](#) available to students, and a way for students to search for [resources](#) in the library database, Ebsco, and eLibrary. Students may also request resources through [interlibrary loan](#). In addition, the [launch page for my.Sterling](#) includes quick links to the library, tech support, and turnitin.com. Examples of courses in which instructors further increase collaboration among students and library staff include [GD105 Foundations of Servant Leadership](#) and [HS440 Research Methods in Health Science](#).

More regarding the guidance Sterling College gives its students in the effective use of research and information resources can be found in 2.E.

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3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

Argument

3.E.1

The College's co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

A number of the following co-curricular activities may be taken for college credit, but many students participate in these activities without receiving college credit.

The student newspaper, [*The Observer*](#), is published every month during the regular semester and distributed freely at no charge across campus. Under the guidance of an advisor, students are responsible for generating story ideas, writing, editing, and layout. Students gain valuable experience of the journalism process which will benefit them in their coursework and in the world of work.

Sterling College continues to have a successful Debate and Forensics program. In April 2018, [Gage Brookman placed 1st in the nation as the top speaker at the National Forensics Association Lincoln-Douglas Debate National Tournament](#), and as of December 2019, the team has qualified for at least one student for the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament, extending its streak to 14 consecutive years. The Sterling College Debate & Forensics team is the only one in the State of Kansas that has qualified students to both the National Forensics Association National Debate Tournament and the American Forensics Association Individual Events Tournament.

[*The Great Plains Review*](#) (GPR), an art and literary journal, is another co-curricular activity which 7-10 students per year work on and many more contribute writing or artwork. Under the guidance of an advisor, students solicit submissions in the early weeks of spring, then select, if necessary, edit submissions, arrange layout, and facilitate the publication of the GPR. In the final week of the spring semester, the students organize the [GPR release party](#) where students, alumni, staff, and faculty who have had something published in that edition of the *GPR* have an opportunity to read or display their work for the Sterling College community.

Sterling College [Worship Arts](#) are led by a [full-time Director](#) and involves about 25 students per semester. Ministry teams travel to area churches and Christian schools to lead youth groups, children's ministry, praise and worship, and other programming needs. Chapel praise bands lead worship during chapels or other Campus Ministry events. Students in both of these activities develop their team building skills and use their music or ministry gifts to enrich the lives of others, on campus and throughout the world.

While theatre productions do include a large number of theatre majors, there are also students involved in products from many other areas of study. Many students, from many different programs, work on set construction, costuming, ticketing, seating, and performing, and have the opportunity to participate in something they love while still earning an academic degree in the area of their choice.

Since 2011, the Sterling College Business Department has sponsored a Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) -- Phi Beta Lambda chapter. Sterling College hosted the FBLA-PBL Fall State Leadership conference in 2013 and the FBLA-PBL Spring State Leadership conference in 2016 & 2017. Through these leadership conferences students have an opportunity to develop and refine the business skills they learn in the classroom through competition. Six of the past eight years students have qualified to compete at the FBLA-PBL National competition. In 2013 Sterling had a student elected to the Kansas FBLA-PBL State Leadership Board. In addition to state and national success, students have engaged locally in entrepreneurial fundraising and other activities such as an on-campus [etiquette dinner](#).

3.E.2

Annually since 2009, Sterling College has organized and participated in [Love Sterling](#), a Saturday morning, usually in April, dedicated to working on service projects in and around Sterling, Kansas. Students have painted, weeded, trimmed trees, carried away trash, visited the elderly at the [Sterling Village](#), and other activities as needed. Organizers of the event, which are comprised of students, staff, and community members, spend the early weeks of spring determining with city and church leaders what projects are needed and feasible for volunteers to finish in a few hours. The activity is a great bonding time for the community and illustrates the College's foundation in servant leadership.

While participation in athletics is extra-curricular, over 60% of the students at Sterling College participate at some level in intercollegiate athletics. As a division of the campus which directly touches a majority of the students, the athletic program at Sterling College is a strong influence in the character development of our students. The athletic programs support the core values of the College. The Sterling College athletic program was named a Five Star Champions of Character Institution by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) for the 2016-2017 and [2018-2019](#) academic years. A [Five Star Champions of Character Institution](#) shows commitment in athletics to five key areas: character training, conduct in competition, academic focus, character recognition, and character promotion. These five areas measure the Institution's commitment to the Champions of Character core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership. Institutions earn points based on

exceptional student-athlete grade point averages and by obtaining zero ejections during competition throughout the course of the academic year.

In addition to the athletic program's recognition by the NAIA, the program does the following to underscore the core values of the institution in its athletes:

- The coaching staff [meets at least twice each year](#) with all of our student athletes and discusses in depth the values and rules of the college and what their responsibilities are. They discuss academic values, spiritual growth aspect, opportunities for bible studies, and athletic development, and how all areas develop a well-rounded individual.
- The coaching staff conducts [leadership training sessions](#) with the leaders of our athletic programs in August to help them develop the knowledge and courage to become good, well-balanced leaders.
- The coaching staff encourages and has taken team mission trips to Alaska, Panama, and Joplin, Missouri, to help athletes develop servant leadership attitude and skills.
- Teams have worked with Habitat for Humanity over the last three years.
- All athletic programs participate in [Love Sterling](#).
- The teams have host families for Thanksgiving and Christmas, to help those in our community in need.
- [Men's](#) and [women's](#) basketball and men's and women's [soccer](#) teams have put on several youth clinics where the five core values of the NAIA are shared.
- Our football team does a tremendous amount of mentoring with [elementary school children](#) and invite them to come to practices and meets.
- This last year our Women's Golf team was the [2018-2019 KCAC Team of Character](#).
- Athletic teams volunteering at the United Methodist Church on one Wednesday a month during the school year serving a community meal for the churches cross training the youth in our community.
- At the [Warriors of Excellence Banquet](#) each year, the athletic department honors each sport's student athlete who exemplifies excellence academically, spiritually, and athletically, and who demonstrates strong servant leadership qualities.

These and other activities illustrate Sterling College's investment in the educational experience of our students by virtue of co- and extra-curricular activities, which align with the mission and core values of the College. By living out a maturing Christian faith, and through the knowledge and skills gained in their education in service to others, Sterling College achieves its mission of developing thoughtful and creative leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

The requirements for courses and programs offered through Sterling College are the same whether those classes are taken on ground, online, or through dual credit agreements with Sterling High School and Berean Academy. Degree requirements and course policies are published in the Academic Catalog and/or on the syllabus for each course.

The hours and grade point average necessary to continue in good standing and to graduate from Sterling College are published and followed and are appropriate to undergraduate and graduate institutions.

The general education curriculum at Sterling College was developed by and is managed by the faculty of the College and reflects the institution's values of a faith-based liberal arts education. The general education curriculum ensures that students will have an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge people expect of a college educated person. The learning objectives of the general education program fulfill the institutional learning objectives and are aligned with the mission of the College.

Through the writing intensive requirement, all major programs actively engage students in the acquisition, evaluation, and proper use of knowledge in their field, culminating in a research project appropriate to each student's major field of study.

Program objectives have been developed for each program which align with the institutional learning objectives and the mission of the College.

Many programs have successfully integrated the study of world diversity somewhere in the program's curriculum. Students also have opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity through guest lecturers on campus or participation on a College sponsored mission trip.

The faculty of Sterling College are engaged in various scholarly projects appropriate to their discipline.

The College continues to strive to increase the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees.

The College has a strong professional development program, including new and current faculty. All faculty are given opportunities for professional growth throughout the year by attending

faculty retreat, faculty professional development days, and faculty meetings, and by utilizing annual professional development funds.

Teaching at Sterling College is evaluated through faculty completion of course reports, classroom observation by department chairs, and IDEA evaluations completed by students.

All Sterling College faculty are required to keep 10 office hours per week and to have those hours published in their syllabi, posted near their office door, and on file with the Academic Affairs Office. Adjunct faculty are given space to use in Mabee Library, and online faculty must designate times during the week when they are available for phone consultation. In addition, while all faculty are expected to respond to email requests from students in a timely manner, online faculty are required to respond within 24 hours.

The staff and administration of Sterling College are highly qualified and support the academic enterprise of the College through student support services, health services, counseling services, career services, academic support and tutoring services, financial aid, registrar, and campus ministry. Students in the online division of the College have access to the same registrar, financial aid offices, and Chaplain, but are also supported by a Coordinator of Online Student Services.

Faculty are responsible for the academic advising of students but have the support of the registrar, a general education planner, the academic catalog, and the JICS online enrollment system. The concern of previous HLC visits in the area of faculty turnover have been successfully addressed, and evident by the decreasing number of resignations, as well as the marked increase in both 5 and 10-year tenured faculty.

Faculty development funds are available for all faculty, although slightly diminished over the past few years due to lower enrollment numbers. Faculty are continually encouraged to use their professional development funds to continue to stay current in and connected to their fields.

Sterling College has strong co-curricular and extra-curricular programs which enrich the education environment of the College and support the mission and vision of the College.

Opportunities:

Sterling College was granted approval to offer master's degrees in Sports Ministry and Athletic Training. While the programs have launched, a continued focus needs to remain on the recruitment and marketing components of both programs, to ensure growth in enrollment.

While many staff have access to professional development opportunities, professional staff development must be a higher priority within the 2020 Strategic Plan, not only for the efficient operation of the services those staff provide but also to emphasize the value the College puts on those positions and the employees in those positions.

The 2009 visiting team was concerned with the low number of faculty holding the doctoral degree. The College has shown improvement in that percentage, from 35% in 2009-2010 to 43%

in 2015-2016. However, that percentage has also fluctuated, dependent upon the credentials of applicants. Regardless, Sterling College has shown its commitment to hiring faculty with doctoral and terminal degrees, and will continue to do so. More importantly, the College has invested in its faculty, granting \$91,313 in assistance through the forgivable loan program since 2010-2011 to faculty completing doctoral programs.

Funding for faculty development as well as the procedures for distributing those funds was a concern as well. The College has committed \$400 per faculty member per year for professional development use, which can be pooled for three years, if more funds are needed to attend a more distant conference. As mentioned above, while the Faculty Welfare Committee does a good job making faculty aware of the funds and encouraging faculty to use their funds, continued incentives should be made available. Faculty must be continually reminded that their professional development is not just for them, but for the institution and, most importantly, for students. In addition, while the total budget line for professional development hasn't risen substantially since 2009-2010, the forgivable loan program is robust and certainly also lends to the professional development and qualifications of Sterling College faculty.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its education programs.

