

Assurance Argument
Sterling College - KS

3/3/2016

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](#), the Board of Trustees reaffirmed the mission of the College.

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, [visible](#) in nearly every office, and included in the [commencement program](#). 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 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 mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith."

1.A.2

The College mission statement guides individual [departmental objectives](#) and [mission statements](#). 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](#), identifying those objectives which correlate with elements of the institutional mission statement in the same manner.

Consistent with its Christ-centered mission, Sterling College offers three programs through the Theology and Ministry Department, a [Biblical Studies major](#), a [Christian Ministries major](#), both available on campus, and an online [Theological Studies major](#). A number of [interdisciplinary studies](#) majors which integrate ministry components with other campus academic programs are available for students to choose: Educational Ministry, Media Ministry, Performing Arts Ministry, Sport Ministry, or Business Ministry. As further support of the mission, all full-time students are required to [attend chapel](#). Residential students who are enrolled full time at Sterling College must attend 14 chapels and 2 convocations each semester. Full time commuter students who live outside of Sterling must attend 11 chapels and 2 convocations each semester. Students are given a number of opportunities to earn chapel credit, opportunities. Successful completion of the chapel/convocation requirements is required for students to graduate from Sterling College.

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.
- [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 [Director of Campus Ministries](#) oversees the College's chapel program and helps coordinate a number of ministry initiatives.
- An [Online Chaplain](#) serves the spiritual needs of students at a distance.
- The [Director of Health Service](#) (a licensed Registered Nurse) is available to help students with any [health concerns](#) they have.
- 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](#) closely monitors students on academic probation and manages all tutoring.
- [Athletic coaches](#) are encouraged to consider the spiritual and academic dimension of their athletes
- An [Athletic Mentor](#) is tasked with monitoring and supporting student athletes who are struggling academically.
- The [Coordinator of Online Student Services](#) helps meet the academic and advising needs of the College's online students.
- The [Student Life Administrative Assistant](#) who is the front line in handling student issues and referring those issues to the appropriate campus personnel or office.

In addition, [11 clubs or organizations](#) under the umbrella of the [Student Government Association](#) support students in their extra- and co-curricular endeavors: Art League, Campus Activities Board, Chess Club, English Blend, Freshmen Activities Board, Future Science Professionals Association, Math Club, Music at Sterling College, Ping Pong Club, Theatre at Sterling College, and Zeta Omega Phi. SGA clubs produce events such as Worship Night (Campus Activities

Board); Dissection Night (Future Science Professionals Association), 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 also align with and support Sterling College's mission to be a Christ-centered institution of higher education. Budgeting documents demonstrate that for the past six years, the College spent 23.2% of its budget on instruction and 6.8% on academic support.

Expenses	June 2010	June 2011	June 2012	June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
Instruction	2,676,110	2,762,970	2,877, 813	2,914,818	2,824,204	2,964,088
Academic Support	833,945	765,889	807,921	934,783	914,038	1,044,460
Student Services	2,667,384	2,873,837	2,894,784	3,024,315	3,153,679	3,308,752
Institutional support	2,544,144	2,733,709	3,281,917	2,472,693	2,712,346	2,896,106
Auxiliary Enterprises	3,163,520	3,149,073	3,213,684	3,337,519	3,512,961	3,867,501
Total Expenses	11,885,103	12,285,478	13,076,122	12,684,128	13,117,228	14,080,907

Consistent with its Christ-centered mission, the College also employs [a full-time director of campus ministries](#) and supports cross-cultural mission experiences throughout the year through planned

academic experiences such as the [2016 interterm class](#) which traveled to Voice of the Martyrs offices in Oklahoma, through budget designated for [summer mission trips](#), and by [encouraging staff](#) to serve as mission team leaders by granting staff PTO days.

Moreover, the College's [2012-2016 Strategic Plan](#) is geared toward strengthening, developing, and enriching the academic ethos of the College by meeting the following objectives:

- establishing signature academic programs;
- increasing student selectivity;
- strengthening the profile of the faculty;
- making the College's academic programs more accessible;
- establishing master's degrees;
- strengthening the College's educational technology;
- growing the scholarship endowment;
- enriching the student experience; and
- establishing a distinguished speaker series.

The 2012-2016 plan exists to strengthen, enrich, and develop the academic program through a number of metrics outlined in 2012. One 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. Through focusing on this plan, the faculty profile has been strengthened, many [new interdisciplinary majors](#) have been established and several successful [educational technology initiatives](#) have been implemented.

Since 2012, Sterling has worked toward establishing a [master's degree](#) program. The internal groundwork has been completed for a [Sports Ministry Master's degree](#) with approval by the [Faculty Council](#) and the [Board of Trustees](#). If approved by the HLC on the new timeline, Sterling College could offer its first master's courses beginning with the fall 2017 term.

Practical resources have been 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 relaunched in 2012. 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.

A [new strategic plan](#) for 2016-2020 has been developed by faculty, staff, and administration. In May 2016, the Board of Trustees will approve the new strategic plan which will guide 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 will remain a primary goal of the 2016-2020 plan, [several other areas](#) will be 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](#), beginning in August 2011 and concluding in January 2012, Sterling College

engaged in a strategic planning process in which representatives from diverse constituencies participated. The [2011 Strategic Planning Task Force](#) was made up of 25 representatives from the College administration, faculty, student body, alumni, Board of Trustees, and the Sterling community. From this process, it was determined that the central, strategic initiative that Sterling College will focus on during the next five years will be to develop its [academic program](#).

Likewise, the planning for the [2016 strategic plan invites 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](#) have been sought. A valuable part of this process has been 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.

In addition to the observation regarding strategic planning, the [2009 site team observed](#) "that many of the self correcting and community energizing benefits of a consultative administrative style were lost in the mid 2000s as this College wrestled with making difficult financial decisions. These benefits beg being recovered. To that end, the team encourages the current President, a man who has had some success at restoring a more consultative climate at the College, to continue to develop mechanisms by which he might appropriately involve a larger number of community stake-holders in wrestling with the day-to-day challenges facing the institution."

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 monthly [faculty meetings](#), the VPAA's office distributes a monthly [academic newsletter](#) via email that all faculty are kept informed of any changes or issues which have arisen in the previous month. The newsletter also functions as a way to introduce topics or issues which will be discussed in that month's faculty meeting.

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. [Article II. Purposes](#), states that the purpose of the constitution is to guarantee a consultative administrative style whereby the faculty have a means of offering recommendations to the President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Specifically, the constitution achieves the following:

1. *To provide a means whereby representatives of the faculty can offer recommendations to the President and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) pertaining to the academic and operational improvement of Sterling College and to matters concerning the improvement of the general welfare of the Sterling faculty community.*
2. *To provide a framework for cooperation between the faculty and the administration in order to accomplish the strategic goals of Sterling College and achieve its mission and vision.*
3. *To afford each faculty member an opportunity to make recommendations concerning the development and operation of the College and the improvement of the general welfare of the*

faculty community.

4. *To transmit Council recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President.*
5. *To provide a means whereby the administration can refer academic, operational, or common interest matters to a board representing the faculty of Sterling College*

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 and department restructure committee.

The 2009 visiting team also made an observation and recommendation regarding the [Board of Sterling College](#):

"While current board members both demonstrate a substantial understanding of the College's mission and programs and personal commitment to providing financial support for the work of the College, the team finds that the Board of Trustees hand could be strengthened both financially by giving attention to board size—e.g., increasing board size beyond the minimum number with which it is now populated and operationally by extending beyond what is done now the development opportunities made available to Board members."

In October 2010, the [Board Development Committee](#) decided to purchase Fred Laughlin and Bob Andringa's book *Good Governance for Nonprofits: Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board* for all Board members, and to invite [Bob Andringa](#) to the [February 2011](#) Board meeting to lead the Board of Trustees in professional development workshops.

As part of a regularly board meet in February 2012, the Board of Trustees continued its professional development training by participating in a [board retreat](#) on the subject of "[Forming the High Trust Culture](#)" led by [Bill Thrall](#). The board has continued to make commitments to [raise and contribute more money](#) to the operation of Sterling College. However, rather than increase the size of the Board, as the visiting team suggested, the Board agreed to [reduce their numbers from 24-36 to 15-25](#). Decrease in board size was made in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the board and to improve the College's opportunities for strategic board membership rather than just to maintain a number. The preference was for quality of board membership rather than for quantity.

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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 web site, in the [Academic Catalog](#), in the [Faculty Handbook](#), in the [Staff 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](#) and the [October 2015](#) 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 [maturing-Christian-faith-related](#) items for the assessment of the Sterling College general education core. While the College respects the theological diversity within the Christian community, it is unapologetic about its role as an institution guided by teachings of the Reformed Christian tradition. Faculty candidates applying to Sterling College must respond to a [series of questions](#) which enable the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Dean, and Department Chair 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.

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 recently participated in a Japanese history and culture experience at the [Kansas City Japan Festival](#) at Johnson County Community College in Kansas City.
- In the Athletic Training Program, students are required to obtain [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 and HI461 [Topics in Non-Western History course](#) 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](#), 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, but especially in TM340: [Gender and Ethnic Issues](#), students study contemporary racial and gender issues.

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." 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 2014 census information, [Rice County](#) has a minority population of 5.9% while in fall 2015, minority enrollment at Sterling College was 31%. [Enrollment data](#) over the last seven years shows the increasing value Sterling College has put on attracting minority students.

The ethnic diversity of Sterling College also [compares favorably](#) with the other Kansas Independent College Association (KICA) colleges.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Minority Students	17%	20%	19%	20.5%	23%	25.5%	31%

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 world view 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. The [men’s basketball mission trip to Panama](#) in May 2014 resulted in international recruiting opportunities.
- [Tuition Remission](#) for one course per semester for students over age 60.
- A [Peacemakers Convocation](#), which occurs during [Black History Month](#) each year 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 [Cultural Diversity](#), a required course for all Education majors, students serve in a [Soup Kitchen](#) in nearby Hutchinson, Kansas.
- Personnel in the Admissions Office have recently strategically focused on the states of Texas and California in their [recruiting efforts](#). Through the efforts, the [diversity of the student body](#) has increased.
- 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](#), 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.
- Mabee library computers contribute surplus power to the [World Community Grid](#).
- A relatively [diverse faculty](#) underscores the College's commitment to a diverse world population.
- 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.

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 maintained a [National Advisory Council](#) (NAC) comprised of twenty-two friends and supporters of the college. The NAC has two primary purposes. First, it serves to develop potential trustees. More importantly, however, it is an entity made up of individuals who represent various professions and interests. Thus, it serves to provide the College with ideas about how to ensure institutional relevance in a changing culture. The NAC meets twice per year on campus to brainstorm ideas for continuous improvement.

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 in the city park 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) [utilizes 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 8 boys and 8 girls teams to the campus and community and providing a valuable learning opportunity for students in the [Sports Management program](#). The college pool is used by community members, Presbyterian Manor residents, and for rescue training by the Kansas Law Enforcement or Kansas Park and Wildlife. A [Kansas youth camp](#) uses the campus for a "Sleep-less in Sterling" youth retreat every spring, and the [Kansas Christian Ashrams](#) host a retreat on the College's campus every summer. The [Santa Fe Trail Bicycle Trek](#) camps, showers, and has meals at the College as they ride the Santa Fe Trail each summer. The College opened its doors to Sen. Jerry Moran to hold a [town hall meeting](#) with Rice County residents. The [College cafeteria is open](#) to community members during regularly scheduled meal hours. The education department has resumed its hosting of the [Santa Fe Children's Literature Festival](#) this fall. Over 1500 students and

their teachers were on campus September 17, 2015 to hear readings and talks by children's author David L. Harrison and children's author/illustrator Cheryl Harness.

The Sterling College arts programs have a long-standing tradition of support, cooperation, and partnership with area high schools. For over 20 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. Modeled after the Theatre Workshop, Sterling began an [Art Workshop](#) in 2013. Active morning workshops ranging from printmaking techniques, photography to traditional sketching are included for up to 100 students. The popular event is limited in size due to space in the Art Center. The Sterling College Music department has hosted a [Composer Series](#) for five years. 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. Sterling College has also hosted [high school debate and forensics tournaments](#).

Given Sterling's rural location many small high schools in the area do not have active theatre programs. [Sterling theatre students](#) have assisted area high schools in providing leadership from directing to scene design and construction to choreography. Although a small high school, Sterling High School's theatre program is very active. The school presents three productions a year. One of the three productions has consistently been directed by a Sterling College theatre alumnae working in some capacity at the College (Admissions, Marketing, Online). Other schools who have benefited from Sterling's theatre assistance include smaller schools like Little River and Inman to larger schools like McPherson, Goddard, Campus, Clearwater, and Andover.

[Sterling College 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.

Academic programs also interact with the community. Students in the Athletic Training program, one of the premier athletic training programs in the region, [serve the local high schools 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 to begin the 2015-2016 school year. The [agreement](#) will provide Certified Athletic Trainers to the high schools in a Graduate Assistant position through Sterling College. This 2-year agreement will provide ATC's at the high schools for coverage of all home practices, home contests, and away football games.

In 2013, Sterling College educational psychology students hosted a group of [Rice County gifted students](#) on campus for a day of experiences related to the gifted students' reading of *The Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann David Wys. And in 2015, a youth ministry class hosted youth groups from Little River, Lyons, and Sterling on campus for [One Accord](#), an evening of worship.