4.A.1 The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

Sterling College maintains a practice of regular program reviews. The [2008-2009 Assessment Plan](#) outlined a six-year cycle for Program Review, during which every academic program would undergo review. While the specifics of the Assessment Plan have evolved since its inception ten years ago, the foundational details remain the same. The [program review template](#) was created to guide program faculty through the process and establish the minimum requirements for program review. Early each fall, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA) meets with the faculty of programs scheduled to undergo review during that academic year. An overview of the review process is provided, brainstorming of resources is conducted, and a plan for moving

forward with the review is created. The program review process typically spans the course of one academic year from introductory meeting to submission of the final report. In recent years, programs have completed the review in one year and proposed curricular improvements through the faculty governance procedures in the following academic year. Examples of completed program review documents are provided for the [Biology](#) and [Business Administration](#) Programs.

The comprehensive [program review](#) process requires program faculty to consider eight key areas: 1) assessment data collected since the last program review; 2) input from outside stakeholders; 3) benchmarking of peer institutions; 4) changes to program and/or course objectives; 5) how those changes affect the alignment matrices; 6) guidelines and/or standards from appropriate accrediting bodies; 7) guidelines and/or standards from professional associations; and 8) budget implications for implementing changes as a result of program review. From this review, program faculty can reaffirm the program as it stands or make recommendations and proposals for improvement.

Following the 2016 mid-cycle visit, a [revised schedule for program review](#) was provided to the HLC as part of an [interim report](#) associated with non-academic program review and Criterion 5. Because this process is cyclical, the [schedule is updated](#) at the completion of each academic year, to reflect progress and continue to plan for future years. In addition to institutional program review, several programs undergo review as a part of external program accreditation processes. Eleven programs underwent program review through the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) during the 2018-2019 year in preparation for an on-site visit in the spring of 2020. Athletic Training is accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). Faculty are preparing a self-study during the 2019-2020 year in preparation for a site visit during the 2020-2021 year. Details regarding each program's current review status are outlined in the [Detailed Program Review Schedule by Program](#).

4.A.2 and 3

Sterling College evaluates all the credit that it transcripts and assures the quality of the credit it [accepts for transfer](#). The Sterling College [Academic Catalog](#) includes that "[c]ourses taken at another institution will be evaluated by the Registrar for transfer credit. All prior academic work must be reported for evaluation. Sterling College reserves the right to decline the transfer of courses completed at an unaccredited institution."

Any courses accepted for transfer must have a grade of C- or better. If the Registrar's Office has a question regarding how to apply the qualified course for transfer, the Registrar's Office contacts the appropriate faculty member, provides a course description of the transfer course, and asks the faculty member whether the course will meet a general education or major/minor requirement. If the qualified course is not applied to a requirement for a degree at Sterling College, the transfer hours count as elective credits and can help the student meet the required 124 credit hours for graduation.

Through the [Guaranteed Admission Advantage](#) with community colleges in Kansas, transfer students from those institutions who have an A.A. or A.S. have their Sterling College general education requirements met, with the exception of GD105: Foundations of Servant Leadership;

TM102: Introduction to Old Testament; TM103: Introduction to New Testament; and TM366: Basic Christian Doctrine. Any courses which those transfer students have taken which may meet a major or minor requirement must be evaluated by through the College's standard process for evaluating transfer credit.

Sterling College offers students opportunities to earn [credit by examination](#). The College has stated policies regarding transcribing credit from Advanced Placement Exams, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support (DANTES), Institutional Credit by Examination (popularly called "test out"), and Credit for Prior Learning. The College uses the American Council on Education recommendations for awarding credit for prior learning.

Dual Credit courses are accepted for credit by the College and are evaluated according to the process for evaluating transfer credit. The College also accepts up to 12 credits of [International Baccalaureate \(IB\)](#) courses in higher level subjects with scores of 5 or better.

The most common forms of credited experiential learning at Sterling College are internships, practica, and independent studies.

Internships are designed to help students gain hands-on work experience in their major fields of study. Students from all programs who participate in an internship for credit must follow the requirements in the [Sterling College Internship Packet](#). Students provide a description and document their goals and strategies for the internship before beginning to accrue hours. This documentation is approved by the internship supervisor, faculty instructor, and Director of Career Services before the start of the internship to ensure all parties agree to the scope and content of the internship. Students then record and track their hours on a work log, receive evaluations on their performance from their internship supervisor, and complete a self-evaluation of their internship experience. Additionally, the faculty instructor may require other journals, a reflection essay, and/or completion of specific projects.

Several programs require some type of practicum course as a requirement for graduation. For example, [ES 362 Field Experience](#) is a requirement of the exercise science program. The undergraduate Athletic Training program, which is in its last year at the baccalaureate level, requires students to participate in six semesters of practicum. The graduate level Athletic Training program launched in the summer of 2018. Students are required to participate in eight terms of [clinical experience](#), through which program faculty ensure that students are qualified and prepared for their clinical experiences by following their [cohort progression plan](#) and upholding the prerequisite requirements for each course.

Students may submit a [Request for Independent Study](#). An independent study is a specific program of study, for 1 to 3 credits, under the direct supervision of a faculty member. Enrollment in an independent study course is limited to juniors and seniors in their major area(s) only and for a maximum of 6 credits toward degree completion. Along with the Request for Independent Study, the faculty member must design a syllabus to meet the requirements of this [individualized course of study](#) including a course description, learning objectives, activities and assignments,

assessment procedures, grading policy, and contact expectations. The VPAA or Associate VPAA must approve all requests for independent study before a student can be enrolled in the course.

4.A.4

Prerequisites for courses are determined by the program faculty proposing a course, approved by the Academic Affairs Committee and Faculty Council, and, once approved, are listed in the catalog, [within course descriptions](#). In addition, all [prerequisites](#) must be passed with a C- or better before a student can enroll in a course.

The College also maintains authority over the rigor of courses and expectations of student learning. [Proposals](#) for new courses or course changes must include a cover letter, rationale for the addition, a syllabus, catalog copy reflecting the change, and a revised two-year course rotation. The Academic Affairs Committee evaluates proposals based on how the change will strengthen the program, how feasible the changes are with staffing and budgeting, and how well the change addresses issues with the program. Examples of recent changes include a change in the [History with Secondary Education curriculum](#) and in the [Business Administration](#) or [Biology](#) program. Once changes have been [accepted by the Academic Affairs Committee](#), the proposals move to Faculty Council for [final faculty approval](#) and then to the office of the VPAA for implementation.

On campus and online students have access to [Mabee Library](#) and its resources, to [turnitin.com](#), to [mySterling](#), to [Canvas](#), to [counseling services](#), [Career Services](#), and to [tutoring and other academic support services](#). Dual credit students are made available the same resources as campus and online students. The courses taught for dual credit at Sterling High School and Berean Academy include the course objectives set by the Sterling College department responsible for that content, and the syllabus used for the dual credit courses includes Sterling College course policies. [BI110: Human Anatomy and Physiology](#) taught at Sterling High School serves as an example.

The College maintains authority over dual credit courses. Before a course can be offered for dual credit, the high school must submit a syllabus for the proposed course. Once faculty qualifications have been verified, the syllabus is reviewed by the department faculty in which the course is housed. Courses are evaluated to ensure that prerequisites, content, rigor, and outcomes are consistent with the College's course. Student achievements in those courses are factored into the institutional assessment process in the same manner as campus courses.

The faculty at Sterling College are appropriately credentialed, including those in the dual credit programs at Sterling High School and Berean Academy and those who teach education courses through KICA (Kansas Independent College Association). The [table](#) shows what degrees current full-time, pro-rata, and adjunct Sterling College faculty have earned as of September 2019. Dual-credit instructors are listed on the table as adjuncts.

Those faculty who do not have a graduate degree in their teaching field, must be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs through the Faculty Welfare committee. The candidates' education, credentials, and experience are evaluated. During fall 2015, the VPAA [revised and](#)

[clarified the procedure](#) for verifying faculty qualifications. The Faculty Welfare Committee approved the revision in January 2016, and the new [policy](#) went into effect February 2016. Since that time, the policy and procedure have been effective in ensuring the hiring of qualified faculty.

The College makes exceptions to the requirement for graduate degrees only in situations where the search for a highly qualified candidate has been exhausted. The procedure requires that the faculty member's credentials be [documented](#). If it is determined that the faculty member needs to earn graduate credit to remain qualified, a [continued education plan](#) is created and reviewed annually. As a general policy, the College seeks to hire appropriately qualified and credentialed faculty.

The 2009 visiting team noted that "only 35 percent of Sterling College's faculty hold the doctoral degree." That percentage has increased, but also decreased again in recent years. Much of this decrease can be attributed to the overall small size of the faculty. A change in one or two faculty members impacts the percentages greatly. Most faculty turnover of late is faculty members and their families who accepted positions closer to their hometowns. Late resignations prior to the Fall 2019 semester left positions unfilled when these percentages were calculated. Several current faculty members are utilizing the College's forgivable loan program and the College is retaining faculty members at a greater rate than in the past, as reflected in the number of faculty who are eligible for extended contract each year.

More about faculty qualifications is given in 3.C.2.

4.A.5

The College maintains specialized accreditation for two programs:

Education:

The Education department offers 11 different licensure programs [approved by the Kansas State Department of Education \(KSDE\)](#). In spring 2019, the College decided to take action in the [non-pursuance of accreditation](#) with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As other national accreditors emerge for professional teacher education programs, the College will continue to review the benefits and pursuance of national accreditation for this program.

Athletic Training:

The Athletic Training program is [accredited](#) by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). In the fall 2017, the substantive change application to transition the baccalaureate degree program to the master's level was submitted and [approved](#) by the CAATE following review. The program is accredited through 2020-2021, with a self-study due July 1, 2020 and a site visit during the 2020-2021 academic year.

4.A.6

Sterling College evaluates the success of its graduates.

Each summer, the Career Services Director prepares the Sterling College [“Career Outcomes Report”](#) for the most recent graduating class, including those completing their graduation requirements in the summer, fall, interterm, and spring semesters. The report contains graphs and tables displaying overall employment rates and graduate degree plan rates as well as this same information broken-down by major. The report also shows the percentage of students who completed internships. The report for the just-graduated class is uploaded to the [Career Services webpage](#) each June.

The data for the report comes from an electronic form each student completes prior to receiving their graduation packet from the Registrar. The timing of this survey results in a high return rate, but also means that the results are from immediately after graduation when many students have just begun their job search.

The Athletic Training Program keeps consistent [records](#) on the success of their graduates. Eighty percent of their graduates who took the Board of Certification Exam have passed and have become certified Athletic Trainers. Three-year aggregate data includes 64% of their graduates attend graduate school, and of those who have applied for graduate school, 100% were accepted.

Similarly, the Education department keeps consistent [records](#) on the success of their graduates. The Sterling College Education Program (STEP) has a 100% seven-year pass rate on the PLT Exam, the exam which prospective educators must take to continue on the path to full licensure in the state of Kansas, 100% eight-year pass rate on the Kansas Performance Teaching Portfolio, and 98% five-year pass rate on the PRAXIS II content exam. In addition, STEP has a five-year average of 93% for graduates working in an education-related field.