In January 2016, a general education special topics interterm class, [GD289: Introduction to the Persecuted Church](#), examined historical and contemporary examples of persecution in the world today. A centerpiece of the class was a week spent at Voice of the Martyrs headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

The Sterling College [Office of Financial Aid](#) offers several opportunities for area high school students

and families to learn about financial processes and procedures, visiting area high schools for Financial Aid Nights and sponsoring FAFSA Nights on campus for students and parents 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. Furthermore, the College allows 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.
- Because of the community’s small population, the Sterling College Music Department provides community musicians the opportunity to participate in a [community band](#).
- Every Thanksgiving, [a free community dinner](#) is held in the College’s cafeteria.
- For over 20 years, Sterling College has hosted an annual "[Sleepless in Sterling](#)" youth retreat for the churches within the Southern Kansas Presbytery. The event brings 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](#) for \$1 per person per day, 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 College has [hosted planning-committee meetings](#) for the K-96 Highway project.
- The student newspaper, [The Stir](#), is published as an insert in the community newspaper, *The Sterling Bulletin*, every other week, keeping the community informed about events and affairs

at the College.

- Chapel services and special convocations such as those in the [Freeman Lectures Series](#) are open to the public.
- 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.
- Education department faculty presented information about [teaching strategies](#) at the USD 376 fall professional development sessions.

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 181 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.

The Associated Colleges of Central Kansas ([ACCK](#))

Sterling College is one of six institutions that belong to the ACCK, which is, described on the ACCK website as a "consortium of six private liberal arts, four-year, church-related, co-educational institutions located within 40 miles of McPherson, Kansas." The ACCK 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 ACCK, 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 ACCK, 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 ACCK allows the College to participate in a cooperative benefits program for employees, participate in joint professional development opportunities with other ACCK institutions, and provides electronic mailing lists so that staff and administrators of member institutions can communicate with each other easily.

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 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.

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 2015 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:

While the student population is quite diverse, considering the diversity of the surrounding community, the College could do more to diversify its faculty and staff. Of the 42 full-time and pro-rata faculty in 2015-2016, only 14% are minorities and 31% are women.

In addition, 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 new general education objectives, in academics is needed. Just as we have a Writing Intensive requirement for all programs, the College should consider developing an Intercultural

Engagement requirement for all programs so that each program would need to identify and assess the experiences their majors have with diversity and cultural awareness.

Additionally, while Student Life and SGA have supported diversity clubs in the past, those clubs were not well attended and have been disbanded. Student Life should consider developing diversity clubs again, especially considering the recent increase in the minority population of the student body.

Core Components Needing Organizational Attention per 2009 Evaluation Team:

Two of the three issues the team [cited in the Assurance Section](#) of their team evaluation regarding Criterion 1 were related to issues the College had with a previous administration. The progress noted by the visiting team in 2009 toward a more collaborative style of leadership has continued. The College continues to build collaboration and improve communication as evidenced by the faculty revision of the Constitution and Bylaws, the reinstatement of all-faculty meetings, and broad constituency participation in the 2011 Strategic Plan. The current administration has also worked to create a more collaborative environment with after-board-meeting gatherings, presidential coffees, academic newsletters, and strategic planning lunches soliciting feedback and ideas from faculty and staff on the 2016 Strategic Plan. Sterling College has learned from the painful experiences of the mid 2000s and values the opinions and feedback of all of its constituents.

The Board and administration took very seriously the suggestion for Board development and spent much of the February 2011 and 2012 board meetings in professional development with Bob Andringa and Bill Thrall. They considered the suggestion of the team to increase Board size but decided that they would rather strengthen the quality of the Board and reduced the required size.

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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

2.A

Sterling College operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and any auxiliary functions and has established and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing Board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Integrity is one of Sterling College's core values: "[Integrity](#) in scholarship, the arts, athletics, and all other co-curricular activities."

Financially speaking, the college operates with integrity in its fundraising practices, its management of college resources, and in its budgeting practices. The structure of the Sterling College Board of Trustees helps ensure that the Board oversees the integrity of College operations, particularly those related to fiscal and legal matters. In its fiscal oversight, the Board is guided by two standing committees that are particularly instrumental: [The Finance and Investment Committee](#) and the [Advancement Committee](#).

The purpose of the Finance and Investment 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 well-being." [\(3.7.2\)](#) To that end, the committee looks at, among other things, [endowment funds](#), other [investments](#).

The purpose of the Advancement Committee is to "study and recommend policies relating to raising financial resources for the organization, as well as marketing, communications, and media and public relations." [\(3.7.3\)](#) Specifically related to finances, the Advancement Committee has the "responsibility to review and recommend policies for . . . Development/fund raising activities that seek gifts from alumni, trustees, current and past parents, friends, churches, foundations, and corporations" including but not limited to the Sterling Fund, capital campaigns, deferred giving, endowment growth, and other projects, such as the building of a science and academic center, which have been identified as institutional priorities.

In addition to Board oversight, the Business Office employs generally accepted accounting principles 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; in accordance with

regulations, restrictions, or limitations imposed by sources outside the institution; or in accordance with directions issued by the governing board."

In July 2015, the College hired a full-time [Director of Human Resources and Title IX Coordinator](#) who, as Title IX Coordinator reports [directly to the President](#). The Director of Human Resources meets with new employees and reviews employment policies and serves as a resource to current employees on new or existing policies. The Director of HR is currently revising the staff handbook, but the current [staff handbook](#) already includes integrity statements for employees.

- personnel in a superior-to-subordinate relationship may not be related to each other (existing relationships are grandfathered);
- 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; and 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 staff handbook also underscores the College's [intolerance toward sexual harassment](#). At the beginning of each academic year, each employee receives a [Title IX brochure](#) in his or her pay envelope and new employees receive the brochure in their new employee packet which defines sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, stalking, and gender discrimination along with an outline of the College's [Sexual Misconduct Complaint Procedure](#). Beginning this fall, employees and students were also required to participate in [online Title IX training](#). Employees and students watched a PowerPoint slide show and then took a [Title IX quiz](#). As of January 2016, [98.29%](#) of the employees at Sterling College has completed the online training and taken the quiz.

The College also has an active "[Warriors Speak Up!](#)" campaign on campus to encourage employees and students to speak out when they witness or hear about inappropriate or violent speech or acts. The College's Title IX policy also clearly states the limits of confidentiality and the prohibition against retaliation.

In order to strengthen its position against sexual harassment and misconduct, the College recently hired 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](#), and provides a [Silent Witness](#) link on the Safety and Security college webpages for anonymous reporting of sexual harassment and misconduct, among other safety and security concerns.

Employees are also given annually the [College's Alcohol and Drug Policy](#) which expresses 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 [Staff](#) and [Faculty](#) Handbooks 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 Director of Human Resources and Title IX Coordinator.

On the academic side, the registrar instructs and reminds faculty how to comply with [FERPA](#) requirements. Students are also advised regarding their FERPA rights:

1. Given to them in the [student handbook/academic planner](#) 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 and in their student mailbox

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.

The [President's Cabinet](#) meets weekly to discuss issues which have arisen during the previous week, as well as institutional planning and strategy. 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](#).

During selected Board Meetings, employees have a chance to interact informally with the Board during an [afternoon reception](#). Employees are further kept informed on what is happening through [campus coffees](#) offered periodically and [all-employee meetings](#) held the week after each Board Meeting. Employees also have a time for community building during the [Kick-off Banquet](#) in the fall and a [Christmas luncheon](#) after final grades for fall have been submitted. During each of these gatherings, the President addresses employees. The weekly newsletter, 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.

[Faculty-as-a-whole](#) meets once a month to be kept 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](#). Other faculty committees, [Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs](#) and [Academic Affairs](#) also meet once a month to discuss issues pertaining to faculty. 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. For example, in 2014-2015, the Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs Committee appointed a committee to [revise/update the faculty handbook](#). Once that committee has finished its task, it will be disbanded.

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 would like 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.

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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, easily accessible to anyone who wishes to know that information. The information contained in these documents is reviewed and updated at least annually, as detailed below.

The [academic catalog](#) is reviewed annually by department chairs and department personnel for accuracy in course rotation, course descriptions, and program requirements. The catalog also contains the academic calendar 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. Printed and bound copies of the catalog are available to all faculty and students who wish one. The catalog is also available online.

The entire [Sterling.edu](#) website was redesigned and launched on March 7, 2015. This included updating to 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 webpages 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, including "[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](#), [Google+](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and [Pinterest](#).

Marketing was an area of concern for the 2009 evaluation team. The [2009 evaluation team](#) observed that "the College needs to develop an integrated marketing plan that links all parties in a common strategy. While we understand the difficulty in deciding where funding should go, this area needs to be a priority to be a future focused organization. In talking with the President and other campus personnel there needs to be a focus on changing the "silo" mentality that has developed over the last few years due to administrative turnover, especially in the area of strategic planning. An interdepartmental communication strategy would be helpful to discourage any remnant of territorialism that might be a holdover from previous administrations. This would help the College to be focused on future cooperation and trust rather than on a past that harbors ill-will and mistrust."

While in 2009 Sterling College had folded the Director of Marketing responsibilities into the Executive Assistant to the President position, in August 2010, the College moved quickly to hire a full-time [Web Marketing Manager](#). When that employee left, the college hired a graphic designer and in 2013, he moved to the position of [Web and Visual Arts Specialist](#) where he remains. In August 2015, the College hired a full time [Director of Marketing and Communication](#). With a well qualified marketing staff, the College is able to centralize marketing efforts into one office.

In 2009, the marketing of e.Sterling, the online academic division of the College, was handled separately from the marketing of the on ground campus, causing animosity between on ground and on line employees. That practice has stopped. The Office of Marketing and Communications supports the marketing function for all Sterling College departments, including Sterling College Online (formerly e.sterling). The current marketing strategies of Sterling College have corrected the "silo mentality" which plagued the marketing situation in the late 2000s, creating a climate of cooperation and trust.

The Sterling College Athletic Department operates and maintains [scwarriors.com](#) 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](#), who has been a valued partner and has 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.

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 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 color, layout and design elements while the copywriter begins work on the text. 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 it is sent to the Office of Admissions. The designer communicates general design concepts with the Office of Admissions as well. Once copy and design elements are approved by both offices, the final project is put together.

Each year the [student handbook](#) is updated through the Student Life Office. Emails are sent to different departments to verify their departmental information is correct or if any changes need to be made. The student life staff also reviews the document to see if any changes need to be made too.

Student policies which define what is permitted as a Sterling College student are reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees when changes are made, such as changes in off-campus housing requirements and student life policies.

Student handbooks are distributed to all students when they register for the fall and spring semesters. This is the second year Sterling College is providing each students with a hard copy of the [Academic Planner and Student Handbook](#). The athletic and student life departments shared the cost. Both departments felt students would utilize the academic planner as well as read and understand the student handbook if it was in their hands instead of relying on them to look at the information

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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."

2.C.2.

The Board of Trustees conducts business via [five standing committees](#):

- the [Board development committee](#),
- the [finance and investment committee](#),
- the [institutional advancement committee](#),
- the [academic affairs committee](#), and
- the [student life and enrollment committee](#) (athletics).

These five 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 is able to seek advice and feedback from the Board.

The [National Advisory Council](#) (NAC), which is intended to be, among other things, a vehicle for trustee development, has been an important way for the Board to interact with external constituencies. The NAC is comprised of various leaders and friends of the College who can assist the institution in various ways. The NAC meets twice per year and offers advice and suggestions about how the college can continue to thrive and grow and meet the needs of its constituencies. The chair of the Board of Trustees is an *ex officio* member of the NAC and thus remains communicative with certain external constituents.

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.

2.C.4.

The Board also 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 2011 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.

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's librarians have academic freedom as they determine what materials should be circulated and as they guide students in the use of resources.

The college's meetings of the Faculty Council and its Academic Affairs committee 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. While the student newspaper, [The Stir](#), has an advisor, stories are chosen and written by students. Additionally, students publish an annual literary magazine titled the [Great Plains Review](#), one campus organization, [The English Blend](#), encourages students to write, read, and perform their written work. A student-led [film festival](#) has occurred for four consecutive years. During this festival, students perform original dramatic works that have been written by other students. Furthermore, [student leaders](#) are invited to and asked to address both the Board of Trustees and the National Advisory Council.

The college also opens its [chapel](#), [convocation services](#), and [lectures](#) to the public, and the college strives to feature guest speakers who represent different perspectives within the Christian tradition. On campus speakers have included a [Kansas Supreme Court Justice](#), [pastors](#), [teachers](#), [writers](#), [business leaders](#), and [entrepreneurs](#).

Faculty and students are also encouraged to express themselves through writing and conference presentations. Assistant professor of chemistry, [Farai Kwaramba](#) earned an Advancing Science Grant which enabled him to present two lectures on his research to a variety of conference attendees, including employees and students from federal, private, and academic institutions. Associate professor of biology, [Dr. Wai-Foong Hong](#), taught an undergraduate course in the department of molecular biotechnology at Da-Yeh University in Taiwan for two weeks in July.

Former assistant professor of art, Hanna Kozlowski-Slone and then senior art major Shelby Huber were only eight professor-student pairs out of a group of 95 arts, chosen to display their art work in the art show "[TAPPED](#)" which focuses on the relationship between students and their professors. Huber would go on to win Best of Show and the Patrons Choice Award for her oil painting "[Enervated](#)" at the Rice County Arts Council's 41st annual Prairie Art Exhibition.

Four students and a faculty member participated in the [National Student Leadership Forum](#) in

Washington DC in 2014, hearing speakers in national politics, business, and social services. Each year, senior art [students exhibit](#) their final collection of work as college students on campus. At the Central Plains Society of Mammalogists meeting, students from Sterling College took first place in the undergraduate poster presentation category for their work with [kangaroos in captivity](#). Psychology students attend the SWPA convention each year and often present posters and occasionally [full sessions](#) on their research.

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.

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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."

Section [2.11.1](#) of the *Faculty Handbook* 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.

[Faculty Development Funds](#) are available "to facilitate and nurture the professional growth and academic enrichment of faculty members." Since academic year 2009-2010, over 50 faculty members have taken advantage of these funds and attended a number of professional conferences and activities.

The 2009 visiting team cited professional development as an area needing institutional attention. Specifically, the [team suggested](#):

"Though Sterling College has made a budgetary commitment to faculty professional development, that budget is limited. Additionally, the structure and goals of the professional development program are unclear. The institution should develop a more intentional professional development program for

faculty, staff and administration. A professional development program should demonstrate Sterling's commitment to leadership, service and life-long learning."

Since the [2009 visit](#), the College has improved the budget for [faculty professional development](#) and [clarified the process](#). Each faculty member has \$400 per year available for his or her use, but the faculty member may elect to pool three year's 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.

Year	Funds Distributed
2009-2010	\$3,603
2010-2011	\$3,171
2011-2012	\$6,000
2012-2013	\$10,386
2013-2014	\$6,144
2014-2015	\$7,242

The 2015-2016 budget for faculty professional development is [\\$15,000](#) and \$7,189 have been allocated as of February 2016.

In addition to the professional development opportunities and policies for faculty, the *Faculty Handbook* also provides provisions for [educational leave](#) and describes the guidelines for the College's robust [Forgiveable Loan Program](#) 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 (KASFAA), the Rocky Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (RAMSFAA), and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). The financial aid staff participates in appropriate training and attends conferences held by KASFAA, RAMSFAA, and Federal Student Aid (FSA). 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), and the entire Registrar's Office attends the annual conference. The registrar also belongs to the Associated Colleges of Central Kansas (ACCK) registrar's group through which she receives and gives registrar support and assistance.

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 Strategic Plan](#) includes a goal to "establish professional development policies for all employees."

2.E.2

Students at Sterling College are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources. Upon faculty request, the librarian staff will visit classes to instruct students in the responsible searching, evaluating, and using of secondary 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 *Sterling College 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 their first semester at Sterling College or whenever 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, the [Institutional Review Board](#) reviews the project and insures that the research is conducted ethically. Specific institutional polices regarding IRBs are being developed.

2.E.3

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

During the [fall 2009 faculty retreat](#), the College hosted Dr. Jann Weitzel, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri to speak to faculty on academic integrity issues. That next academic year, the faculty revised and clarified the academic integrity policy. The [Academic Integrity Policy](#) is referenced in each course syllabus and is followed. To support the Academic Integrity Policy, the College purchased a subscription in 2014-2015 to [turnitin.com](#) and provided instruction in its use. A history department faculty member serves as a [resource for faculty](#) who use the system.

The Sterling College academic policy provides appropriate grace to students guilty of academic integrity while still holding those students responsible for their violations. The policy requires the

faculty member to make the first contact with a student, giving the student an opportunity to appeal when the accusation is first made. Once the faculty member has determined that a violation did indeed occur, he or she notifies the Office of Academic Affairs, who checks the [Academic Integrity Log](#) to see if this is the student's first violation. The violation is recorded on the log appropriately, (first, second, or third violation), and if it is the first violation, the faculty member determines the penalty. The student must meet with the Vice President for Academic Affairs (or his designee) where the student is counseled regarding the importance of academic integrity and the policy is reviewed. The student signs a [Statement of Student Responsibility for Academic Integrity](#) form signifying that he/she has been counseled, has received a copy of the policy, and understands the consequences of a second and third violation.

Upon a second violation, the student receives an F for the course in which the violation occurred and a W for all other courses in the semester and is immediately [suspended from the College](#). The student may reapply for admission to Sterling College the following semester.

Upon a third violation, the student receives an F for the course in which the violation occurred and a W for all other courses in the semester and is immediately and permanently dismissed from the College.

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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 Director of Human Resources and Title IX Coordinator to ensure that ethical practices are followed in the hiring and training of new employees and in the treatment of current employees. 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 webpages 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 Stir*, the *Great Plains Review*, campus art shows, and theatrical, musical, and film productions. A diverse set of off-campus speakers is hosted through department or 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.

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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 an undergraduate bachelor's degree.

The college publishes a [credit hour policy](#) in the 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.

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

Additionally, the [baccalaureate degree requirements](#) are published in the 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 wants to guarantee that a graduate's degree includes a minimum number of credit hours from Sterling College.

In addition, Sterling College requires a minimum GPA in order for a student to earn a degree at Sterling College. For non-education majors, a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00 and a minimum of 2.5 in the declared majors and minors are required. For education majors, a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50 and a minimum of 2.75 in both major and licensure requirement classes is required.

3.A.2

Currently, the college offers only bachelor's degrees. However, during the 2014–2015 academic year, faculty proposed a master's degree in [Sports Ministry](#) in fall 2015, approved by the Board of Trustees in [May 2015](#) and approved a master's degree in [Athletic Training](#), understanding that both degrees would need approval from the college's Board of Trustees, the Higher Learning Commission, and in the case of the Athletic Training master's, the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) if they would be offered. As the faculty council notes from [February 2015](#) demonstrate, some faculty objected to the lack of academic rigor in the original [sports ministry](#) proposal. But, as recorded in the [March 2015 minutes](#), the faculty council approved the proposed curriculum after [concerns about rigor had been addressed](#). The Sports Ministry approval process shows that the faculty at Sterling College take seriously the mandate in [Section D, Article 1](#) of the *Faculty Council Bylaws* which state that the academic affairs committee is charged with ensuring that all undergraduate offerings are “relevant to the academic standards and programs of the college.”

3.A.3.

The college also ensures that its program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery. The institution offers six online bachelor's programs, four of which are offered residentially as well. Two of these programs— [History](#) and [Elementary Education](#) — have the exact same curricula and program-level learning objectives -- [History](#), [Elementary Education](#). The online program in [Theological Studies](#) has a slightly different course curriculum than the residential [Biblical Studies](#) program, and the online [Christian Ministries](#) program has a slightly different curriculum than the [residential program of the same name](#). However, the programs are assessed according to the same program-level learning objectives -- [Theological Studies](#), [Christian Ministries](#) -- and academic leadership realizes that the curricula should be the same regardless of delivery mode.

[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 [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 Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation ([CAEP](#)) and the Kansas State Department of Education ([KSDE](#)).

Every class taught at Sterling College is expected to have a syllabus which conforms to the [syllabus template](#). The online syllabus includes additional information unique to online delivery, such as a statement on internet etiquette. Each syllabus is required to include the required textbooks, time and place of class meeting, instructor's contact information, including location of office, office phone number, email, and office hours. 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](#)

[Sample Campus Syllabus](#)

Sterling College has offered dual credit with Sterling High School for many years. Although attempts to extend the dual credit program to other area schools have been attempted, none have worked out due to similar programs in the area's community colleges. 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 juniors and seniors. Additionally, the Vice President for Enrollment makes a presentation to each of the school's potential dual credit classes to describe the program and go over admission processes. Forms are also given to the students who are interested at that time. After seven to ten days, the dual credit forms along with a master promissory note and enrollment card are submitted to the Sterling High School Office. The Sterling High School Principal or the school Counselor must approve each student. The packets are then processed through the Sterling College Admissions and Registrar's Offices.

For spring 2016, 39 Sterling High School students are enrolled in Sterling College dual credit courses in:

LL101 College Composition I
BI110 & BI110L Human Anatomy and Physiology with Lab
HI212 U. S. History II
MA110 College Algebra
MA200 Calculus I

Dual credit courses must also abide by the syllabus policies of Sterling College and must include some of 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.

[Sample Dual Credit Syllabus](#)

Many education students take their content methods course through the Associated Colleges of Central Kansas (ACCK). Students enroll and pay for those courses through Sterling College. The academic quality of those courses is monitored by the Sterling College Education Program (STEP) and the education programs of other institutions in the ACCK. The ACCK education courses fulfill the program objectives of the STEP program which may lead to education licensure for the student.

[Sample ACCK Methods Course Syllabus](#)

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

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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

Sterling College demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its education programs through its general education and major programs.

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 [39–41 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. The college requires that all students 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 of the 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, TM245: Homiletics, and BU140: Business Communication may meet the public speaking GE requirement. And 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 major-program curricular matrices demonstrate, objectives align with [five institutional learning objectives](#), which are stated as follows:

The Sterling College graduate will:

1. Demonstrate sufficient content knowledge to be successful in his or her chosen profession or advanced academic endeavor.
2. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between his or her chosen area of study and the world and its cultures.
3. Exercise the intellectual, communicative, and social skills reflective of creative and thoughtful servant leadership.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the personal and civic skills necessary for a productive life of faith and service.
5. Demonstrate understanding of how Biblical principles affect personal, professional, and academic life.

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](#)

From 2001 to spring 2009, the College used the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (CBASE) as its standardized assessment for general education. Starting in the 2009-2010 academic year, the CBASE was abandoned in favor of the Measure of Academic Proficiency Progress (MAPP), now called the [ETS Proficiency Profile](#). Unlike the CBASE, the ETS Proficiency Profile may be administered online, allowing online students to complete the assessment if they are completing a degree at Sterling College. Students in all Basic Christian Doctrine classes during an academic year take a class period to complete the ETS Proficiency Profile, 50 students over the course of the year taking the ETS writing exam and the rest of the students taking the 36 multiple-choice question test which measures critical thinking, reading, writing, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Like Major Field Tests for academic disciplines, 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, in 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. On campus students complete the survey on paper, but on-line students take the survey on survey monkey. Even though these questions provide the College with indirect data, they are nonetheless more valid than they were.

In addition to the ETS Proficiency Profile and the MCF survey questions, the GE Chair also uses course based grades, as reported on instructor course reports, 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 a [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 [theatre](#), a senior may direct a full-length play production or design sets, costumes, or lighting for a production. 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 states 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 for Assessment and Accreditation.

3.B.4

Institutional objective 2 addresses the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and eventually work. In the 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 class 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.
- [TM344: 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.
- [TM262: 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.

While many programs explicitly address the diversity of the world in course material, the institution should do a better job of requiring some kind of world diversity element in each program and tracking and assessing it, perhaps as we track and provide guidelines for the writing intensive requirement in all programs.

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 East Asia, Guatemala, Panama, and India, 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, 368 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 coordinator 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, most recently taking a trip to Johnson County Community College in Kansas City to attend [Japan Fest](#).

3.B.5

While Sterling College values 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 following list highlights the wide array of research and creative projects the faculty and students at Sterling College participate in:

- Jeff Bruns, professor of business recently co-authored an article in *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* entitled "[Assessing the worth of the college degree on self-perceived police performance](#)." (2015)
- Keith Pfannenstiel, assistant professor of Exercise Science co-authored an article in *Xenobiotica* entitled "[Effects of age on multidrug resistance protein expression and doxorubicin accumulation in cardiac and skeletal muscle](#)." (2013)
- Last December then Sterling College art professor Hanna Kozlowski-Slone and senior art major Shelby Huber had their art work chosen for an exhibition entitled "[Tapped](#)," which focused on the relationship between students and their professors. (2014)
- Sterling College assistant professor of art and design, David Stenulson, had a painting selected for the show "[Monolithic](#)" at Manifest Gallery in Cincinnati. (2015)
- Two students studying biology at Sterling College, won first place in the undergraduate poster presentation category at the [2015 Central Plains Society of Mammalogists](#) meeting, for their work on kangaroos in captivity. (2015)
- A senior psychology student presented his research on the [perceived social attributes through selfies](#) in a full session at the Southwestern Psychological Association conference. (2015)
- Farai Kwaramba, assistant professor of chemistry, was awarded the [Advancing Science Grant](#) from the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. The competitive grant allowed Kwaramba to present two lectures on his research to a variety of conference attendees, including employees and students from federal, private, and academic institutions. (2014)
- Assistant Professor of Communications professor Ken Troyer co-authored the

- textbook, [*Argumentation and Debate: A Strategic Perspective*](#).
- Associate Professor of Biology, Jonathan Conard, co-authored a book on hiking and biking in Kansas with his sister entitled [*Kansas Trail Guide: The Best Hiking, Biking, and Riding in the Sunflower State*](#).
 - Assistant Professor of Communication, Gorman Woodfin published [*In the Hollow of His Hands: Amazing Stories of God's Care*](#).
 - Assistant Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Jacob Shatzer published [*A Spreading and Abiding Hope: A Vision for Evangelical Theopolitics*](#).
 - Aaron Brown, Assistant Professor of Language and Literature, published a book of poetry entitled [*Windhover*](#).
 - Assistant Professor of Language and Literature Mark Watney participated in a one week seminar on Greek tragedies at Harvard's Institute of Hellenic Studies in Washington D.C., sponsored through the Consortium of Independent Colleges (CIC).
 - Music faculty member, Mark Clark has a long history of performing in professional music theatre in Wichita, Kansas, including Music Theatre of Wichita and Crown Uptown Dinner Theatre.
 - Music faculty member, Rick Nichols is a member of [*Artisans in Brass*](#), a professional brass quintet.
 - At the Annual Meeting of the Kansas Academy of Science, Associate Professor of Biology, Wai-Foong Hong, presented data that she and her genetics students collected on [*increasing plant yield during drought conditions*](#).
 - Sterling College sent four students and a faculty member to the 2014 [*National Student Leadership Forum*](#) in Washington DC.
 - Professors Frank Leone and Spencer Wagley presented at 2015 Fall Christian Educators Conference. Mr. Leone's presentation was entitled "[*Using Thinking Strategies to Teach Addition and Subtraction Facts*](#)," and Dr. Wagley's presentation was entitled "[*Critical Thinking: It's More Than a Box in the Textbook*](#)."
 - Spencer Wagley also presented at the 35th Critical Thinking Conference on "[*Critical Thinking in Teacher Education: Perceptions and Practices of Teacher Candidates and College Faculty*](#)."