During institutional [program reviews](#), the College surveys alumni regarding the program under review. The names of the alumni are provided to the department under review, and a link to a survey created with SurveyMonkey is emailed to those alumni. Many programs have sent surveys to their alumni since 2010. However, while those surveys asked questions about the course offerings and current or possible program objectives in those programs and if the alumni thought that those courses belonged in those programs, the surveys did not include a section for alumni to identify if they are currently working in the field of their major or if they believed that their major prepared them for whatever career they are in. An exception is the Business department and the Math department. The Business survey began with two questions regarding how well graduates had been prepared either for the workforce or for graduate school. Question 6 of the Math department survey asked alumni to rate to what degree they agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Mathematics program at Sterling College prepared me for further academic study or employment in a related field."

The Education and Athletic Training programs administer both alumni and employer surveys. The Education department surveys their alumni and building principals one, two, and three years' post-graduation while the Athletic Training program surveys their graduates and their employers one year after graduation.

As referenced in Criterion 1.D, the College made the move to dissolve the National Advisory Council (NAC) and replace it with [academic program-level advisory groups](#). These groups are being formed to [serve academic programs](#) in an advisory capacity as they explore curriculum improvements, internship opportunities, qualities for which employees in the field expect from new graduates, and more.

The Alumni and Advancement Offices endeavor to maintain accurate alumni information in many ways including:

- A contract has been signed to produce an alumni directory to be published in early 2021.
- The Director of Alumni updates information in the Raiser's Edge database on an on-going basis based on information gathered from Facebook, LinkedIn research, alumni finder, google alerts, event registration/attendance, and various ongoing contact with alumni.
- The Advancement Office has four Gift Officers (fundraisers) who work directly with Sterling College alumni. They make regular updates in the database as a result of their efforts to maintain contact with alumni.
- The Director of Career Services periodically learns about changes in employment based on conversations, emails, and LinkedIn profile updates from graduates and former students. These updates are then passed along to the Director of Alumni for entry into the database.
- The Raiser's Edge database is analyzed annually for new email addresses and phone numbers. (The most recent run resulted in over 5,700 new phone number updates and 109 new email addresses.)
- Regular communications to alumni include requests for updates. These communications include: the weekly Planned Giving enewsletter, the monthly Alumni enewsletter, and the bi-annual Sterling Magazine. Additionally, an update information link is available on the [alumni page](#) of the College website. Updates are made to the database based on responses received.
- An ongoing communication process is being developed on campus to update the Alumni Office of changes in status on alumni from information gathered from professors, coaches, Registrar's Office, and other campus personnel. Information gathered from this process will be added to the database.

The Alumni and Advancement Offices see great potential in accessing current employment and graduate school plans from the LinkedIn profiles of former students and graduates (this information is self-reported by the user). A significant effort to ensure graduates are connected to Sterling College in [LinkedIn](#) has resulted in the number of former students and alumni properly connected to SC from 595 in June 2016 to 1,639 in July 2019. Efforts continue to encourage alumni to properly connect in this way.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1, 2, 4

Sterling College has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals, which require substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members. The College maintains [five institutional learning objectives](#), that when paired with the [institution's mission](#), form the foundational framework for the development, assessment, and improvement of its curricular programs.

Clearly Stated Goals for Student Learning

In 2007-2008, the general education curriculum was revised by a sub-committee of the Academic Affairs Committee. During that process, the general education objectives were narrowed down from 52 objectives to 5 general areas, with 16 sub-areas, which were not strongly articulated as goals. In August 2013, the faculty approved new [General Education Objectives and Assessment Measurements](#) which retained a revised list of 5 general areas, but articulated 14 (instead of 16) sub-areas more specifically as goals. Each of these 14 sub-areas are aligned with missional elements, as identified with the abbreviations CL (creative leader), TL (thoughtful leader), CTL (creative and thoughtful leader) and MCF (maturing Christian faith). Furthermore, these goals are aligned with institutional learning goals numbers three, four, and five.

Every [major is designed](#) to produce in the student:

- *knowledge* of the discipline's content and methods
- continuing development of *skills* related to the discipline's content
- *values* relating the discipline to world-view perspectives

Each major has [program objectives](#) that align with the mission to "develop *creative and thoughtful* leaders who understand a *maturing Christian faith*." Again, the abbreviations described previously are used to designate program objective alignment with missional objectives. Additionally, each program's [curriculum alignment matrix](#) includes a chart that demonstrates programmatic level objectives with institutional learning objectives. As objectives three through five are strongly tied to the generally education curriculum, at minimum, program objectives must align with institutional objectives one and two.

The College does not claim any learning outcomes for its co-curricular programs. Any learning outcomes that might be attached to co-curricular activities are covered in the corresponding course some students take while active in those activities. For example, a student could be involved in forensics and debate without being enrolled in [CM150D: Debate Laboratory](#) or [CM150F: Forensics Laboratory](#). [GD190: Chapel and Convocation](#) is required each semester a student is enrolled full-time at Sterling College, but the course carries no credit and is recorded as pass/fail; therefore, no academic assessment is attached to the course. However, the Office of Spiritual Life is assessed through non-academic program assessment.

Effective Processes for Assessment of Student Learning and Achievement of Learning Goals

The assessment plan was originally implemented in the [fall of 2008](#). The then associate dean who developed the plan was guided by Mary Allen's book *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). Specifically, the assessment plan embraces Allen's advice about instruction and assessment alignment and her insistence on strict linearity and triangulation at every level of assessment. While the 2008 plan has been revised, the plan generated an important culture change at the College in the sense that faculty began to embrace the importance of student-learning outcomes. The value placed on the importance of student-learning outcomes remains a vital part of the assessment of student learning which continues today.

Assessment at the program level is rooted in the program alignment matrix. Faculty within each program maintain a curricular matrix that contains the [programmatic objectives](#) (with alignment to missional objectives identified) and an [alignment map](#) that indicates which program objectives are to be addressed in which courses, and at what level of mastery. Each program's document also includes a [program assessment matrix](#) that outlines the assessments used to measure each program objective, as selected by the program faculty. The assessments identified are program and discipline specific and include, but are not limited to, capstone projects, major field tests, course-based grades, performance or show, and more. This document serves as a guide for program-level assessment, a resource to be consulted when considering curricular changes and improvements, and a map for faculty to see how each course fits into the overall goals of the program.

Beginning in 2012, at the end of each academic year, faculty complete a [course report](#) template, using a 6-point scale, to record how well students in the courses taught that year met the program objectives in those courses. The document is numerically driven with optional places for faculty responses. The standardization of this process has made reporting at all levels

easier and more intuitive and has made assessment of institutional objectives much easier. Faculty retain the opportunity to comment and reflect on what is going well and what may need to be improved the next time the course is taught to better meet the program objectives. All faculty are required to complete an annual course report which keeps student learning objectives in the forefront and helps to create a student learning focused culture on campus.

The course reports for his/her program are gathered by each program chair and compiled, using the same 6-point scale, into a [program report](#). The program report gives the program a broader perspective into what is or is not working in the program. The chair considers the suggestions made by program faculty to make changes or revisions in the program, and to be sure that all program objectives are being met.

The data from course and program reports is used when making program changes and when completing the program review process. It can serve as evidence the program faculty need to justify program changes to the Academic Affairs Committee. Additionally, program chairs meet with program faculty to discuss outcomes, suggestions for improvement, and other needs on at least an annual basis.

[Assessment of the general education curriculum](#) involves both direct and indirect assessment measures including results of the ETS Proficiency Profile (standardized assessment), the [Maturing Christian Faith Survey](#) (formerly referred to as the General Education Exam), and course-based grades. The ETS Proficiency Profile provides the College with data related about learning objectives that are common to GE curricula throughout the country, and provides a picture of how its students compare to those at other institutions. However, standardized tests cannot assess every objective within the College's general education curriculum. The Maturing Christian Faith survey was designed to measure students' progress toward the GE objectives related specifically to [Our Statement of Faith](#). Students are [invited](#) to take the survey in their last semester, just prior to graduation. In addition to the ETS Proficiency Profile and the Maturing Christian Faith survey questions, the GE Chair also uses course-based grades to provide more data on the efficiency of our general education curriculum.

The annual [Institutional Assessment Report](#) is created by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs by compiling the data and outcomes reported in the [program reports](#) and the [GE assessment report](#). By compiling data from all programs into one document, trends in how well students are meeting institutional objectives and how well the mission is being fulfilled are identified. These reports, historically, were presented to the former Assessment Committee, which included only a few faculty members. The current Associate VPAA is proposing a change to that would require those reports to be presented to the Academic Affairs Committee, made up of faculty members and several ex officio academic staff members, each fall semester for discussion, feedback, approval, and dissemination.

4.B.3

The faculty at Sterling College use the information gained from assessment processes to improve student learning. The course and program report templates include space for faculty to recommend improvements to their courses and programs based on the data included.

Additionally, program review provides opportunity for large scale curriculum changes to better meet desired student learning outcomes. While this list is not comprehensive of all data-driven changes made since the 2009 visit, or even the 2016 visit, several examples of the effectiveness of this process are detailed here:

- The Math department [proposed](#), and faculty governance [approved](#), a new course, [MA139 Introduction to Statistical Reasoning](#), and removed prerequisites from MA108 Contemporary Math, based on students' scores and instructor experiences.
- The Biology department [proposed](#), and was [approved](#), changes to the biology department based on findings of their 2017-2018 [program review](#).
- The Business department utilized a [2017-2018 program review](#) to reflect on data and outcomes and [made curricular improvements](#), as [approved](#) by faculty governance.

Upon approval of the Academic Affairs Committee, action items are then passed to the Faculty Council for consideration and final approval.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

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

4.C.1

For the 2015-16 school year, the College established a fall-to-fall retention goal for all students of 74% and 66% for First-time Freshmen (FF). That year our actuals were 75% overall and 64% for FF. The College has set the following fall-to-fall retention goals:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
FF	66%	67%	68%
Overall	72%	73%	74%

The College uses the "Overall" metric as our measure of persistence and the terms retention and persistence are used interchangeably. As outlined below in 4.C.2 and 4, FF retention took a dip during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 cycles and the College anticipates low graduation rates for those cohorts as a result. However, the Student Success and Retention Committee (SSRC) has focused, for now, on stabilizing the FF retention rates in order to increase graduation rates in the long run.

4.C.2 and 4

Sterling College uses spreadsheets maintained by the Registrar's Office to track retention, persistence, and graduate rates and reports its results in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Because most of the students at Sterling College fit the definition of a traditional student, the IPEDS designations work well for the institution.

Below is the IPEDS data for Sterling's overall graduation rate for first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion (6 years) from 2012-2018. The years 2019-2022 is data tracked by the Registrar's Office.

Graduation Rate:

2012 (2005 cohort)	2013 (2006 cohort)	2014 (2007 cohort)	2015 (2008 cohort)	2016 (2009 cohort)	2017 (2010 cohort)	2018 (2011 cohort)	2019 (2012 cohort)	2020 (2013 cohort)	2021 (2014 cohort)	2022 (2015 cohort)
48%	34%	42%	39%	42%	45%	39%	53%	53%	45.6% (5 year rate)	38% (4 year rate)

As part of the analysis performed, Sterling [compares](#) its graduation rate data with the "Comparison Group Median" data provided in IPEDS. The review shows that Sterling's graduation rate is the same or better than the comparison group each year with the exception of the data reported for 2013.

Additionally, the College looks at the retention rates of all on-campus students, transfers and re-admitted students, along with first-time, full-time freshmen. The following table reflects the retention figures fall-to-fall for 2012-2013 through 2018-2019 for on-campus students only (no dual credit, post-bacc, or on-line).

Class	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
FF	66%	65%	63%	64%	58%	50%	66%
FR	62%	63%	68%	68%	62%	82%	62%
SO	77%	80%	90%	76%	82%	77%	83%
JR	84%	72%	85%	89%	92%	79%	65%
SR	68%	58%	48%	73%	63%	64%	42%

Overall	74%	70%	75%	75%	74%	66%	69%
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The Registrar's office reports retention data to multiple surveys: IPEDS, College Board, and KICA, for example. In addition, the Registrar's office reaches out to students who may not complete, making sure the students know what requirements they are missing and what the timeline is before their catalog expires.

4.C.3.

In addition to the data discussed in 4.C.2 and 4.C.4, Sterling College administers the College Student Inventory to new students during new student orientation each fall (only missing Fall 2018 after a change in VP of Student Life). The information from this inventory has been used to identify “High Risk” students and to encourage students to consider the factors that may contribute to their success in college as well as develop an action plan for at least one challenge they may face. “High Risk” student names are provided to members of the Office of Student Success, the Student Success and Retention Committee, and athletic coaches. Students on this list are contacted by the members of the Office of Student Success for a time of reflection and identification of potential resources to assist.

As part of this inventory, some students reported concerns related to the financial aspect of attending college. Beginning with the 2019 inventory, a list of these students was provided to the Financial Aid Office so they could offer additional assistance in the form of conversations and training.

[Individual results](#) of this inventory was provided to each student as part of their Foundations of Servant Leadership class where instructors presented overall survey results and explained the purpose of the survey. Beginning in 2019, each student completed a [CSI Reflection & Action Plan](#). The purpose of identifying potential challenges and developing action plans early is to improve retention.

Two additional initiatives the College has implemented to improve retention are an attendance reporting system and an academic alert system. The information gained from these two systems is used by the Student Success and Retention Committee (SSRC) to create action plans for each student at risk. The Student Success and Retention Committee members are the [Vice President for Student Life](#), the [Vice President for Academic Affairs](#), the [Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs](#), the [Athletic Director](#), the [Director for Career Services and First Year Programs](#), the [Director for Academic Success](#), the [Registrar](#), and the Student Life Administrative Assistant.

[Daily and weekly attendance reports](#) are automatically generated from the College’s Learning Management System and emailed to the Vice President for Student Life, Athletic Director, Director of Student Success, and Director of Career Services and First Year Programs. In addition to being discussed at SSRC meetings, this list is reviewed by recipients and students are contacted about class absences.

The College uses an [Alert System](#) built into our Learning Management System that allows faculty and staff members to write an alert on any student they are concerned about. Faculty are instructed in faculty training sessions to submit an Alert form at any point in the semester when they see that a student is struggling academically, socially, or emotionally. At the completion of the 4th week of the semester (if not before) faculty members are expected to review their class rosters and create an alert for any student with an academic or attendance issue. All alerts are automatically sent to the Director of Student Success for assignment to the person responsible for following-up on the alert. This assignment is recorded in the Alert System for tracking until the action is completed and the alert is closed.

The alerts in this system have traditionally been written by faculty members. Within the last year, members of the Admissions Staff, Registrar's Office, and Student Life have been granted access to the Alert System and received training on how to write an alert. This change has allowed Admissions Counselors to enter information they have gathered from incoming students that may be helpful for others to see, the Assistant Registrar to report students who have requested transcripts (a sign that the student may be considering transferring), and Resident Directors to make note of students who have experienced life events that may explain certain behavior changes.

During the school year, the SSRC meets weekly and reviews various topics depending on what is important/relevant at different times of the semester. Review topics include: class attendance, grades, chapel attendance, outstanding financial balance, and next semester enrollment status. The Director of Academic Success prepares a report weekly to present to the Committee. Follow-up actions are assigned to committee members, Resident Directors, Advisors, Foundations instructors, coaches, and other involvement leaders (Debate, Choir, Theatre, etc.) and are recorded in the [minutes](#). Later in the semester, students who have had [alerts](#) submitted are added to the list of students discussed and follow-up plans developed for. At the appropriate time in the school year, additional factors are added to the [Student Retention Tracking Report](#).

During the summer of 2018, an analysis was performed on the impact of the College's student's 1st semester GPA on their eventual graduation. Data was collected on the incoming freshmen class of 2012 (allowing them 6 years to graduate). One of the key lessons learned from the [analysis](#) was the fact that 93% of the students from that cohort who eventually graduated from Sterling College had a 1st semester GPA greater than 2.5. This fact is frequently communicated to students in general, those on probation, and by coaches to their athletes to help students realize the importance of getting a good start to their academic career.

During the Spring and Summer of 2019, an analysis was performed on the retention of the College's first-generation students. Data was collected on the incoming freshmen classes of 2015 and 2016. The retention of the first-generation students in these cohorts was tracked. Overall, the retention of [first-generation students](#) was not as high as students who had at least one parent attend college. This realization led to meetings with the Vice President for Student Life and the Director of Career Services and First Year Programs with many of those first generation students. The conversation focused on why those students thought they had succeeded (persisted) while so many of their peers were no longer attending Sterling College and lead to a discussion of what the College could do to better support and retain first-generation students. As a result of

this conversation, incoming freshmen who are first-generation students are now grouped together in the College's mandatory first year class lead by instructors who themselves were first-generation college students and supported by Peer Mentors who were also first-generation students. The creation of these classes allows for conversations unique to this population to take place in a safe place.

Sources

- ACAD - Graduation Rate Comparison - July 2019
- ACAD_Submit Early Alerts Form_Dec 2015
- HR - AD Bio - Morris
- HR - AVPAA Bio - Laudermilk
- HR - DCSFYF Bio - Ehresman
- HR - DSS Bio - Moncada
- HR - Registrar Bio - Grizzle
- STULIF - ASRC Minutes Sept 2019
- STULIF - Attendance Report - Oct 2019
- STULIF - CSI Reflection and Action Plan - Aug 2019
- STULIF - CSI Sample Student Report - Aug 2019
- STULIF - Early Alerts - Sept 2019
- STULIF - First Generation Student Analysis - Jul 2019
- STULIF - First Semester GPA - Aug 2018
- STULIF - Student Retention Tracking Report - Oct 2019
- STULIF - Student Success and Retention Committee Minutes - Oct 2019
- VP for Student Life Bio - BRIAR
- VPAA Bio - BROWN

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

The College follows its processes and policies when evaluating the courses it accepts for transfer. The College also has clear guidelines for the acceptance of credit by examination, Credit for Prior Learning, and International Baccalaureate credits.

Through its processes and policies, the College maintains authority over prerequisites, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all of its programs, and it makes sure that the dual credit courses are equivalent to the same courses offered on campus at Sterling College in learning outcomes and levels of achievement.

The College maintains specialized accreditation for its Education endorsement areas (KSDE) and in Athletic Training (CAATE).

The College has consistently followed its assessment plan for academic programs, beginning with annual instructor course reports, program chair reports, general education assessment, and institutional assessment. The plan is easy for faculty to understand and not burdensome to complete, so the plan is sustainable. The College has worked diligently to maintain a practice of regular academic program review and faculty use the information collected to drive program improvement.

The College has articulated goals for student retention, persistence, and completion, and those goals are reasonable and attainable. The College collects and analyzes data on student retention, persistence, and completion according to accepted practices. The Student Success and Retention Committee meets weekly to discuss student learning and achievement.

Opportunities:

The College has made great strides in a regular practice of program review. As program faculty continue to see positive outcomes and impacts from the assessment and review cycles, support for the process and faculty buy-in will continue to increase.

Sterling College has become more consistent in tracking and assessing the success of its graduates and using that information to improve student learning and program performance.

While the assessment plan is working on the data collection and analysis level, the College must continue to improve how it uses that data and analysis in budgeting and planning decisions.

Core Components Needing Organizational Attention Following 2009 and 2016 Reviews:

One area noted for concern in the 2009 visit was the College's practice of program review. Since that time, a renewed focus on program review, both academic and non-academic, has been a major focus.

The 2009 team encouraged the College to increase the percentage of faculty with doctorates. More details are included in 3.C., but the value of terminal degrees is weighed heavily during the hiring process as faculty turnover occurs.

When the 2009 visiting team was on campus, the assessment plan was relatively new, so the team made observations about the course reports, end of course student surveys, and the guidelines for proposing curricular changes. The assessment plan evolved as faculty and administrators became more in tune with it, and the College is now at a place where regular, on-going assessment occurs. The College remains committed to ongoing assessment of student learning, evinced by the consistency with which faculty have participated in all stages of program assessment.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

Sterling College supports its operations with the fiscal, human, technological and physical resources necessary to fund and support its programs. While stability in these areas has been achieved, the College has made and is planning to make improvements that will dramatically and positively impact the campus experience for both employees and students. With careful management of all resources, Sterling College delivers high quality programs for a fraction of the resources of other institutions, as evidenced with one of the [lowest tuition rates](#) in the region. The College's greatest resource is the people, so recruiting, hiring, training and developing quality personnel will continue to be a top priority.

5.A.1

Fiscal Resources

Sterling College relies on three main sources of revenue – tuition, federal financial aid and private fundraising. The most significant part of the overall operating budget is tuition and fees. As demonstrated below, tuition and fees represent an average of 62.77% of the budget.