As can be seen, for our rural location and a required teaching load of 27 hours per year, 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

Sterling College has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high quality programs, and student services.

3.C.1

In [2015-2016](#), Sterling College employed 40 full-time faculty, two pro-rata faculty, and 31 adjunct faculty (varies according to semester). IPEDS from 2010-2014 show that we have averaged 39.2 full-time and 29 part time faculty per year, with a student:faculty ratio of 13:1.

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 they perform, such as directing a play, coaching forensics, or serving as an associate dean; others are given a load reduction as required by an external accrediting body, such as CAATE (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education) and KSDE (Kansas State Department of Education) and CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation).

In order to effectively transition to their position as full faculty members, new faculty are expected to participate in new [faculty orientation](#) which begins at the beginning of August with a day-long retreat and continues through the fall semester with [bi-monthly lunch meetings](#) covering topics such as using the Learning Management System (LMS), advising, assessment, and academic alerts. As part of the new faculty orientation, an [LMS course](#) was created where new faculty could record their class observations and participation in other aspects of community life at the College. 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.

The faculty-as-a-whole meets at a 1.5 day [faculty retreat](#) in August and [monthly](#) throughout the semester 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](#):

- Teaching Expectations
- Advising Expectations
- Student Recruitment
- Student Retention
- Scholarship and Creative Work
- Service to the College
- Service to the Profession
- Service to the Student Body
- Service to the Community

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 Dean for Assessment and Accreditation, and the General Education Chair, all required members of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Of the [42 new full-time faculty](#) hired for academic years [2009-2010](#), [2010-2011](#), [2011-2012](#), [2012-2013](#), [2013-2014](#), and [2014-2015](#), only 17 remain employed as full-time faculty in fall 2015. Academic year [2015-2016](#) saw ten new full-time faculty on campus, with the physics position remaining unfilled because of the College's commitment to hiring only qualified faculty. Two of the new hires over the past six years are the result of expanding the program in Exercise Science and creating a program in Criminal Justice.

A greater length of tenure by faculty creates continuity for students and for the faculty who remain employed at Sterling College. When faculty turnover is great, faculty and academic administrators spend time getting new faculty oriented to the processes and culture of Sterling College. As was mentioned about program review in 4.A, maintaining a practice of program review is difficult for some programs with frequent faculty turnover, especially in Music, Psychology, Biblical

studies, Christian ministry, Art, Theatre, Math, and Communication and Media Arts, where faculty turnover has been high.

Because Sterling College has only [fifteen faculty](#) who have been teaching full time at the college for five years or more, and only four who have been teaching full time at the College for ten years or more, finding senior faculty to fill leadership positions on faculty committees has been challenging.

3.C.2.

The [faculty](#) at Sterling College are appropriately credentialed, including those in the dual credit program at Sterling High School and those who teach education courses through ACCK (Associated Colleges of Central Kansas). 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 approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs through the Faculty Welfare committee. The candidates education, credentials, and experience is [evaluated](#). The procedure in the current Faculty Handbook has been followed, but 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.

The College makes exceptions to the requirement for graduate degrees only in the cases of adjuncts or dual credit instructors needed to fill a class or two temporarily. In the case of the dual credit [math instructor](#), the College has required the instructor to pursue graduate hours in the teaching field as a condition of employment, and the VPAA monitors the instructor's progress yearly. As a general policy, the College seeks to hire appropriately qualified and credentialed faculty.

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.

[2009-2010](#): 44 full-time faculty. 15 with doctorate; 5 with terminal degree = 35% or 45%

[2010-2011](#): 41 full-time faculty. 18 with doctorate; 1 with terminal degree = 44% or 46%

[2011-2012](#): 41 full-time faculty. 15 with doctorate; 3 with terminal degree = 37% or 44%

[2012-2013](#): 40 full-time faculty: 17 with doctorate; 5 with terminal degree = 42% or 55%

[2013-2014](#): 40 full-time faculty: 16 with doctorate; 4 with terminal degree = 40% or 50%

[2014-2015](#): 41 full-time faculty: 17 with doctorate; 6 with terminal degree = 42% or 56%

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

Institutions in the [Kansas Independent College Association](#) (KICA) average 59% doctoral/terminal degrees, with a range of 18% on the low end and 100% on the high end. At 58%, Sterling College sits almost at the mean and just 4% below the median of 63%.

While the percent of Sterling College faculty with doctoral degrees has not increased to the level the team would have liked to see, the percent is increasing. When you add in faculty with terminal degrees, such as MFA, MDiv, or JD, the percent is closer to the 75% the team expected. The College supports a [forgiveable loan program](#) for faculty which provides financial assistance to those faculty

who are working on doctoral degrees. [Faculty job descriptions](#) also state that the College prefers candidates with doctoral or terminal degrees. In addition, the [2012-2016 Strategic Plan](#) prioritized strengthening the faculty academic profile. The [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) prioritizes professional development, which could potentially provide more resources for faculty to complete their doctoral 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 dean, 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 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 [2009 visit team](#) was concerned about the funding for faculty development as well as the [procedures for distributing](#) those funds. The College has addressed both of these issues. While funding has not reached the target the team suggested of \$1000 to \$1500 per faculty member, what they saw as the amount spent at "typical colleges," the funds used have gotten closer to and even surpassed the \$350 per year that the team acknowledges that "competing institutions at the very lowest end of the spectrum spend" per capita, especially when the [actual dollar amount spent per faculty](#) who applies for funds is considered. The College has committed to reserving [\\$400 per faculty member](#) for professional development use. More on Faculty Development Funds can be found in 2.E.

While [forgiveable loans](#) are not, strictly speaking, faculty development funds, those funds do provide significant benefit to the faculty who are seeking doctoral degrees. Since the 2010-2011 academic year, Sterling College has distributed \$59,280 to faculty to off-set the financial burden they face for tuition, books, and fees in completing their doctoral education.

In addition to off campus opportunities for professional development, faculty retreat is used as a time for professional development. In the past few years, faculty have discussed topics related to teaching such as flipping classrooms, integrating more critical thinking and writing into the classroom, and engaging [Generation NeXt](#). The faculty have also spent time at retreat discussing the integration of faith and learning, especially two years ago when a member of Ken Blanchard's [Lead Like Jesus](#) team came to campus to lead workshops for faculty and selected staff.

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

[152 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 [six members of Cabinet](#) who, with the exception of the

athletic director, hold the executive title of Vice President. Each member of Cabinet oversees an aspect of the college: [enrollment](#), [student life](#), [athletics](#), [advancement](#), [academics](#), and [operations](#). The Cabinet meets together weekly to plan and to 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

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.

- [Career Services Director](#)
- [Campus Counselor](#)
- [Academic Support Director](#)
- [Coordinator of Online Student Services](#)
- [Financial Aid Director](#)
- [Campus Nurse](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Athletic Training Staff](#)
- [Athletic Mentor](#)
- [Director of Campus Ministries](#)
- [Online 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:

- A 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 whole office attends the annual conference. The registrar also belongs to the ACCK (Associated Colleges of Central Kansas) 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, RAMSFAA and NASFAA.

The campus nurse keeps current in her field by attending the American College Health Association (ACHA) Conference every year

All employees -- faculty, staff, and administration -- 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](#).

Academic advising is handled by a faculty member in the student's area of major study. On campus students create an [academic plan](#) in GD105: Foundations of Servant Leadership, whether that is two years, as a transfer student or four years, as a freshman. Advisors also have access to the [General Education Planner](#) to assist advisors and advisees in fulfilling students' general education options. Students in online programs also have access to academic advising, either through program faculty, as education students do, or through the Coordinator of Online Student Services in cooperation with academic department personnel, [another area of concern of the 2009](#) visit team which has been addressed.

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 posted in the Academic Catalog which students and advisors both have access to. Each department has created a [two-year rotation](#) of classes to assist with accurate academic advising.

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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

Sterling College provides support for student learning and effective teaching in a number of ways.

3.D.1

Sterling College offers co-curricular support services for students' success.

The College employs a full-time [Career Services and First Year Program Director](#) 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

The [Campus Nurse](#) 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.

[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 [Ulifeline](#), an online resource for students and faculty that provides information and screenings to promote student mental health and emotional well-being."

Recognizing a need because of the number and diversity of the athletes on campus, in fall 2015 the College hired an [Athletic Mentor](#), who assists student-athletes in achieving their academic goals while participating in an intercollegiate athletic program. The Athletic Mentor does not replace the Academic Support Director but is another resource available to student athletes in order to achieve academic success.

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 1290. 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.

Most Sterling College students take either [MA108: Contemporary Mathematics](#) or MA110: College Algebra, but both have minimum ACT requirements: 18 for Contemporary Mathematics and 21 for College Algebra. Students who do not meet those minimum ACT requirements 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.

The Academic Support Office completes a [Course Plan of Action Form](#) with the at-risk student, which the student must have signed by his/her advisor, appropriate instructors, any athletic or activity coaches, and the Director of Academic Support, as a means of keeping students accountable for their success. The Director of Academic Support also hands out a sheet containing [Improvement Tips](#) to those students to guide them in creating their plans for 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 opened a [Writing Center](#), conveniently located in the Academic Support Office space, in fall 2008, staffed with peers who have demonstrated strong writing ability, supervised by the Director of Academic Support, which offers walk-in times and appointments for any students of whatever writing ability who desire writing-specific assistance. [The Academic Support Center](#) also provides math tutoring, and can make arrangements for students to meet with tutors for any other subject with which they may be having difficulty.

While we have recognized a need for reading assistance for some students, we do not currently offer a developmental reading class for students who, based on their ACT reading score, are not adequately prepared for college reading. Developing and staffing such a class has been a frequent topic for consideration by faculty. Additionally, some student's sub score and ability in math is so low that even Intermediate Algebra is difficult for some and it is not uncommon for some students to repeat it.

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. 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.

The objective of the Honors Program is to "engage students with significant ideas, trends, and works of literature, so that they will use that understanding to serve others and the world." To that end, the Honors program also offers off-campus educational opportunities. In the past, these opportunities have included trips to the Wichita Opera, the Highland Festival in nearby McPherson, the Renaissance Festival, the World War I Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and Japan Fest at Johnson County Community College.

In a student's last year of the Honors Program, students will complete an assignment in which they reflect upon ways that deep engagement contributes to faithful service to others in their field and in the world.

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. On campus 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 [Coordinator of Online Student Services](#) 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 employs a [Director of Informational Technology](#), who is assisted by a full-time IT assistant director. The Director of IT reports to the Vice President for Administration and Institutional Initiatives. The director oversees all aspects of information on campus and directs the planning, acquisition and implementation of business, educational and institutional hardware, software and storage purchases. In addition, the IT staff oversees network support, via help@sterling.edu, as well as telephone support and manages [mySterling](#), an educational and informational portal for staff and students.

Since the last HLC visit, Sterling College has implemented or improved upon the following major IT initiatives that supports the academic success of Sterling College students.

Our IT staff services over ten student computers each week at no charge. We have centralized all printing services, allowing faculty and students to print directly from laptops without charge anywhere on campus. The IT staff facilitated a move to Office 365, providing a full copy of Office Professional Plus to each student at no cost. Students have full access to the learning management portal [mySterling](#), through their computers or through their hand-held devices by accessing [Go.sterling.edu](#). This portal provides access to student services such as financial aid, degree audit capability, online testing, and course information.

The IT staff processes, on average, 13 "help" tickets each day. The college has a three year replacement plan on newly leased Microsoft Surface tablets for all faculty and selected staff. These tablets are supported educationally by the installation of twenty 60-inch flat panel televisions, replacing twenty projectors in highly utilized classrooms. All classrooms now utilize the Miracast technology for wireless presentation experiences.

Faculty have access to [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](#), the learning management system, is used by many faculty to [record attendance](#). Like many learning management systems, it also includes portals for students to take online tests, submit homework or essays, find the syllabus or handouts, and participate in online classroom discussions. Some faculty use only the attendance function, but many faculty use many of the features, and some use all of the features.

In 2012 the College contracted with [InterDesign](#) to evaluate instruction space campus-wide. Board, faculty and staff continue to use the results of this study as roadmap for campus improvements. The College is now in the silent phase of a \$25 million capital campaign that includes two construction projects.

First, a 44,000 square foot Science and Academic Center that will add five labs, six classrooms, six conference/seminar rooms, 18 offices, and state of the art equipment. All students will take classes in

this building, with the top two floors of the three-story facility serving as home to natural sciences.

Second, expansion of 17,000 square feet and remodeling of 5,000 square feet at the 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, two renovated classrooms, an exercise physiology lab, and six new academic offices. The Center will be home to the College's first campus-based master's degree when Athletic Training transitions to a graduate program.

[Mabee Library](#) is home to over fifty bibliographic databases and over 100,000 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, copy machines, and study rooms. 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 interlibrary 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; and
- interlibrary 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 7 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 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.

Over the past several years, the Art Center has received several [renovations](#), from the updating of the gallery, to the addition of two new classrooms, along with audio video production space, fitted with a green screen to enhance the creativity of our student produced film and video projects. Most recently, the Sterling College Art Center lobby was renovated to create a beautiful and functional gallery to host visiting exhibitions and faculty and student work.

Culbertson Auditorium received extensive renovations in summer 2013 including new seating, carpet, paint, and an ADA compliant restroom in summer 2015.

Other spaces students use for performances on campus are Cornerstone, renovated in 2013, for poetry readings "coffee house" nights, and other small gatherings; and Culbertson Auditorium, for theatre performances, chapel, and other educational lectures and convocation. Upper Wilson, originally the

college's gymnasium, is now used for a variety of activities, including cheer, dance, softball and baseball, music, social dances, and student gatherings. The Art Center is also home to the mass media and radio labs.

In 2011, the [Heritage Gardens and Outdoor Learning Lab/Native Tree Walk](#) was created, in cooperation with the state of Kansas. The lab, which creates a natural grassland prairie space, was created with a combination of a state grant and a gift from the Doane family. The space is available for academic use by [area K-12 schools](#).

Students in education visit local schools for [observation](#) and in order to meet the [clinical requirement](#) for their degree and for licensure, and athletic training students gain valuable experience at off-site locations, including [Sterling Medical Center](#) and [Hutchinson High School](#). The Director of Teacher Education and The Director of Athletic Training (Clinical) ensure the quality of the off campus sites their students observe or train in with annual evaluation visits.

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](#), the College's learning management system, includes quick links to the library, tech support, and [turnitin.com](#).

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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- IT_Go.Sterling.edu_2015
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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

Sterling College fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

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.

[*In the Know*](#) is a weekly news media project produced by students through the Communication, Media and Theatre Arts department. Students create a 3-5 minute campus news program which is aired at the beginning of each Wednesday morning chapel service. Students gain valuable writing, presentation, and technical experience with the creation of each broadcast. 6-8 students participate in some capacity each week to produce *In the Know*.

The student newspaper, [The Stir](#) is published every other week during the regular semester as an insert in the local newspaper, [The Bulletin](#). 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. *The Stir* has a student staff of 5-7 students.

Sterling College has an extremely robust and successful [Debate and Forensics](#) program. In April 2015, the team placed [4th in the Debate Sweepstakes](#) at the National Forensics Association Lincoln-Douglas Debate National Tournament, and in November 2015, the team placed first at the [Missouri Mule Tournament at the University of Central Missouri](#), defeating 29 schools. Approximately 20 students a year participate at some level in debate and forensics at Sterling College. In February 2016, the team won [Gorlok Gala](#), the largest regular season tournament in the nation, beating out competitors from 41 other schools from across the nation.

[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 [Ministry teams](#) is 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.

The Sterling College Business Department sponsors a Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) -- [Phi Beta Lambda chapter](#), and in February 2015, a group of students competed at the [State Leadership Conference in Hays, Kansas](#), earning 13 awards. Competing in areas such as Job Interview, Computer Applications, Accounting for Professionals, Personal Finance, Help Desk, and Macroeconomics, students have an opportunity through FBLA to develop and refine the business skills they learn in the classroom. In September 2014, Sterling College [hosted an FBLA conference](#) on campus which was attended by 50 students from around Kansas.

3.E.2

Yearly, since 2009, Sterling College has organized and participated in [Love Sterling](#), a 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 Presbyterian Manor, 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 displays the College's foundation in servant leadership.

While participation in athletics is extra-curricular, with 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 [2009-2010](#) and [2010-2011](#) 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 three times 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 a leadership training session 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.
- Jack Dillard (Track and Cross Country head coach) organized a fund raising event for [Victory Village](#) through his "Character in the Community" 2015 interterm class. The class hosted a "Night to Remember" basketball game on Monday, Feb. 8th at 7:00 in which the Victory Village Saints played the Reno County Sabres.
- Teams have worked with [Habitat for Humanity](#) over the last three years.
- All athletic programs participate in [Love Sterling](#).
- The teams have adopted families for Thanksgiving and Christmas, to help those in our community in need.
- 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 Track and Field/Cross Country teams do a tremendous amount of [mentoring](#) with the elementary school kids and invite them to come to practices and meets
- This last year our Women's Basketball team, Men's Soccer Team, Women's Cross Country Team, Men's Cross Country team, Women's Indoor Track team, Men's Indoor Track team, and Men's Outdoor Track team were all the 2014-2015 [KCAC Teams of Character](#).
- Our Women's Outdoor Track team was the 2015 [Buffalo Dunes team of the year](#) at the national level.
- KC Bassett was the 2014-2015 [KCAC Women's Basketball Coach of Character](#)
- Haley Ray (Volleyball) was the 2015-2016 [KCAC Athlete of Character of the Year](#).
- 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.

All of these activities illustrate that Sterling College invests in its students' education experience by virtue of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which align with the mission and core values of the College, both by living out a maturing Christian faith, and in using learning and the knowledge and skills gained in that education in service to others.

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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, on line, or through the dual credit agreement with Sterling High School. Degree requirements and many 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 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 most 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 increase the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees.

The College has a strong professional development program especially designed for new faculty. All faculty are given opportunities for professional growth throughout the year by attending faculty retreat 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 and financial aid offices, but are also supported by a Coordinator of Online Student Services and an Online Chaplain.

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.

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 is moving forward with seeking approval to offer master's degrees in Sports Ministry and Athletic Training. While some details still need to be developed, the College has an opportunity to extend its strong academic programs to graduate students. Ensuring that the academic rigor of the graduate courses is substantially above the rigor of undergraduate courses will continue to be a consideration.

While many programs address the diversity of the world in course material, the College should consider requiring an explicit world diversity element in each program and then track and assess that element, much as the writing intensive requirement is tracked and assessed.

Faculty turnover continues to be a challenge which the College will address.

Faculty development funds are available for all faculty, yet a low number of faculty apply for those funds each year. Faculty need to be strongly encouraged to use their professional development funds to continue to stay current in and connected to their fields.

While many staff have access to professional development opportunities, professional staff development is a higher priority in the 2012-2016 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.

Core Components Needing Organizational Attention per 2009 Evaluation Team:

The 2009 team was concerned with the [low number of faculty holding the doctoral degree](#). The College is improving that percentage, from 35% in 2009-2010 to 43% in 2015-2016. That percentage is higher (58%) when terminal degrees are considered. Sterling College has shown its commitment to hiring faculty with doctoral and terminal degrees. More importantly, the College has invested in its current faculty, granting \$59,280 in assistance through the forgivable loan program since 2010-2011 to faculty completing doctoral degrees.

The 2009 team was concerned about the [funding for faculty development](#) as well as the procedures for [distributing those funds](#). The College has committed to the faculty \$400 per person per year for

professional development use, which can be pooled for three years, if more funds are needed to attend a more distant conference. Very rarely, however, do all faculty apply for use of those funds, so when the total amount dispersed is divided by the total number of faculty, we still arrive at a very low dollar amount spent per faculty member. Those numbers do not adequately represent reality because those people who do apply for funds are given what they have requested, up to \$400 per year or \$1200 for three years. As mentioned above, while the chair of the Faculty Welfare Committee does a good job making faculty aware of the funds and encouraging faculty to use their funds, perhaps even stronger incentive should be given. Faculty need to be aware that their professional development is not just for them, but for the institution and, most importantly, for students. Faculty need to be strongly encouraged, and perhaps even obligated, to use their professional development funds to remain current and connected to their disciplines.

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.

The 2009 team expressed concern that the [Sterling College faculty did not seem to own the online](#) curriculum, even though the online programs paralleled on campus programs. This oversight has been corrected so that campus faculty not only do much of the online teaching, they are responsible for the assessment of those programs, and are responsible for much of the advising. The Coordinator of Online Student Services does advise online students, but only in consultation with the registrar and with program faculty.

Sources

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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

Sterling College has planned to maintain a practice of regular program review as encouraged by the [2009 accreditation team](#). Over half of the college's programs have been reviewed thoroughly according to the schedule set in 2009-2010. However, this is still an area of improvement as many programs have not been through program review since the 2009 visit. At this point in the cycle (2015-2016), every program should have been through the program review process, and we should be beginning to review again those programs ([Biology](#), [Chemistry](#), and [History](#)) which began the process in 2009-2010. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

Problems in following the official program review schedule arose in programs where many new faculty haven't stayed more than one or two years. The thinking in many cases seems to have been that even though the program was scheduled for review, having new faculty complete the review

didn't seem productive for the program or fair to the new faculty. However, in those situations especially, some program changes needed to be made because of the change in faculty and the expertise those faculty bring, so the departments didn't feel like they had time to wait for their program review cycle to come around, nor did they feel they had the expertise or experience to conduct those full program reviews.

While many factors have prevented the institution from strictly sticking to its program review schedule, many academic programs have been reviewed as planned, either through the program review process or as part of a review by an external accrediting body (Elementary Education and Athletic Training).

Table of Completed Program Reviews

<i>Program</i>	<i>Program Review Completed</i>	<i>Education Review Completed</i>	<i>Next Scheduled</i>
Art and Design		Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Athletic Training	CAATE		2020-2021
Biology	2010	Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Business Administration	2013		2019-2020
Chemistry	2011	Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Communication and Media Arts: Speech/Theatre		Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Elementary Education		Review 2011 Initial Feedback No Rejoinder required Final Report Letter	2018

English	2012	Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Exercise Science: Health Education		Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Exercise Science: Physical Education		Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
History	2011	Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Mathematics	In process 2015	Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Music		Review 2011 Initial Feedback Rejoinder Final Report Letter	2018
Sports Management	2014		2020
Theatre Arts		Completed with Communication and Theatre Arts above 2011	2018

Table of Program Reviews to be Completed

<i>Program</i>	<i>Next Scheduled</i>
Biblical Studies	2016-2017
Christian Ministries	2016-2017

Criminal Justice (added 2014-2015)	2020-2021
Health Science (added 2013-2014)	2019-2020
Organizational Management (added 2013-2014)	2019-2020
Psychology	2016-2017
Theological Studies	2016-2017
Writing and Editing (added 2012-2013)	2018-2019

As can be seen in the first table above, eleven programs undergo a program review through the secondary education endorsement process. While some of these programs did not go through a formal program review process according to the guidelines set out in the [Program Review Template](#) or according to the [cycle of program reviews](#) in the 2008 Assessment Plan, they all went through a program review process for education accreditation in 2011 and are scheduled to go through program review for education accreditation again in 2018.

As part of that process, programs write a program report responding to the standards for accreditation set by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). KSDE responds to those program reviews, citing any weaknesses or deficiencies. The program makes those changes or responds to feedback in a rejoinder, which is sent back to the accrediting body. The accrediting body then approves, or disapproves, those programs. All eleven of the programs were accepted for education endorsement. All of the students in the academic programs with an endorsement option require education students to take nearly the same major requirements as non-education students. Where there are differences, education students have either more requirements or their major elective options are determined for them. [For example](#), English majors are required to take six hours of English electives. For education students, three of those hours must be LL356: Young Adult Literature. English majors may choose between a creative writing class or LL315: Advanced Composition, but education students must take LL315.

The similarity between the non-education major programs and the education endorsement programs makes the program review departments complete for education endorsement a valid assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of those programs.

As further evidence that departments look carefully at their programs as part of education program assessment, annually, since 2008-2009, programs with education endorsements have collected data and written reflections on that data. Programs will use the data collected beginning 2015-2016 for the scheduled 2018 program review.

Program	Data Sheets	2014-2015 Reflections
Art Education	Data Sheet	Reflection

Biology Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Chemistry Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Elementary Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
English Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Health Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
History Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Mathematics Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Music Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Physical Education	Data Sheet	Reflection
Speech Theatre Education	Data Sheet	Reflection

Additionally, many of the above programs may undergo a program review process before 2018 as a result of the state of Kansas updating program standards in all endorsement areas. The state is still in the process of setting the schedule, but we do know that Math is scheduled for 2015-2016 and English and History for 2016-2017.

In recommitting itself to maintaining a practice of program review, the [revised schedule](#) for program review will align the education program reviews with institutional program reviews for those programs with education endorsement options. Such alignment will ensure that, moving forward, Sterling College maintains a regular practice of program review and that all programs will have been reviewed by the year 10 Comprehensive Evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2019-2020.

The College developed specific [interdisciplinary majors](#) in 2014-2015 which were accepted without individual plans for program review because the programs which make up the interdisciplinary programs should go through program review; for example, Biology and Mathematics for Biological Mathematics. Following is a list of faculty created interdisciplinary programs listed in the Academic Catalog: Biological Mathematics; Business Mathematics; Business Ministry; Criminal Justice Administration; Educational Ministry; Liberal Arts; Media Ministry; Musical Theatre; Performing Arts Ministry; Political Studies; Pre-Forensic Science; Sport Communication; Sport Ministry; Sports Writing; Wildlife Law Enforcement.

While programs have historically been discouraged from making substantive changes to their programs outside of the program review process, substantive changes have been made under certain circumstances; often those circumstances are due to faculty turnover or changes required to remain compliant with program specific accrediting bodies. Because of these circumstances, many programs which didn't go through the formal review process have instituted major changes in their programs over the last few years. Even in those cases, however, many of the requirements of program review

have been included in their arguments to the Academic Affairs committee for the necessity of the requested changes. See [2016 Psychology proposal](#).

A unique situation is the [Mathematics program review](#). The program was very far into the process, having stabilized the faculty in the program, completed the writing of the program review, and prepared to submit their program review to the Academic Affairs committee in fall 2015, when one faculty member left and the education standards for the mathematics secondary licensure changed. The department chair decided to hold the program review back in light of the changes in faculty and education standards.

While strictly following through with the program review process has not happened, the process the College has in place is a solid plan for program review, and a [revised scheduled](#) for program review, which coincides with the program reviews required for education endorsement areas has been developed. With the appointment of the new [Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs](#), the faculty and academic administration will better support the program review process.