Fiscal Year	Gross Institutional Budget	Gross Revenue from Tuition	% of Gross Budget
FY 19	\$21,520,297	\$13,624,454	63.31%
FY 18	\$22,028,655	\$13,737,226	62.36%
FY 17	\$20,295,180	\$12,492,549	61.55%
FY 16	\$20,934,934	\$13,471,109	64.35%
FY 15	\$20,039,811	\$13,209,567	65.91%
FY 14	\$19,702,141	\$12,410,122	62.98%
FY 13	\$18,657,882	\$11,562,162	61.96%
FY 12	\$19,275,452	\$11,621,173	60.29%

To deliver academic programs more effectively, Sterling College launched its most recent capital campaign in 2015. The SterlingNOW \$25 million campaign is nearly complete through pledges and gifts totaling \$24,366,128.82 (as of December 4, 2019). In many ways, this campaign serves as a [master campus plan](#) for the next decade of the College. The success of this campaign has included:

- Successfully obtaining a [\\$2 million grant from the Mabee Foundation](#). This represents the largest grant awarded to the College in its history.
- Receiving an [estate gift](#) of \$7.7 million from a local benefactor. This was the largest single gift ever given to the College. \$1 million of this gift provides for the campaign construction, while \$6.7 million is designated for endowment.
- Ongoing and [successful construction](#) of the first phase of the campaign, a 32,000 square-foot addition to the Gleason Physical Education Center.
- A \$10 million pledge from a single donor to build a 34,000 square-foot Science and Academic Center.

Through careful planning and intentional fundraising, the college continues to strengthen its [Department of Education financial ratio](#). The College's ratio for the past two fiscal years has been 2.2. These strong ratios have raised our five-year average to 1.78 overall.

With the near-completion of the pledge portion of the SterlingNOW campaign, the College has turned its attention to bolstering the Sterling Fund which directly supports the annual budget. To accomplish this, the College has hired a new Director of Development for Annual Campaigns and a new Vice President for Athletics. These additions to our advancement team have allowed the College to increase its annual fund goal from \$850,000 (FY 2019) to \$1.2 million (FY 2020). The Office of Advancement documents 132 separate wills, estate or other planned gifts naming the College as beneficiary with a projected gift revenue pipeline of \$12,139,000. The pipeline gift total does not include the proceeds of a large pending estate, of which \$6,700,000 million will benefit scholarship endowment.

Sterling College provides [financial aid](#) to eligible students through state, federal and institutional programs while also providing work study opportunities to qualifying students. During the 2018-19 academic year, 91% of undergraduate students received a total of \$4.983 million in federal financial aid with an average award of \$8,971. Traditionally, about half of all students are eligible for a PELL grant disbursement. The 20th day report of fall 2019 revealed that 45.2% of the student body received PELL assistance totaling \$1.228 million.

Sterling College desires to partner with families to keep their college education affordable and has managed to keep the historic discount rate mostly flat for several years. The [overall discount rate](#) was 52.69% for 2019.

Human Resources

Several improvements in human resources have been made over the past ten years to support our faculty and staff. An inclusive [employee handbook](#), detailing policies related to both faculty and staff, was created. The creation of a [staff welfare committee](#) has served our non-faculty employees by providing information and professional development opportunities. This body has brought policy proposals that have been adopted by the Cabinet and incorporated into the employee handbook. One of the key contributions of this committee was the development and implementation of an [employee satisfaction survey](#) with results and recommendations reported to the Cabinet during the summer of 2019.

Total full-time employees (as reported to IPEDS) have increased from 146 in 2009/2010 to 196 in 2018/2019. The College's commitment remains to fully staff all areas of operation, particularly in the area of teaching faculty. Sterling College's student-to-faculty ratio remains strong at 11:1. As square footage is added in new buildings, the College adjusts and increases numbers needed for maintenance and housekeeping employees.

Over the past five years, the following key positions have been added:

Area	Title	Year added
Business Office	Director of Human Resources	2015
Title IX	Title IX Coordinator	2015
Student Success	Director of Academic Support and Student Engagement	2015
Student Success	Director of Career Services and First Year Programs	2015
Physical Plant	Director of Grounds	2016
Academics	Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs	2016
Athletics	Vice President for Athletics	2019

Business Office	Accounts Payable/Payroll Clerk	2019
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Physical Infrastructure

The physical plant is led by an experienced and dedicated director who leads eleven employees to manage the custodial, grounds and building maintenance projects throughout campus. The College has made several [deferred maintenance improvements](#) to facilities that have impacted academics, athletics and student life.

An [academic space assessment](#), completed in 2012, analyzed the use of all classrooms and offices and made recommendations for more efficiently and effectively utilizing each teaching facility. This assessment revealed inefficiencies in temperature control, the need to improve ADA accessibility and included a recommendation to improve technology access to all classrooms. Following this report, discussions by the faculty, administration and Board resulted in the creation of the SterlingNOW campaign to provide strategic capital improvements.

In May 2015, the Board of Trustees approved a \$25 million capital campaign plan which outlined three primary objectives: 1) to expand the [Gleason Center athletic complex](#), 2) construct a new science and academic building, [Zaid-West Hall](#), and renovate [Thompson Hall](#) (the current science hall), and 3) provide a significant investment in the endowment of the college, further strengthening the financial stability of the institution.

The College [broke ground](#) on the Gleason Center expansion in May 2019. The 32,000 square foot addition is scheduled to be completed in August 2020. No firm timeline on the building of Zaid-West Hall has been determined.

In sync with the space assessment and capital campaign, the College is actively pursuing an active and ongoing plan designed to make the infrastructure of campus more efficient and effective. In partnership with a local building controls firm, the college upgraded lighting, implemented water conservation controls and established building intelligence technology throughout campus. The installation of motion switches, window blinds, high efficiency lighting, water saving vanities and the replacement of inefficient boilers, along with other improvements, save the College over \$100,000 annually. In addition, a centralized [building intelligence program](#) was implemented to provide control over energy conservation and management throughout campus.

Technology Infrastructure

In April 2019, Sterling College made the decision to outsource its technology services. The [contracted partner](#) is a local business that oversees all aspects of information technology on campus and directs the planning, acquisition and implementation of business, educational and institutional hardware, software and storage purchases. In addition, this group oversees network support, telephone support and manages the information portal for staff and students.

Since 2016, Sterling College has implemented several major [technology initiatives](#) that greatly benefit our staff, faculty and students. The improvements are organized in four major categories: Student Services, Educational Services, Infrastructure and Security.

In May 2019, the Sterling College network was encrypted. This meant that phone, internet, email and printing services were interrupted for several business days until decryption was accomplished. The College reported the event to the Department of Education within 48 hours and made a formal response concerning the incident on June 5, 2019. The College also [formally communicated](#) with our students, employees and alumni on August 12, 2019. In response to this event, Sterling College has taken several steps to make our virtual and campus technology environment more secure. Some important [technology security measures](#) have been implemented since May 2019.

5.A.2

Resource Allocation Process

The plan for resource allocation at Sterling College is simply a plan for both spending and stewardship. Directing the College for the past four years has been a [strategic plan](#) that focused on eight key areas vital to the mission and effective functioning of the College.

To underscore its commitment to academics, Sterling College contractually provides incremental salary increases to faculty based on a [faculty salary schedule](#), built on service, rank and education. The College views this policy as an endorsement of its commitment to the learning process for our students and support of its primary mission. Recently, administration approved an hourly increase for all maintenance and housekeeping personnel. This increase, recommended by our former Human Resource director, took effect January 1, 2020 and is in response to internal research that showed the College was behind comparable institutions in this area.

Resource allocation begins in October with planning, participation, input and representation at many levels including, but not limited to the areas of academic administration, faculty leadership, student life, financial aid and admissions. The initial process is ratified by the Board of Trustees at their fall meeting and then budget managers are involved in the process of building a resource allocation plan that first meets the primary mission of the College which is the teaching and learning processes. As a former CFO, the president of Sterling College plays a vital role in resource allocation processes and holds cabinet members accountable to managing the budgets under their purview.

One of the key components of the budgeting process is building contingency reserves that support the individual line items and the overall program. This practice allows the College to meet unforeseen needs in many areas without making the teaching and learning process subordinate to emergencies and unplanned expenses. All College income is used to pay for expenses related to college business and does not pay revenue to a superordinate entity.

Planning and budgeting priorities also align with and support Sterling College's mission to be a Christ-centered institution of higher education. The College spends just over 30% of its budget

on instruction and academic support along with 24% of its budget serving students in their academic, social and spiritual pursuits.

	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Jun-15	Jun-16	Jun-17	Ju
Instruction	\$2,762,970	\$2,877,813	\$2,914,818	\$2,824,204	\$2,964,088	\$3,161,668	\$3,255,940	\$3
Academic Support	\$765,889	\$807,921	\$934,783	\$914,038	\$1,044,460	\$1,050,862	\$1,064,882	\$9
Total	\$3,528,859	\$3,685,734	\$3,849,601	\$3,738,242	\$4,008,548	\$4,212,530	\$4,320,822	\$4
Total Expenses	\$12,285,478	\$13,076,122	\$12,684,128	\$13,117,228	\$14,080,907	\$14,909,638	\$14,714,742	\$1
% Direct Educational Spending	28.7%	28.2%	30.3%	28.5%	28.5%	28.3%	29.4%	30

5.A.3

Mission and Core Values

The mission of Sterling College is “To develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith.” The concept of servant leadership is a critical component to understanding resource allocation as the College strives to fully prepare students academically for their chosen field of work or service, while also providing training in what corporate America now calls “soft skills” or “emotional intelligence”. These “soft skills” are detailed in the [six core values](#) that support our mission.

Examples of mission-focused activities supported through budgeting include:

- The hiring of a Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning (Fall 2017)
- Organizing and promoting “LOVE Sterling”, a city-wide service project (annual)
- Participation in the Kansas Governor’s Prayer Breakfast (annual)
- Supporting a “Host Family” program that connects students to local families
- Providing support for diversity through hosting the Peacemakers Convocation each February to celebrate Black History Month and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s work of peacemaking (annual)

Sterling College’s strategic plan, which is discussed in detail in section 5C, expands on the mission, provides direction for resource allocation and a timetable for goals. Of the eight areas outlined in the 2016-2020 strategic plan, the following “big ideas” have been accomplished.

1. Strengthening the Academic Profile

This was accomplished most notably through the integration of faith and learning, which included identifying and hiring a Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning.

2. Fostering a Vibrant Spiritual Community

Sterling College strengthened its mission spiritually by creating a clear [statement on life, marriage, gender identity and human sexuality](#). In addition, the creation of a [strategic partnership with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church](#) re-created connectional ties to the College's Presbyterian heritage.

3. Grow Enrollment Strategically

The most significant accomplishments with regard to enrollment have been the implementation of a new recruiting management system (JRM) and the creation of a new scholarship opportunity that will allow Sterling to attract "college-ready" students who have significant financial need.

4. Manage Regulatory and Compliance Commitments

This was accomplished through intentional attention to the campus compliance calendar and the President's involvement at the national level with groups like NAICU and others.

5. Develop Sustainable Giving

This was most notably accomplished through the near-completion of the SterlingNOW campaign – the largest capital campaign (\$25 million) in the history of the College. The majority of the funds will impact and promote the academics of the institution.

6. Support Outstanding Faculty and Staff

The College has strengthened its professional development programs for both faculty and staff and the establishment of a consistent evaluation process has ensured that qualified faculty and staff are in place.

7. Equip Students for Excellence

This goal was primarily met through the creation of a First Year Program and intentional effort to meet the needs of diverse and marginalized students.

8. Improve Facilities, Technology & Infrastructure

The College has greatly improved safety, security, technology and fulfilled critical deferred maintenance issues since the last HLC team visit, all of which have led to a safer and more efficient campus.

5.A.4

Sterling considers its employees its most valuable resource. A breakdown of employees by type of service is as follows (as reported to IPEDS for the 2018-2019 fiscal year):

Description	Full Time	Part Time	Total Employees
Teaching Faculty	47	32	79
Academic Support Staff	29	9	38
Executive Administrative Staff	8	0	8
Directors/Coordinators	10	0	10
Technical Staff	1	0	1
Maintenance Staff	11	0	11
Counseling/Health Staff	0	3	3
Coaching/Sports Staff	26	20	46
Totals	132	64	196

For the current academic year, 45% of our full-time faculty hold terminal degrees. In order to hold any teaching position, full- or part-time, faculty must hold a graduate degree from an accredited institution and meet HLC criteria for highly qualified faculty. Faculty qualifications are described in greater depth in 3.C and 4.A.

An additional way Sterling College ensures the hiring of quality employees is through the creation and maintenance of [job descriptions](#) that outline educational requirements, physical requirements and essential job duties of each position.

[Annual evaluations](#) are performed for all employees. [Faculty evaluation criteria](#) are outlined in section 7.2 of the Faculty Handbook. [Professional development](#) for faculty, including pay incentives to earn terminal degrees, is encouraged. In 2018, the Staff Welfare Committee was formed to provide staff members with representation and a voice to administration. This group provides monthly meetings aimed at improving and addressing professional development, comradery and work concerns of all staff.

The College participates in the CIC and CCCU tuition waiver exchange programs and offers tuition remission to employees meeting the criteria outlined in the employee handbook.

Development takes place at many levels throughout the College to respond to changes in learning, student safety and employee safety. All staff complete [Title IX training](#) to ensure all are informed about and know how to respond to concerns falling within Title IX. Members of the Campus Safety Committee received FEMA training on the Incident Command System through

the Department of Homeland Security. In May of 2019, [active shooter training](#), led by local law enforcement was conducted for all employees. These types of training and preparation are vital to the safety of our students and staff in the event of a major incident.

5.A.5

Throughout each fiscal year, adjustments are made to budgets that reflect current enrollment, changes in expenses, gift income, and other variables. Cabinet members and managers receive monthly budget updates from the CFO and the President personally monitors the final budget numbers.

The College has a predictable and efficient process for monitoring expenses. The CFO works closely with the President and the Budget Council to develop and manage the budget each year. The College has internal financial controls in place to monitor expenditures accurately and efficiently. Department heads and vice presidents are required to monitor and approve all purchase requests through a requisition system and all credit card purchases through an approval system called Concur. This process provides accountability for spending so that the College's educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas.

The [Budget Council](#) meets regularly to discuss and adjust budgets as needed throughout the fiscal year as income and forecasting dictate. The CFO monitors cash flow daily and provides monthly reports to Cabinet.

In Spring 2019, the College hired an accounts payable clerk to provide greater accountability for spending and monitoring expenses campus-wide.

The College's finances are monitored annually through an independent auditor. Each October, the auditing firm reports to the financial impact committee of the Board of Trustees.

Addressing Weaknesses from 2016 Visit

1. Faculty turnover

Faculty turnover was cited as "significant" in the final report provided by the HLC (May 5, 2016). Faculty turnover rates have continued to decline under the leadership of the current Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Year	Number of FT Teaching Faculty	Turnover (numeric)	Turnover (percentage)
2014-15	41	10	24%
2015-16	42	7	17%
2016-17	44	10	23%

2017-18	43	2	5%
2018-19	44	3	7%

This increase in retention could be linked, in part, to the participation and inclusion of faculty in significant decision making and empowering faculty to lead in areas such as faith and learning initiatives. [Faculty meetings](#) now include a time of celebrating successes and accomplishments and communication within academics has intentionally increased.

2. Heightened Cash Monitoring

Sterling College has greatly improved its financial ratio with the Department of Education monitoring for Title IV funds (evidenced in 5.A.1).

3. Professional Development of faculty and staff

With limited funds for professional development available, the College has nonetheless moved forward in expanding professional development opportunities, especially for staff. Opportunities include:

- [“Lunch and Learn”](#) training sessions for physical plant and housekeeping staff (six sessions annually)
- The creation of a [Staff Welfare Committee](#) which provides information about the different departmental functions to all staff members and surveyed all employees regarding culture and job satisfaction in 2018.
- Performing [non-academic department assessments](#). These assessments highlight areas of strength and weakness that can be either celebrated or addressed to enhance the services provided.

4. Borrowing

Overall borrowing has decreased. In addition, the borrowing contracted since the last visit has improved the fiscal strength of the college by decreasing expenses. Some examples are:

- The landscaping and grounds budget was reduced by taking over all of the mowing duties. This saves the College \$20,000 annually, even though the equipment that was purchased was financed.
- JRM (Jenzabar Recruiting Management) software was implemented to greatly increase the efficiency of the admissions, financial aid and registrar departments. A portion of this software purchase and training was financed, but should lead to greater retention, fewer mistakes and hours saved in these departments.

Year	Budget for Debt Services
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2013-14	\$1,352,000.00
2014-15	\$1,361,141.00
2015-16	\$1,361,141.00
2016-17	\$1,361,141.00
2017-18	\$685,000
2018-19	\$685,000

Sources

- ACAD - Faculty Meeting Agenda - 2019
- ACAD_Academic Catalog_2019-2020
- ACAD_Academic Catalog_2019-2020 (page number 8)
- ACAD_Academic Space Assessment1_4 MAY 2012
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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

Sterling College has created an [organizational structure](#) that is built on collaborative efforts and shared governance from all invested parties. Students, faculty, staff and Board all have a meaningful and relevant voice in shaping the governance of the institution. The shared governance model fits the campus community well through the distribution of authority to various employees and constituencies to make sound fiscal and academic decisions.

Board of Trustees

Sterling College is governed by a self-perpetuating [Board of Trustees](#) who have a defined structure and process by which their authority is exercised. The [style of governance](#) is an "...outward vision rather than an internal preoccupation, encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, strategic leadership more than administrative detail, clear distinction of board and staff roles, and pro-activity rather than reactivity". Eighteen of the nineteen trustees are alumni of the institution, giving this group a thorough knowledge of the College as well as a firm commitment to the mission. Board members go through a reaffirming process every three years which consists of both a self-evaluation and a peer evaluation.

The entire Board meets in person, as possible, two times annually, once in the fall and once in the spring. In addition, they have three to four less formal meetings which take place over the phone, through email, or by supplying necessary feedback in some other manner. They are organized into [three standing committees](#): the Executive Committee, Financial Impact Committee and Student Impact Committee. The [Executive Committee](#) meets an additional time during the winter via a conference call, or other Board approved avenue as outlined by the board bylaws, article XIII. To ensure that the board is properly informed of the needs of Sterling College, the financial impact and student impact committee contain both board members and members of the presidential cabinet. [Board bylaws](#) changes require notification to the board members at least 10 days in advance of the board meeting. To foster clear, accurate and timely

communication, the president and the board chair meet bi-weekly throughout the academic year, though subject to change if schedules conflict. Board Members are provided access to regularly updated [institutional metrics](#) via [Sharepoint](#).

At each of the regularly scheduled board meetings, the board receives [reports](#) from the president and each cabinet member, as well as board reports from any designee of the president. The Financial Impact Committee board report includes information from the CFO, VP for Administration and Institutional Initiatives, and VP for Advancement. The Student Impact board report contains information from the VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Athletics, VP of Student Life, and VP of Enrollment. Each report is tied back to the board policy manual numerically and topically and with each action, evidence of compliance is provided.

Institutional Constituencies

In the week following each board meeting, an [all-employee meeting](#) is held to [brief](#) all employees on the discussions and decisions of the board that could affect employees and students. Outlook calendar requests are sent out and the requests are [tracked](#). In January 2019, the all-employee meeting was held at two different times to maximize the likelihood that an employee could attend. These meetings provide a forum for questions to be posed that guide and direct governance and academic issues.

The president meets once per week with the CFO and each vice president in the areas of academic affairs, administration, advancement, student life, athletics and enrollment. To be good stewards of time and resources, these meetings alternate between all presidential cabinet meetings and one-on-one meetings between the president and vice presidents. These meetings may include members of each vice president's area, such as assistant vice presidents and directors. Cabinet updates are sent out weekly from the office of the president. These updates share data points that are more appropriately sent via email, which allows for greater amounts of discussion of action items during presidential cabinet meetings.

The [faculty constitution and bylaws](#) encourage a spirit of collaboration and of challenging the status quo. The purposes of the Faculty Council are to provide a means where recommendations can flow from the faculty to the President; to provide a framework for cooperation to accomplish strategic goals; and to afford avenues whereby individual faculty members can have a voice to make improvements to the college. In addition, [the faculty handbook](#) includes that faculty "...are expected to participate in... meetings of the full faculty, the department, and faculty governance". There are [five standing committees](#) under Faculty Council where action items can originate: Faculty Welfare & Fiscal Affairs, Academic Affairs, Graduate Studies, Student Services and Institutional Advancement. Faculty Council, Faculty Welfare, Academic Affairs, and Graduate Studies meet monthly. The other two committees meet on an "as needed" basis. The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs are [members](#) of these committees, in addition to Faculty Council. The Vice President of Student Life is a member of the Student Services committee and the Vice President of Institutional Advancement is a member of the Institutional Advancement committee.

Many other [committees on campus](#) consist of various faculty, staff, and administration. Examples of which include the Admissions committee that reviews applications from students who do not meet both the high school GPA and ACT requirements, the Academic Success committee that tracks at risk students in an effort to improve retention, and the newly formed [Staff Welfare committee](#). The [Staff Welfare committee was created](#) to provide a voice for staff regarding benefits, salaries, other compensation, as well as new ideas and concerns.

All new employees meet with the Director of Human Resources either before beginning work or by their second day and are provided the [employee handbook](#), employee [Emergency Preparedness Plan](#), [Title IX information](#), the [alcohol & drug policy](#), [benefits information for health insurance](#), [supplemental insurance and retirement](#), information on [FMLA](#), [workers compensation](#) information, vehicle reservation information, meeting room reservation, and other miscellaneous information when beginning their tenure. New adjunct faculty are required to attend [new adjunct orientation](#) that takes place two weeks before the start of the fall semester. New full-time faculty are required to attend [new faculty orientation](#) during which they meet all the members of the president's cabinet and become aware of necessary policies and procedures.