The [Template for Comprehensive Program Review](#) guides faculty in their review of their programs and requires the following:

- Summary of assessment data compiled since the last review. (Summarized by program objective)
- Input from outside stakeholders.
- Review of similar programs at other institutions.
- Changes to program and course objectives.
- Changes to alignment matrices.
- If applicable -- incorporation of guidelines and/or standards from all appropriate accrediting bodies.
- If applicable -- incorporation of pertinent information from professional associations.
- Budget needs for implementing changes based on program review.

The Program review process might necessitate significant curricular proposals and changes which are brought before the academic affairs committee of the faculty council. However, program changes are not a requirement of the program review process. In either case, once the program review is complete, it goes to the Academic Affairs Committee for further review and any changes which require a change in budget or new faculty, must be approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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 states 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 each community college 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 a faculty member in that program. [See examples of that process here.](#)

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), as well as Institutional Credit by Examination (popularly called "test out"). The College also has stated policies for granting [Credit for Prior Learning](#) and refers students to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) for information on how to prepare a portfolio of evidence to be evaluated by CAEL.

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 participating in an internship, must follow the requirements in the [Sterling College Internship Packet](#). To be eligible to enroll for internship credit, a student must have completed at least 12 credit hours at Sterling College and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0. Each student's eligibility will be verified by the Career Services Director before internship placement occurs. The Internship Packet also outlines the credit hour policies associated with internships. One (1) credit hour may be awarded for a minimum of 40 hours of relevant internship experience. A student may not receive more than three (3) hours of internship credit per semester. A maximum of six (6) hours of credit earned through internship experiences can count toward graduation. Students are required to develop goal/strategy plans and work logs, in addition to other journals, papers, and projects as required by the Faculty Instructor.

The [Athletic Training program](#) requires students to participate in six semesters of [practicum](#). [AT200: Practicum I](#) must be taken in a student's first semester of acceptance into the Athletic Training program and includes prerequisites. The Athletic Training program ensures that its students are qualified and prepared for their practicum experiences by following their [Athletic Training Education Program Retention Policy](#).

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 Academic Dean must approve all requests for independent study before a study 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](#). 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 [Elementary Education](#) curriculum and in the [Business Administration](#) 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](#), and to [mySterling](#), the learning management system, to counseling services, and to tutoring services. Dual credit students also have access to Mabee Library and its resources. The courses taught for dual credit at Sterling High School 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. [LL101: College Composition](#) taught at Sterling High School serves as an example.

The faculty at Sterling College are appropriately credentialed, including those in the dual credit program at Sterling High School and those who teach education courses through ACCK (Associated Colleges of Central Kansas). The [attached table](#) shows what degrees current full-time, pro-rata, and adjunct Sterling College faculty have earned as of October 2015. All full-time and pro-rata faculty have a graduate degree in their program area. Only 6 out of 39 adjuncts do not have a graduate degree in their teaching area, but those who don't either have graduate hours or significant expertise in those teaching areas. 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. The procedure in the current Faculty Handbook has been followed, but 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.

The College makes exceptions to the requirement for graduate degrees only in the cases of adjuncts or dual credit instructors needed to fill a class or two temporarily. The new 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." As can be seen in the table attached above, that percentage has increased. The table below shows what percentage of Sterling College faculty hold a terminal degree.

Fiscal Year	'10-11	'11-12	'12-13	'13-14	'14-15	'15-16
Faculty with terminal degree in field	40%	46%	56%	56%	61%	58%

More about faculty qualifications is given in 3.C.

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), and is also accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which has now become the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

Athletic Training:

The [Athletic Training program](#) is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE).

4.A.6

Sterling College evaluates the success of its graduates.

Each summer, the Career Services Director prepares the “[Sterling College Career Survey Results](#)” for the most recent graduating class, including those completing their graduation requirements in the summer, fall, interterm, and spring semesters. The data for the report comes from paper forms the students complete prior to receiving their graduation packet from the Registrar. Some students complete more of the information on the forms than others.

Several departments on campus have an interest in some of the information on the forms, so the forms are routed throughout the summer with different departments retrieving the data they are interested in. The data is entered into a variety of databases and spreadsheets.

Realizing the common need for data across campus, the inefficiency of using multiple databases, and the reality that people were entering some of the same data into several different databases, those with an interest in the graduating student data met together in January 2016. That committee is now finalizing a single list of the data we need for the Information Technology team to develop a single application where students will enter their data. This application will ensure that all the data needed is gathered while eliminating the need for multiple people to enter data into different databases.

The Athletic Training Program keeps consistent records on the [success of their graduates](#). 80.3% of their graduates who took the Board of Certification Exam have passed and have become certified Athletic Trainers. 66% of their graduates attend graduate school, and of those who have applied for graduate school, 100% are in graduate school.

Similarly, the Education department keeps consistent records on the success of their graduates. The [Sterling College Education Program](#) (STEP) has a 97% five-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. In addition, STEP has a five-year average of 77% 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 by the department under review, and a link to a survey

created with Survey Monkey is emailed to those alumni. Many programs, English, Biology, Theology and Ministry, Chemistry, Speech and Theatre Arts, for example, 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 [Alumni Directory](#) was last updated in 2012, and includes information on the careers and graduate school attendance of Sterling College alumni, but a comprehensive survey and analysis of the alumni of Sterling is needed. While anecdotally, many on campus know what our alumni are doing in the workforce and in graduate school, the College cannot document the success of its alumni and does not analyze that information consistently.

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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 and 4

Sterling College demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning by having [clearly stated goals](#) for student learning and [effective processes for assessment](#) of student learning and achievement of learning goals and by including substantial participation of faculty.

Every major at Sterling College 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

Further, each major has [program objectives](#) which align with the mission to "develop *creative* and *thoughtful* leaders who understand a *maturing Christian faith*." These goals are assessed annually.

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.

The General Education objectives are assessed annually.

General Education Assessment Reports

[2009-2010](#)

[2010-2011](#)

[2011-2012](#)

[2012-2013](#)

[2013-2014](#)

[2014-2015](#)

In fall 2008, Sterling College implemented an [assessment plan](#) based on best practices in student-learning assessment. 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 Sterling College 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.

While some things have changed from that 2008 plan, two important pieces of that plan are still used in the [current assessment plan](#). Beginning in fall 2007, faculty completed [curriculum alignment matrices](#) for each program. These matrices contain the [programmatic objectives](#) for student learning and an [alignment map](#) that indicates which objectives are to be addressed in which courses. With the high incidence of faculty turnover the College has experienced, these matrices have been crucial in maintaining program quality and continuity. New faculty are given access to these matrices when they join a department so that they can see how their courses fit into the overall plan of the program. In addition, when a program wishes to make a program change that affects the alignment matrices, before that change can be implemented, faculty must revise and submit new matrices. Furthermore, these matrices are also necessary for faculty to complete their [course report](#) each spring.

On the matrices, faculty identify program objectives that relate directly to elements of the Sterling College mission to "develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith." Objectives for each program are labeled with "CL" for "Creative Leader," a "TL" for "Thoughtful Leader," a "CTL" for "Creative and Thoughtful Leader," or an "MCF" for "Maturing Christian Faith."

The second key document from the 2008 assessment plan is the alignment map for each program which shows the [alignment of program objectives to institutional objectives](#). The program objectives are further designated on this map as relating to either a knowledge, skill, or value. This alignment map is used by department chairs and the Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation to create yearly program reports and the annual assessment report.

In summer 2011, the College implemented evaluation-based changes to its assessment processes. The College now has an outcomes-based assessment plan that is both more efficient and more meaningful than it was from 2008 to 2011. To facilitate this change, each program created a Program Assessment Matrix which clearly shows which program objectives are associated with which assessments. A [compilation of program assessment matrices](#) shows that programs have chosen assessments which are appropriate for their discipline. Some use a capstone project, a major field test, course based grades, performance or show, for example, to assess how well students are meeting the program objectives. The Program Assessment Matrix is now part of a larger matrices document which contains the following information:

- a list of program objectives, with mission-element abbreviations associated with any or all objectives

- a curriculum alignment matrix which demonstrates how each course in a program relates to given program objectives
- an alignment matrix that demonstrates which courses in the program, if any, are associated with the General Education curriculum
- an alignment matrix that demonstrates how program objectives align with institutional objectives
- a program assessment matrix (described above)

The matrices documents provide program chairs with most of the information they need to complete their annual program assessment. In their annual report, chairs report about student progress toward every program objective.

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. But 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, in to a [program report template](#). 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 should be used when [making program changes](#) and when completing the program review and can often serve as evidence the program faculty need to justify program changes to the Academic Affairs Committee.

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 Exam
- [course reports](#)

From 2001 to spring 2009, the College used the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (CBASE) as its standardized assessment for general education. Starting in the 2009-2010 academic year, the CBASE was abandoned in favor of the Measure of Academic Proficiency Progress (MAPP), now called the [ETS Proficiency Profile](#). Unlike the CBASE, the ETS Proficiency Profile may be administered online, allowing online students to complete the assessment if they are completing a degree at Sterling College. Students in all Basic Christian Doctrine classes during an academic year take a class period to complete the ETS Proficiency Profile, 50 students over the course of the year taking the writing exam and the rest of the students taking the GE exam which measures critical thinking, reading, writing, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Like Major Field Tests for academic disciplines, standardized tests related to general education

provide valuable data about learning objectives that are common to GE curriculum 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, in fall 2011, the General Education Chair worked with the Director of Institutional Assessment to create the [Maturing Christian Faith](#) survey to measure student's progress toward the GE objectives related specifically to [Our Statement of Faith](#) of Sterling College. On campus students complete the survey on paper, but on line students take the survey through the online service Survey Monkey. Even though these questions provide the College with indirect data, they are nonetheless more valid than the cumbersome assessments used previously.

In addition to the ETS Proficiency Profile and the Maturing Christian Faith survey questions, the GE Chair also uses course based grades, as reported on instructor [course reports](#), 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.

Representative Course Reports	Representative Program Reports
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Annual Institutional Assessment Reports are created by the Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation by compiling the data from the [program reports](#) and the GE Assessment Report. While drawing strong conclusions from a small sample can be dangerous, by compiling the data from all academic programs into one document, we can begin to see trends in how well our students are meeting institutional objectives and how well we are fulfilling our mission.

The Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation completes the annual institutional assessment report early fall of the following academic year and presents the report to the [Assessment Committee](#) for recommendations and comments. The committee can make recommendations for changes or improvements to the assessment plan or for curriculum changes which then would go to Academic Affairs for communication to the relevant programs.

Institutional Assessment Reports

[2009-2010](#)

[2010-2011](#)

[2011-2012](#)

[2012-2013](#)

[2013-2014](#)

[2014-2015](#)

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 assessment points are attached to the course.

The 2009 visiting team had a few suggestions to make to improve student learning assessment at Sterling. Understandable, since in 2009, the College was transitioning from one assessment plan to another. Since that time, as has been expressed above, the College has continued to improve the assessment plan to make it more efficient for faculty to complete and more useful for faculty in recognizing and making program improvements.

One comment the team had was regarding the [course report template](#). Specifically, the team observed that "the Course Report should include learning outcomes data, a brief explanation of the methodology used to obtain the data, and – in time – a measurement of learning outcomes after the programmatic change was made." Column E in the revised Course Report template provides room for program faculty to comment on improvements they might wish to make when next teaching the course or suggestions for program changes which would improve the learning experience for students. The department chair summarizes that information in the [program report template](#), and it is here where the assessment of program changes is made, rather than on a course level.

The team also had questions regarding the usefulness of the [end-of-course attitudinal survey](#) Sterling College used in earlier assessment plan. The College no longer uses the student attitude survey, except at the end of the program where students are asked to assess how well their program met the stated program objectives. Students complete this [Program Objectives](#) survey along with the Maturing Christian Faith survey their final semester at Sterling College.

4.B.3

Sterling College uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. The [Course Report Template](#) and the Program Report Template both include space for faculty to describe improvements needed to their programs based on the data gathered from assessment. Most of the time, faculty report minor changes they may make to a particular class, an assignment or reading change, but most chairs report that no improvements are needed or that they wish to wait to make changes until more data has been gathered and analyzed. However, some programs have made improvements to their programs based on student learning assessment.

- In spring 2014, using assessment of program reports and program comprehensive master assessment plan, the chairs of the Athletic Training program noted that students were lacking in therapeutic exercise and [therapeutic modalities](#). The program used national exam scores for those two domains, while also using end of program exam, program reports, and exam prep scores. Based on the gathered data, the program decided that students were not able to master the material in the current class setting. Lab times were introduced for the classes along with adding hours to the subsequent practicums.
- The Biology department used data from their [program review](#) to propose adding courses to help provide a wider range of options for Biology students. Data from the 2012-2013 program report indicated that biology students could improve in critical thinking and writing. The program used this data to incorporate more critical thinking and quantitative assignments into their courses and to adjust their advising recommendations so that biology students would be encouraged to take additional upper-level math courses and enroll in Composition II to meet the writing-intensive course requirement.

- The Math department used the [2015 program review](#) to adjust their program objectives, and are working through the process of revising the required courses to help students better prepare for graduate school. For example, they have scheduled a topics course in Number Theory for Fall 2016 to help students be more prepared for graduate programs.
- The English department discovered during their [program review](#) in 2010 that their education majors needed more direct instruction and work with young adult literature. Rather than having English education majors take EL/LL256: Child and Adolescent Literature, the department proposed a new course LL356: Young Adult Literature to better prepare students going into a middle school or high school Language Arts classroom.

The most far-reaching example of evidence based changes to improve student learning is in the area of critical thinking, reading, and writing.

As an institution, we had been below the benchmarks for critical thinking, reading, and writing in our General Education objectives. In 2014-2015, students scored a 2 in both the "apply proper conventions of standard written English" and the "reads texts skillfully and analytically" objectives, suggesting "below average work lacking indication of potential for performance at a high level." The critical thinking objective score was a 3, "indicating work is generally below average but may demonstrate potential in places."