Student feedback is highly regarded at Sterling College. [A textbook survey](#) was sent out to students to gather data before we switched from a brick and mortar bookstore to a virtual bookstore, [MBS Direct](#). An internet survey was sent out to students to determine the preference between faster internet and access to cable in the dorms.

Various [student organizations](#) exist to enrich and influence the lives of our students academically, socially, and spiritually to accomplish the overall mission of the college. Organizations such as the Campus Activities Board, Future Science Professionals Association, and the English Blend serve to broaden the experience of our students, teach servant leadership skills and provide an avenue for student's voices to be heard as a primary constituent.

The [Student Government Association](#), an elected group that is headed by an executive committee and further strengthened by a student senate, represents the student body at Sterling. The SGA offices are in the student union and each of its cabinet members receive a stipend for their service. The [student handbook](#) serves to provide expectations for academic integrity, social responsibility and community life on a residential campus.

Auxiliary & Informal Structures

Communication between cabinet members, faculty and staff is further encouraged by auxiliary events such as [campus coffees](#) where all employees are invited to meet outside of the president's office for fellowship and coffee, as well as a monthly event called [Lunch with Leadership](#) where employees are invited to dialogue with administration. Every year, there is an all employee Christmas luncheon as well as a Christmas party that takes place at the President's house. Prior to the launching of the 2016-2020 strategic plan, [faculty and staff luncheons](#) were planned to allow employees to share insight on the mission-critical initiatives that had been proposed and allowed them to propose new programs or services that would better serve our students and constituents. In preparation for the new strategic plan, [six faculty and staff luncheons](#) took place during October and November of 2019.

Microsoft Sharepoint is an online platform that is used by various constituents to facilitate communication and collaboration. The Board of Trustees, faculty and staff have the ability to view and edit documents in real-time. All agenda items and minutes for Faculty Council, Academic Affairs, Faculty Welfare & Fiscal Affairs and Graduate Studies committees are posted to Sharepoint and visible to all faculty.

The [Campus Events](#), a weekly internal communication of all campus activities, is distributed to all employees and students. Additionally, there is an internal shared calendar that is regularly updated to reflect campus events.

The [Campus Safety Committee](#) meets regularly throughout the school year to review safety and security issues that could disrupt missional objectives of the College. Decisions made by this team are communicated to faculty, staff and students. Members of this team represent a varied cross section of departments on campus in addition to local law enforcement. In 2019, the CSC team led the college in its very first active shooter drill. Following the drill was a debriefing session where employees were encouraged to ask questions and share concerns regarding the drill.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

Argument

5.C.1

Sterling College has invested significant time and resources to planning strategically for the future of the institution. Confidence in strategic planning is built through the dual vision to both avoid harmful circumstances while also taking advantage of opportunities.

First and foremost, great care and effort go into vetting all employees with regard to "mission fit". The College ensures that each and every Sterling College employee meets [criteria of faith](#) and character prior to an offer of employment. The President interviews nearly every candidate personally to ensure that the each hire will further its mission.

The [current strategic plan](#) reflects the College's bedrock commitment to its mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith". One of the key areas addressed in this plan is to "[Foster a Vibrant Spiritual Community](#)". This area emphasized the mission from a spiritual perspective through goals intended to bolster our commitments to Scripture, prayer, servant leadership, church relations and training our students biblically.

The other seven areas, equally important to the mission of the College:

- [Strengthen the Academic Profile](#)
- [Grow Enrollment Strategically](#)
- [Manage Regulatory Compliance Commitments](#)
- [Develop Sustainable Giving](#)
- [Support Outstanding Faculty and Staff](#)
- [Equip Student for Excellence](#)
- [Improve Facilities, Technology & Infrastructure](#)

In creating the current strategic plan, faculty, staff, board and community members were all consulted and given the opportunity to shape both the wording and direction of the plan. The title “Guard and Guide” was inspired by President Rich’s 2013 inaugural address where he challenged the college community to hold “a high view of God and a high view of Scripture.” Both God and God’s Word are to be cherished and obeyed if the mission of the College is to be fulfilled. This intentional, Christ-centered perspective, permeates each area of the strategic plan and its objectives. For each of these areas, budget allocations were set and monitored annually, to ensure that resources are aligned with the ongoing mission of the College.

Sterling College is preparing to successfully conclude its current strategic plan by June 2020. In May 2020, the Board of Trustees will approve the new strategic plan that will guide the College through June of 2023.

5.C.2 Linkage Between Budget, Planning, Operations and Assessment

Prior to the 2016 HLC visit, the College’s strategic plan lacked clear linkage to the budgeting process. Currently, all phases of the strategic plan are discussed during the budgeting process by the CFO and all members of the [Budget Council](#). This is evidenced by the fact that of the 96 [strategic goals](#) outlined in the current plan, 91 of those initiatives have been achieved or are ongoing. Specific year by year projections as to the dollar amounts that were needed to achieve these objectives were discussed and vetted. Each goal was given a budget code to tie the planned funds to the planned activity. Some key goals that have been reached include:

Goal	Budget 2016-2020	Status
Hire Director for Integration of Faith & Learning	\$9,000	Hired Fall 2017 and ongoing
Launch Master’s Program	\$20,000	Launched summer 2018 and ongoing
Undergraduate Humanities Conference	\$3,000	Started in 2017 and ongoing
Participate in Governor’s Prayer Breakfast annually	\$6,000	Completed March 2020 and ongoing
Purchase new CRM (Customer Relationship Management) Software for Admissions	\$210,000	Completed September 2019
Establish Annual Chemical Waste Removal	\$26,600	Started Summer 2016 and ongoing

Capital Campaign Travel Costs	\$172,800	Started 2016 and will be completed December 2020
Strategic Alumni Events	\$80,000	Started 2016 and ongoing
Purchase Proximity Locks	\$57,000	Purchased locks for four key buildings (Fall 2018) and cameras throughout campus (Summer 2019)
Wireless Access Point Upgrade	\$175,000	Complete Summer 2017

Academic assessment has been critical to decision making and budget preparation. During [Program Review](#), budget implications of proposed changes must be included. Again, prompted by the 2016 HLC visiting team, the College has added [non-academic assessments](#) to its annual evaluations. These assessments play a key role in budget allocation and changes to the strategic plan in expanding or even abandoning goals that were previously ratified.

This commitment to being nimble in processing both short and long-term objectives, has allowed the college to complete many key goals including the first phase of building connected to the \$25 million SterlingNOW campaign.

For over 18 months, many shareholders have been involved in the planning of the Gleason Center Expansion, which is planned to open August 2020. This project involved hundreds of hours of meetings that led to decisions that created the greatest good for the most members of our campus community. A 32,000 square-foot addition, along with major renovations to the existing structure and approximately \$1 million of infrastructure upgrades will transform the Gleason Center from a tired, out-of-date building, into a state-of-the-art facility.

Sterling College employs monitoring and service systems for technology and physical plant. The physical plant utilizes Spiceworks support ticket system to allow students and employees to alert maintenance personnel of repair needs or potential emergencies. In 2018, the department responded to 1356 maintenance requests.

In addition, resources have been spent to upgrade aging facilities and infrastructure.

Building	Project	Investment	Completed
Campus: Building Controls	Building Intelligence Program to upgrade lighting, water conservation, building controls	\$1.3 M	Fall 2016 and ongoing

Gleason Center	32,000 square foot expansion, total utility rebuild and renovation of current lobby, classrooms	\$6,100,000 (Expansion) \$670,000 (HVAC for existing facility)	Fall 2020
Baseball/Softball Facility	Building of temporary weight room building that will serve campus as indoor baseball/softball hitting/pitching facility	\$349,000	August 2019
Campus: Technology	Purchase of new servers, switches, wireless access points, fiber and machines	\$500,000	Fall 2019 and ongoing

In October 2018, an [IT audit](#) provided by an external evaluator outlined 17 areas of improvement. To date, the College has addressed no less than 11 of those areas and this audit has guided resource allocation and budget planning that is represented in the new strategic plan.

In February 2019, the College contracted with a local IT company to manage IT processes. This relationship has promoted an environment of accountability and excellence in responding to technology needs of students and employees. In its first eight months as our IT provider, Gilmore Solutions, has closed 2,847 [support tickets](#) (approximately 355 per month).

Sterling College uses data to drive decisions at many levels. An example of this is that the College conducted a [survey to determine if cable television or increasing bandwidth](#) was more important to students. The overwhelming majority of students indicated that increasing bandwidth was more important to them and this data guided the December 2018 decision to end the cable television contract and purchase additional bandwidth. By renegotiating the contract, the College saved over \$50,000 annually.

5.C.3 Planning Process

Planning for the 2020-2023 strategic plan has involved several action steps:

- An assessment of Guard and Guide was conducted by the Cabinet and Board of Trustees (completed August 2019)
- Review of the eight strategic areas to add/edit any of these (August 2019)
- Six strategic planning luncheons were held across September, October, November and December 2019 and were [attended](#) by a wide variety of employees (completed December 2019)
- These ideas will be prioritized to complete the 2020-2023 Guard and Guide Strategic Plan that will be provided to the HLC visiting team in April 2020 and to the Board of Trustees, for their approval, at their May 2020 meeting.

The following groups were or will be included in the development of the new strategic plan:

Constituent Group	Internal/External	Timeline
Administration, faculty and staff	Internal	Fall 2019
Gilmore Solutions (IT)	External	Fall 2019
Board of Trustees	Internal	Spring 2020
City Management & Rotary Members	External	Spring 2020
Faculty Governance	Internal	Spring 2020
Student Leadership	Internal	Spring 2020
Alumni Advisory Board	External	Spring 2020

5.C.4 Planning on the Basis of Capacity

The College is continually looking for ways to be efficient with funds and truly sees each dollar as ultimately provided by God and, thus, stewardship of these resources becomes a serious matter.

In addition to staff input, technology and data gathering continue to become a vital and growing aspect of planning at Sterling. Budgeting based on current enrollment throughout the year is a vital statistic to track. Budget Council meets regularly throughout the year to monitor spending and expenses, revenue generation, and to make spending plans accordingly. Each student represents approximately \$10,000 in income over a fiscal year and [budget adjustments](#) are made to [reflect student enrollment](#). When retention numbers were down fall of 2018, the College adjusted internal budgets by up to 25 percent in many areas.

Facility planning has included capacity consideration. For example, in the Gleason Center expansion, the College recognized that having one gymnasium was not serving our students well. Each fall, when volleyball and basketball seasons overlap, the gym is utilized from mid-afternoon until after 10 p.m. for practices and contests. The decision was made to include an [auxiliary gym](#) in expansion plans to reduce the demand on the current facility and to add capacity through the physical footprint.

Sterling College is aware of economic factors have affected the planning process in recent years. For example, the upturn in the economy since 2016 has allowed the College to nearly complete its \$25 million capital campaign. The administration has made the decision to build only the first of three building projects and will only complete the other two as pledges are fulfilled. This is a conservative approach but serves to protect the College from downturns in the economy, enrollment or unexpected expenditures in the current physical plant.

Federal support has changed in recent years and has been challenging. For example, the [Perkins Loan program](#) provided \$152,018 to 71 Sterling College students in 2017-18. The sunset of this program led to some students leaving the College due to lack of finances. The College, in response, was forced to increase its discount to just above 50% to provide students with greater institutional support in order to retain them.

The national political discussion of “free college”, a discussion that has not included private institutions, has prompted the administration and trustees to discuss strategies to intentionally bolster the endowment. Three million of the \$25 million SterlingNOW campaign is designated to endowment. In addition, the College recently received the largest gift in its history, a \$7.7 million gift, of which \$6.7 million is designated to endowment.

5.C.5 Anticipating Emerging Factors

As the College's enrollment of minority students continues to grow, as reflected in the table below, broader conversations about how to serve students with regard to academic, social, cultural and spiritual life have begun. Starting with the [faculty](#) in early 2019, a diversity group formed to answer some of these questions. The College has focused on recruiting [international students](#) and through the Office of Student Success, has partnered with Hutchinson Community College to offer ELS services to students.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Minority Students	17%	20%	19%	20.5%	23%	25.5%	31%	31%	36%	38%	37%

Technology continues to grow as a dominating factor in student engagement, satisfaction and learning at institutions of higher education. Over the past several years, the College has made it a key priority to build a [technology infrastructure](#) that will serve our faculty, staff and students for years to come. This commitment has included new servers, switches and access points over the past four years. In December of 2018, the college increased its bandwidth by over 600 percent to 2 GB with the ability to increase this pipeline to 4 GB at any time during the contract period if staff and student needs demand it.

In addition to intentionally recruiting minority students, the College has a focus on recruiting more Kansas students. A demographic that has gone largely ignored are students in western Kansas. In tracking our competitors at other independent institutions in Kansas, the majority of KICA institutions focus recruiting on the eastern half of Kansas. Sterling College has made a concerted effort to recruit students from the [western 54 counties](#) in Kansas. These counties are made up of mostly small towns and average a total population of only 7,500 residents, but together have a population of 400,000 residents. The College has started the [WeKan Scholarship](#) to offer students residing in western Kansas a full tuition scholarship if they meet certain criteria. The goal is to attract more students from these counties, and, increase the amount of Kansas Comprehensive Grant funding awarded to the College annually. Ultimately, the idea is that bright young people will return to the communities they grew up in, armed with a well-rounded, Christ-centered education to make a lasting impact.

A [2018 technology audit](#) alerted the College to 17 areas of improvement. The College has addressed 11 of these issues, most of which have centered around network security, documentation and campus wide policy. In addition, cybersecurity insurance was purchased in June 2019 to mitigate financial risk in the event of a network breach.

An emerging factor that is critical to the College's future is that of water rights. Following drought years in 2011 and 2012, the state restricted water use in the western part of the state extending to just east of Sterling, Kansas. At the time, the College owned just 3.5 acre feet of water rights, an amount that would not sustain even a small part of the campus. Over the past four years, the College has worked closely with Groundwater Management District #5 to increase [permanent water rights](#) to the amount of 33.5 acre feet. While this may seem inconsequential to higher education, these water rights allow the College to beautify and sustain its 40-acre landscape with water rights that are now permanent and sanctioned by the state.

Additional efforts to anticipate emerging factors include a partnership with [EAB](#), reaffirming articulation agreements with Kansas community colleges, and lowering online tuition to a rate of \$135 per credit hour.

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5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

Argument

Sterling College has been making significant improvements in how it collects, analyzes, and utilizes data to improve performance.

5.D.1

Sterling measures its effectiveness, in part, through its [“Dashboard Metrics”](#) which are a list of metrics that provide data for critical areas of performance. These metrics are reported twice annually to the Board of Trustees.

This data provides a year-by-year “at a glance” of performance in critical areas. When performance significantly drops in a particular area, that area is analyzed and resourced for improvement. For example, due to lower than desired retention data, Sterling created the [Office of Student Success](#) which is “committed to planning, processing and developing retention efforts to create academic growth, promote achievement, and encourage students to utilize their talents, skills and abilities to pursue meaningful careers and service to God and others.” The Office of Student Success created a [model for student success](#) that academic policy decisions can be based upon. An additional effort includes the Student Success and Retention Committee (SSRC) which meets weekly to review key indicators of student success and develop corrective measures at the individual student level when necessary.

All [academic](#) and [non-academic](#) departments are required to go through a yearly program assessment. Academic departments collect course data, summarize it in [course reports](#), and then use the course reports, along with various other assessments, in their [program report](#) to determine areas of success and areas of improvement. Sterling maintains a [schedule](#) for program review of academic programs. A [template](#) is used that requires the [program](#) to solicit input from outside stakeholders and give a description of the budgetary impact for implementing changes based on this program review, in addition of numerous other requirements.

Both academic and non-academic program reports contain data from both the current year and the previous year as well as sections to address areas of improvement from the previous year. The use of a [compliance calendar](#) that is integrated with our Microsoft Outlook calendars has assisted departments with the timely completion of various tasks, such as the implementation of the [Chemical Hygiene Plan](#).

5.D.2

To address retention challenges further, the Office of Student Success worked with a committee of faculty members and the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs to create an [advising handbook](#) that was approved by faculty governance in spring 2019. Training took place during a [faculty meeting](#) to ensure all faculty are informed on the process. This handbook will be updated as needed during the first year and then revised on a regular basis.

To address enrollment challenges, Faculty Council created an ad-hoc committee that would work with Admissions to strategically improve recruitment efforts by faculty. In spring 2019, the ad-hoc admissions committee consisting of the Vice President of Enrollment, the Assistant Director of Admissions, and four faculty members (one of which was a Faculty Council representative) created a [faculty recruitment handbook](#). Training took place during the [spring faculty development day](#).

Various surveys have been sent out to faculty and students to gather feedback and data regarding important decisions made at Sterling. In spring 2018, a [survey](#) went out to both faculty and students to gather data regarding transition from a brick-and-mortar bookstore to using the online retailer MBS Direct. A yearly [survey](#) is sent to students to determine changes that the Vice President of Student Life should pursue. A survey was sent out to students to determine if students would prefer to have faster and more reliable wireless internet or cable television in the dorms. In spring 2019, the Staff Welfare Committee distributed a [survey](#) to all employees to gather data to understand satisfaction levels of Sterling College employees in various areas such as salary compensation, quality of leadership and opportunities for advancement.

Recognizing the importance of high quality technology to assist in the overall operations at Sterling, many [technological improvements](#) have been made. A majority of classrooms have replaced older projectors with new television monitors, which offers higher screen resolution and an improved media performance. All faculty laptops were replaced in summer 2019 to guarantee that faculty have reliable computers when using them both inside and outside of the classroom. A new data collection service, JRM, went live in October 2019 to provide the Admissions staff with the necessary resources to track recruits.

In 2017, a [survey](#) was sent to all faculty to gather feedback on the learning management system that was in use at the time. Based on the results of this survey, a [proposal](#) for transitioning to Canvas was created and approved. Canvas launched in fall 2019 and because of the improved features of Canvas, faculty have an easier time creating online assignments, giving students quality feedback and communicating with their classes.

With regard to tracking institution learning objectives, Sterling outlines several outcomes for graduates which include the ability to:

- Demonstrate sufficient content knowledge to be successful in his or her chosen profession or advanced academic endeavors.
- Exercise the intellectual, communicative and social skills reflective of creative and thoughtful servant leaderships.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the personal and civic skills necessary for a productive life of faith and service.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how biblical principles affect personal, professional and academic life.

These objectives, paired with the data collected through the program review process, drive the required course content, faculty training and spiritual life programs that make up a Christ-centered, liberal arts education.

In order to track the success of graduating students, the Office of Student Success collects [data](#) from each graduating students that indicates if, and where, they are attending either graduate school or will be employed after graduation. This data is disseminated to the academic departments in which the graduating student completed a major.

The [current strategic plan](#) outlines eight major initiatives, each containing strategic goals, where [data has been collected](#). The progress within these initiatives documents the institution's effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, while providing the framework for the 2020-2023 strategic plan and initiatives.

Institutional effectiveness, to be fully achieved, must acknowledge the importance of each of these areas while learning from data-driven and mission-driven decisions.

Sources

- ACAD - Advising Handbook Training - April 2019
- ACAD - Course Report Template- October 2019
- ACAD - Faculty Recruitment Handbook Training - May 2019
- ACAD - Graduating Students Data - October 2019
- ACAD - Model for student success - April 2019
- ACAD - Office of Student Success - October 2019
- ACAD - Program Report Template- October 2019
- ACAD - Program review template - April 2019
- ACAD_Academic Program Review Cycle - Fall 2019
- ACAD_Advising Handbook_Mar 21 2019
- ACAD_Biology Program Review 2018
- ACAD_Program Review Template 9 16 2016
- BOOK - Non-academic Program Assessment - May 2019
- ENROLL - Faculty Recruitment Handbook - May 2019
- HR - Employee Engagement Survey - May 2019
- IT - Canvas LMS Proposal - April 2019
- IT - Learning Management System Survey - April 2019
- IT - Technology Update - October 2019
- PRES - Bookstore survey - April 2019
- PRES - Chemical Hygiene Plan - April 2019
- PRES - Compliance Calendar - April 2019

- PRES - Dashboard Metrics - October 2019
- PRES - Strategic Plan 2016 to 2020 - April 2019
- PRES - Strategic Plan Accomplishments 2019 - January 2020
- STULIF - Student Life Survey - October 2019

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

Sterling College continues to build structures, policies and processes to fulfill its mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." The College strives to plan for the future by continuously improving teaching and learning processes through program review and faculty governance processes.

Through the development of a strategic plan, specific objectives tied to the budget have been developed and endorsed by the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty and staff. This plan has guided decision making, resource allocation and, ultimately, student learning while addressing strengths and unmet challenges that are critical to achieving the overall mission.

The College continues to address mission-critical challenges of enrollment management, advancement, technology and program review. While these challenges exist, Sterling College is building a new strategic plan, based on data, to address them in a prioritized manner and looks forward to a bright future for our employees, students and community.

Sources

There are no sources.