Furthermore, during a [writing intensive workshop](#) held in Mabee Library on Monday, January 26, 2015, faculty were asked to share their feelings concerning the writing abilities of students in writing intensive courses. The [four primary areas](#) of concern were:

1. Students cannot write professionally or academically. Additionally, exceedingly poor grammar makes grading overwhelming, leading faculty to minimize, and in some cases completely eliminate, writing assignments in non-writing intensive courses.
2. Students cannot build an argument, an inability which leads to information-dump writing and, often, plagiarism.
3. Students cannot find or use sources appropriately.
4. Students have substandard critical thinking skills.

We determined that a major contributor to the below-average performance of our students in these areas is the current structure of the writing-intensive program. After Composition I, the only other direct writing instruction with a research component most of our students receive is during their junior or senior year. 60% of the programs at Sterling College have a discipline-specific writing intensive course at the senior level; 41% at the junior level, 11% at the sophomore level. (Some programs have more than one course designated as Writing Intensive.) Furthermore, only 22% of Sterling College students have more than one writing intensive course in their program.) We determined that it was unrealistic to expect students to write at a high-level during their capstone or major project when they may not have had any writing-intensive/instructive courses since Composition I of their first year.

To address the four areas of concern identified by faculty, the College [committed itself](#) to improving the writing and critical thinking skills of its students. During spring 2015, all full-time faculty were given a copy of *Engaging Ideas: the Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, 2nd edition, by John C. Bean. Faculty [were advised](#) to read particular chapters in preparation for the August 2015 faculty retreat. The group, which included the then Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation, the Director of the Library, the then assistant librarian, and the chair of the Language and Literature department, in consultation with the then Vice

President for Academic Affairs, chose Bean's book because in it, Bean explains the links between writing, reading, and critical thinking, provides templates for assignments across the curriculum, and covers issues related to grammar and grading load. The team looking at the writing issue decided that Dr. Bean's book is uniquely applicable to the writing issues currently facing Sterling College.

During the last faculty meeting in May 2015, the chair of the Language and Literature department [guided the faculty](#) on how best to use Bean's book on a course level and, perhaps more importantly, on a program level. Faculty were encouraged to consider how they want students to write at the end of their program -- to consider a capstone writing project, if there is one, or at least the major writing project included in the designated writing intensive class for the program.

Program assessment documents were used heavily, in identifying program objectives related to writing, identifying courses which meet those objectives, and then, using the course report template, identifying specifically how writing scaffolding would be integrated into specific courses leading up to the capstone project.

Beginning with the end in mind, faculty were to break down the steps of that project and consider how they might integrate "scaffolding" assignments/projects into earlier classes, so that when students came to the capstone or major project, they would have developed the critical writing and thinking skills necessary to complete that project, with guidance, of course, from program faculty.

During the [August 2015 faculty retreat](#), the chair of the Language and Literature department, now Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation, built upon the ideas suggested in May. Assuming faculty had reviewed the relevant chapters in Bean, the Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation organized faculty by program, distributed program matrices, including the Curriculum Alignment Matrix, Program Objectives to Institutional Objectives Alignment Matrix, and Program Assessment Matrix to each program chair. The session included workshop time for programs to think about "high stakes writing" -- a major or capstone writing project, and how "low stakes writing" could be used as scaffolding assignments to help students think more critically about the discipline and about how they might be able to communicate more clearly in writing their arguments and findings regarding subjects in their discipline. Many chairs turned copies of their [worksheets](#) so that the Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation can follow up with the programs and how they are implementing their ideas during faculty professional development workshops planned for May 2016.

[Initial surveys](#) from the faculty retreat said that faculty found the critical writing workshop helpful and anecdotally, some faculty have reported their willingness and success during the fall semester in integrating some of the writing strategies discussed in August.

More certainly needs to be done to continue to improve the critical thinking and writing skills of Sterling College students, and assessment data in the coming years will indicate how successful we have been, but we have started the process, and that process was begun because assessment data indicated that we needed to improve.

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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 and certificate programs.

4.C.1

While the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan included a goal to increase [student selectivity](#), the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan includes a goal to [Grow Enrollment Strategically](#). Specifically, from the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, the College will work toward "stable or growing student enrollment," and "identify[ing] ideal students/profiles."

The College has set an overall fall to [fall retention](#) rate goal for 2015-2016 of 74%, with a 66% goal for fall to fall first time freshmen goal and a 90% senior retention goal.

4.C.2 and 4

Sterling College tracks retention, persistence, and graduate rates using the IPEDS system and through internal tracking systems. Because most of the students at Sterling College fit the definition of a traditional student, the IPEDS designations work well for the institution. The weakness of using IPEDS is that it provides a clear picture of the retention and graduation rates of only first-time, full-time college students. Also, the IPEDS graduation rate below is a 4-year graduation rate. Occasionally, Sterling College students will finish in 3-years. It is also not uncommon for students to graduate in their fifth-year, especially students seeking an education endorsement since the clinical teaching experience is often completed in the first semester of the fifth year, and students cannot graduate until they have completed all requirements for a degree.

Summary of IPEDS information for fall 2009 - fall 2014:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
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Graduation Rate Overall (first-time, full-time)	41%	41%	48%	34%	42%	39%
Full-Time Retention Rate	79%	68%	62%	55%	66%	63%

Internally, the College creates a report tracking the retention figures for [first-year students](#). The internal report looks at the retention figures from various angles: athletes and non-athletes; students on probation; in-state and out-of-state students; ACT scores; and high school GPA. This reports not only helps the College track these students but also helps the College make decisions for admission of students and predictions for persistence of particular groups of students.

Also internally, 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 spring for 2009-2010 through 2015-2016 for on campus students only (no dual credit, post-bacc, or on-line, except where noted).

Class	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
FF	84%	83%	86%	82%	85%	85%	86%
FR	83%	72%	83%	78%	84%	92%	81%
SO	89%	85%	93%	87%	91%	84%	89%
JR	95%	95%	94%	94%	96%	91%	93%
SR	93%	98%	90%	91%	85%	95%	96%
eSterling	89%	79%	77%	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Total	89%	85%	84%	88%	85%	91%	92%

Retention data for eSterling/Sterling College online was not tracked in 2012-13 and 2013-14, but beginning in fall 2014, Sterling College Online retention data will be tracked by the Coordinator of Online Student Services.

[Sterling College Online Retention Rates](#)

Class	2014-15	2015-16
FF	n/a	0%
FR	0%	100%

SO	50%	n/a
JR	54%	67%
SR	100%	88%
Post-Bacc	84%	60%
Total	85%	74%

A [five-year cohort study](#) on first-time freshmen was completed since 2000. The 2005-2009 cohort study was just compiled since each year's freshmen has six years to graduate. The study compares the 2000-2004 cohort with the [2005-2009 cohort](#). Comparing the 5-year cohort data, reveals which specific populations are not retaining or graduating. Based on [the analysis](#) of this data, the College hired an [Athletic Mentor](#) to serve in the Academic Support Center. The College saw an increase over this period in retention of out-of-state athletes as well as non-Caucasian athletes, areas on which efforts have focused. The College has involved coaches in holding students accountable for missing classes; implemented the [3-week alert program](#), and continued the mid-term grad check.

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.

Sterling College uses the information on student retention to help those students who may be at risk and to make improvements in processes as warranted by the data.

The college gives the [College Student Inventory](#) to new students during the first few days of orientation. The information from this inventory is used in the following ways:

- The names of those students designated as "High risk," first generation college, and dropout prone are sent to residence directors, coaches, and Foundations of Servant Leadership leaders.
- Foundations of Servant Leadership instructors go through the [results of the CSI](#) with each student in their foundation course, regardless of their projected risk for persistence.
- The [College Student Inventory Advisor](#) report for each student in the residence halls is given to the Resident Directors so they can become familiar with those who are high on the dropout prone list.
- The Career Services, Academic Support, and Counseling Services departments are sent a list of students who are receptive to their services based off of the CSI report.

The College also gives the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI) to graduates every 4-5 years to assess how satisfied students are compared to students at peer institutions. The SSI was last given in 2011, and will be given again in 2016 and then every third year after that. After receiving the results, an [action plan](#) is put into place to address the areas where our students are less satisfied, and the College seeks to address those issues within its control.

The Student Life Office is using the following survey schedule:

Survey	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
College Student Inventory (new students only)	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Student Life Survey (Dept review, RA/RD student evals) (all traditional students)	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall	Fall
Student Satisfaction Inventory (all traditional students)		Spring			Spring	
Alcohol and Drug Survey (all traditional students)		Fall		Fall		Fall
Campus Climate Survey		Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring

The National Survey of Student Engagement is being considered for future use.

The College also prepares an in-house "[Red Flag Report](#)." The report is prepared of all new students, separated by first-time freshmen and transfers, identifying for each student a list of at-risk criteria which historically have been issues where Sterling College students do not retain as high. Below is the at-risk criteria list:

- Admitted on probationary status
- International students
- Non-Caucasian
- Out-of-state
- Athlete
- Home-schooled
- HS GPA below 3.0
- ACT score 18 or lower
- Application Date – if students applied May - August of enrolled term
- Drop-out Proneness of above 80 (based off of College Student Inventory survey)
- 1st generation (neither parent ever attended a college)
- Additional criteria throughout semester:
 - 3-week academic alert
 - Below 2.0 mid-term grade
 - Chapel credit check – 2 times monitoring if students are keeping on track for receiving 14 chapels and 2 convocations.
 - Financial Aid or Business Holds on Students – connect with them to see how we can assist them in finalizing their financial plans
 - Semester room rush forms indicating thinking about transferring
 - Not enrolled for following semester

The new student is given a point for each criterion he or she has. Students who have four or more

points are considered at risk for retaining. Resident Directors, Advisors, Foundation Leaders, and Athletic Coaches are given the names of students on the list in their area. The sole intent is to help make faculty/staff aware of those who may need more assistance, so they can intentionally build relationships with those students early in the semester.

Two of the initiatives the College has implemented are an [attendance reporting system](#) and a [3-week academic alert system](#). The information gained from these two systems is used by the [Retention Committee](#) to create action plans for each student at risk. The Retention Committee members are the [Vice President for Student Life](#), [Athletic Director](#), [Director of Career Services and First Year Programs](#), [Athletic Mentor](#), and [Director of Academic Support Services](#).

Faculty also have the option to submit an [Early Alert](#) form at any point in the semester when they see that a student is struggling academically, socially, or emotionally.

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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:

Because of specialized accreditation needs within the Education programs and the Athletic Training program, most programs have gone through a program review at least once in the past six years.

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.

The College follows its processes and policies regarding internships, practica, and independent studies.

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 offered at Sterling High School 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 NCATE/CAEP) 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 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 College has implemented strong measures to increase retention and persistence, including the attendance reporting system, the 3-week academic alert system, the early alert system, and the hiring of an athletic mentor.

Opportunities:

While program reviews have not happened as regularly as were planned, the College has a plan in place to correct the lapse. All programs will have undergone a program review by 2019-2020 when

the Comprehensive Evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation is scheduled.

Sterling College needs to be more consistent in tracking and assessing the success of its graduates and using that information to improve student learning and program performance. The Education and Athletic Training programs can serve as a model for the College to follow on a larger scale. The College already surveys graduates before they leave campus regarding their plans, but surveying those alumni at 5 and again at 10 years out could help the College understand better how effective their programs of study are in helping their graduates succeed. Surveying 250-300 alumni and graduates each year would not be overly burdensome and could provide valuable data for the College.

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

Just as with assessment data, the College needs to better analyze and use the information it gathers regarding retention, persistence, and completion to improve academic programs and student services.

Core Components Needing Organizational Attention per 2009 Evaluation Team:

One area noted for concern in the 2009 visit was the College's practice of [program review](#). While the College did not put every academic program through the program review process as scheduled in 2009, most of the academic programs have gone through some kind of program review. As stated above, the College is aware that this is still an area which needs improvement, and has recommitted itself to ensuring that all programs go through rigorous program review by the conclusion of the 2019-2020 academic year.

The 2009 team also encouraged the College to increase the [percentage of faculty with doctorates](#). More details on this issue is explained in 3.C., but know that the College continues to value the terminal degree and has increased the percentage of faculty with doctorates and other terminal degrees as suggested by the 2009 visiting team.

When the 2009 visiting team was on campus, the assessment plan was relatively new, so the team made a [number of observations](#) about the course reports, end of course student surveys, and the guidelines for proposing curricular changes. Some elements of the plan, such as the composition of the course report, were still evolving. In 2012, the College submitted to HLC the "[Report of Student Learning Assessment at Sterling College](#)," which explained how well the College was implanting the 2009 plan along with improvements the College had made to the plan. 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.

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

5.A.1 & 5.A.2

With regard to its fiscal, human resources and physical and technological infrastructure, Sterling College has improved markedly since the 2009 accreditation process. With that said, the goal is to expand sustainability through careful planning and resource allocation as directed by the Board of Trustees and administration as opposed to mere stability. The college's greatest resource is our people, so recruiting, hiring, training and developing quality personnel, especially with regard to the learning processes, will continue to be a top priority. Sterling College delivers high quality programs for a fraction of the resources that other institutions require and will continue to steward resources thoughtfully and carefully.

Sterling College is a tuition-driven institution. As such, tuition is a significant part of the total operating budget. As seen from the table below, tuition as a percentage of the overall budget has ranged from 60% to nearly 66% (see [addendum to the audit](#) for detail). Along with tuition, financial aid represents a significant revenue stream for nearly 100 percent of the students on campus. Recent federal legislation has put student aid programs in question. If students lose this important benefit, it will impair their ability to complete their education. In light of this and other factors, small tuition increases are likely over the next several fiscal years in order to provide stable support to our students, staff and programs.

Fiscal Year	Gross Revenue from Tuition	Gross Institutional Budget	Percentage
2014-15	\$13,209,567	\$20,039,811	65.9166%
2013-14	\$12,410,122	\$19,702,141	62.9887%
2012-13	\$11,562,162	\$18,657,882	61.9693%
2011-12	\$11,621,173	\$19,275,452	60.2900%

The college continues to strengthen its [DOE financial ratio](#). The [2009 visiting team](#) rightly concluded that Sterling College's financial metrics needed to be strengthened. The team wrote, "The College has struggled for years in providing the financial resources needed to effectively serve its students and appropriately compensate faculty and staff" and cited that year's 0.6 financial ratio as evidence.

The financial ratio is a summative ratio is a compilation of the college's reserve ratio, equity ratio and net income ratio. As seen in the table below, Sterling's financial standing has gained stability over the past several years.

Fiscal Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
DOE Financial Ratio	0.6	1.3	1.4	0.6	1.4	1.6	1.8

Sterling College, is a member of the Kansas Independent College Association (KICA), an 18 member body of higher education institutions around the state of Kansas. In analyzing [KICA tuition data](#), Sterling had the third lowest tuition of all KICA member institutions. Last fall's 20th day report revealed that 50.7 percent of Sterling's student body is eligible for a PELL disbursement. Since the average family adjusted gross income (AGI) for Pell Grant recipients is 123% of the poverty line, Sterling's goal is to keep tuition increases to a minimum while also supporting and resourcing our mission.

In addition to tuition revenue, Sterling College relies on unrestricted gift income to supplement the overall budget. However, as the overall budget grows, the goal for these gifts has remained flat, not increasing over the past five fiscal years. By keeping the overall goal stable, the college lessens its dependence on this type of giving incrementally.

Adequately supporting instruction and learning is a fiscal priority as indicated by the fact that [71.65% of last year's budget](#), based on our audit is dedicated to this end. Over the past six years, an average of 51% of our full time faculty hold [terminal degrees](#) (current year is 58%). In order to hold

any teaching position, either full or part time, faculty members must hold a graduate degree from an accredited institution and meet HLC criteria for hours taken in the discipline they teach. These requirements are also true of adjunct faculty that provide teaching in dual credit classes for Sterling College students still attending high school.

Professional development, including pay incentives to earn terminal degrees, is encouraged through a program explained in the faculty handbook. In addition, faculty evaluation criterion exists to insure quality instruction is taking place throughout the campus. The Vice President for Academic Affairs both conducts and coordinates these evaluations with the Associate Dean of Faculty. At this time, Sterling College is developing a comprehensive evaluation plan for non-teaching staff. This need is being addressed at every level to achieve consistency in our professional community.

Extensive training takes place at many levels throughout the college to respond to changes in learning, student safety and to take advantage of future opportunities. For example, each member of the staff received a [training notice](#) and have completed [Title IX training](#) and a subsequent [assessment](#) that ensures that all staff know the expected requirements regarding discrimination at all levels. In addition, all members of the Emergency Preparedness Planning committee have received FEMA training on the [Incident Command System \(ICS\)](#) through the Department of Homeland Security. This training, supplemented by monthly meetings and scenario preparation are vital to the safety of our students and staff in the event of a major incident.

Physical and Technological Resources

Sterling College's physical plant is led by an experienced and dedicated director. The Director of Physical Plant reports to the Vice President for Administration & Institutional Initiatives. The Director leads a staff of 9 to manage the custodial, grounds and building maintenance projects throughout the campus in collaboration with the overall strategic plan.

In 2011, in partnership with the Kansas Independent College Association (KICA), Sterling College underwent a voluntary [EPA peer-audit](#). The intent of the audit was to identify areas of environmental non-compliance that could lead to a citation or Notice of Violation by the EPA or the KDHE. The peer audit took place in September of 2010 with the resulting report in May 2011. In that report, 206 individual violations were cited. Many of the violations were minor and compliance was achieved immediately. Many others required investment on the part of the college as Sterling allocated \$54,704.88 to achieve full compliance. Sterling has partnered with an environmental consulting firm to continue its commitment through planning and training.

An [academic space assessment](#) was completed in 2012 that analyzed the use of all classrooms and offices on campus 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 a recommendation to improve technology access to classrooms. Several of these recommendations have already been implemented.

This assessment led to discussions at the faculty, administration and board level that resulted in the recommendation of a [capital campaign](#) to promote strategic capital additions to the campus. The Board of Trustees, in May 2015 approved a \$25 million capital campaign plan with three primary objectives. First, to provide a new science and academic building that will enhance our already successful science programs and provide much needed classroom and office space for other disciplines. In addition, the campaign calls for an expansion of the Gleason Athletic Complex, home to the college's growing [Athletic Training program](#). This expansion will include classroom, office and training spaces that will set the stage for a future master's degree program in this discipline. Finally,

the campaign will include a significant investment in the endowment of the college, further strengthening the financial stability of the institution.

In sync with the space assessment and the capital campaign, the college is actively pursuing an active and ongoing [building intelligence program](#), designed to make the infrastructure of the 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 the campus. The installation of motion switches, window blinds, high efficiency lighting, water saving vanities and the replacement of inefficient boilers, along with other improvements, are projected to result in annual savings of over \$115,000, while also reducing deferred maintenance in these areas. In addition, a centralized building intelligence program has been implemented to provide control over energy conservation and management throughout the campus. In the first quarter of FY2016, Sterling has realized over \$25,000 in energy savings through this program.

All of these initiatives are working together to make Sterling College more “green”, more efficient and a better steward of the resources we possess.

Technology

Sterling College employs a Director of Innovation and Technology, a position that reports to the Vice President for Administration and Institutional Initiatives. The director oversees all aspects of information on campus and directs the planning, acquisition and implementation of business, educational and institutional hardware, software and storage purchases. In addition, the IT staff oversees network support, telephone support and manages [mySterling](#), an educational and informational portal for staff and students.

Since the last HLC visit, Sterling College has implemented several major technology initiatives that benefit our staff, faculty and students tremendously. The improvements that are listed below have all been accomplished with a zero dollar impact to the IT budget over the past four years in four major categories: Student Services, Educational Services, Infrastructure and Compliance.

To support these four initiatives, Sterling has incrementally built an infrastructure of technology. Since 2011, the following improvements have been made technologically:

- Increased bandwidth by 1000%.
- Increased public PCs by 45%.
- Reconfigured the campus network for increased stability and security.
- Upgraded the firewall to include antivirus, intrusion detection, antispyware and botnets filtering.
- Implemented central secure printing which allows faculty and student to print from their own devices to any copier on campus.
- Virtualized all campus servers to allow for redundant failover.
- Implemented [Office 365](#) for file storage, email, document and video collaboration.
- Provided Microsoft Office (at no cost) to all students giving them 1 TB of storage space per user.
- Consolidated multiple LMS systems into one centralized system for students and faculty – allowing one portal for access to courses and coursework.

Student Services

Sterling provides incredible value added service to our students. Our IT staff services over ten student

computers each week at no charge. We have centralized all printing services, allowing faculty and students to print directly from laptops without charge anywhere on campus. The IT staff negotiated a move to Office 365, providing a full copy of Office Professional Plus to each student at no cost. Students have full access to the LMS portal mySterling through their computers or through their devices by accessing Go.sterling.edu. This portal provides access to student services such as financial aid, degree audit capability, online testing, etc.

Educational Services

Another major IT process is serving the staff and faculty. Since May of 2015, the IT staff has processed 1,254 [help tickets](#) (or 13 per day). The college has a three year replacement plan on newly leased Microsoft Surface tablets for all faculty and selected staff. These tablets are supported educationally by the installation of twenty 60-inch flat panel televisions, replacing twenty projectors in highly utilized classrooms. All classrooms now utilize the Miracast technology for wireless presentation experiences.

Infrastructure

Currently, Sterling utilizes the [Jenzabar ERP](#) as its fundamental information system. The server environment was recently virtualized to One Drive to increase security, storage, failover capability and redundancy in real time. In addition, through a new vendor agreement, bandwidth on campus has been increased tenfold to meet business, academic and social demand. Finally, a new, internet-based, Lync phone system was recently installed campus wide, reducing the cost of phone service to the college.

Compliance

Compliance to federal and state regulations is a high priority for the college. The mining of this information is performed by the IT staff for several compliance issues. Recently, information from multiple data bases was pulled to create reports to verify attendance records with regard to work study and financial aid reports for a [Department of Education audit](#).

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 at Sterling 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”. These “soft skills” at Sterling are detailed in the [core values](#) that support our mission.

Statement about congruency of mission statements throughout campus

The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution’s organization, resources, and opportunities.

5.A.4

Sterling considers its employees as its most valuable resource. For the 2015-16 fiscal year, Sterling College employs 190 mission-committed people. Of that number 43 are full time instructors, while another 21 are part-time or adjunct faculty. A breakdown of employees by type of service is as

follows:

Description	Full Time	Part Time	Total Employees
Teaching Faculty	43	21	64
Academic Support Staff	20	5	25
Executive Administrative Staff	7	0	7
Directors/Coordinators	9	0	9
Mid-level support staff	14	4	18
Technical Staff	4	0	4
Clerical Support Staff	1	1	2
Maintenance Staff	9	1	10
Counseling/Health Staff	3	3	6
Coaching/Sports Staff	18	20	38
Totals	128	55	183

Each of the employees at Sterling College is qualified and trained to perform the requirements of their position. [Job descriptions](#) exist for each position on campus and each candidate is interviewed by the appropriate vice president and the president of the college prior to being hired. Employees are trained in [emergency preparedness planning](#) as well as issues relating to Title IX requirements. More extensive training of all staff members with regard EPA and [OSHA guidelines](#) are planned for the fall of 2016.

5.A.5

Resource Allocation Process

A plan for resource allocation is simply a plan for both spending and stewardship. Directing the college for the past five years has been a [strategic plan](#) that focused primarily on academics. This focus on the primary mission of the college was necessary to guide decisions that have made positive differences. A [new strategic plan](#) was developed this year, beginning with a meeting of our [National Advisory Council](#) in September 2015. This council recommended expanding the strategic plan to include areas that support the teaching and learning process. This plan is set to be approved by our Board of Trustees at their spring 2016 meeting later this month.

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. For the current fiscal year, all faculty and staff received a 3% pay raise. This was the largest raise received by the staff in seven years. While very modest, these recent raises indicate that the financial health of the college is improving. In addition, it underscores the commitment of our longtime staff who have selflessly served for the overall good of the institution.

Budgeting for a future fiscal years starts in October with [planning](#) and 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.

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.

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

Sterling College has worked hard to become a collaborative campus in policy and practice. 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.

Sterling College's policies and procedures flow from a variety of campus constituencies and inputs. This provides accountability to all stakeholders for competent, conscientious and effective accomplishment of the mission. Examples of these policies are found in the Board Policy Manual, Faculty Handbook, Student Life Handbook, Title IX requirements and other internal publications.

The college is organized with clear lines of reporting and authority through an [organizational structure](#) approved by the Board of Trustees. [Job descriptions](#) are available for every position on campus, outlining duties and expectations.

5.B.1

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" ([Board Policy Manual 3.1](#)). Fifteen of the eighteen trustees are alumni of the institution, giving this group a thorough knowledge of the college as well as a firm commitment to the mission.

The board meets twice annually and is organized into [standing committees](#) focused on academic affairs, board development, finance and investment, advancement and enrollment, student life and executive functions. [Board bylaws](#) changes require notification to Board members at least 10 days in advance of each board meeting. In order to foster clear, accurate and timely communication, the

president and the board chair meet one hour every other week.

The board receives reports from the president and each cabinet member, as well as [board reports](#) from any designee of the president. Each report is tied back to the board policy manual numerically and topically and with each action, evidence of compliance is provided. The president meets once per week with each direct report from the areas of academic affairs, administration, advancement, student life, athletics and enrollment. Each of these leaders meets with their direct staff reports regularly (often weekly) to determine needs and communicate information that relates directly to their duties.

In the week following each board meeting, a [meeting](#) is held to brief all employees on the discussions and decisions of the trustees on emerging issues that could affect employees and students. These updates provide a forum for questions to be posed that guide and direct governance and academic issues.

5.B.2 & 5.B.3

Faculty & Staff

All employees of the college undergo [new employee orientation](#) when beginning their tenure. During this training, policies and procedures that apply to all employees are communicated. Financial, academic, legal and regulatory policies and processes are explained through this required orientation.

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 (Faculty Council Constitution and Bylaws, Article II). In addition, the faculty handbook provides guidance and governance to contractual matters, [teaching responsibilities](#), [evaluation criteria](#) and many other items that guide effective academic processes.

The faculty is led by the [Vice President for Academic Affairs](#). The VPAA is responsible to orient, train, evaluate and provide significant professional development opportunities for the faculty. Monthly faculty meetings and other standing faculty meetings such as the Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Council and Faculty Welfare Committee ensure that policies are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

In preparation for the Higher Learning Commission's visit, accreditation committees for each of the five criterion were created. Each [criterion committee](#) was represented by a cross section of employees from across campus. Each member of the committee provided input with regard to the narrative and the evidence gathered for each core component. This process was led by the Associate Dean for Assessment and Accreditation who directed collaborative communication between the various academic disciplines, staff departments and organizations.

Students

Many [student organizations](#) exist to enrich and impact the lives of our students academically, socially, and spiritually to accomplish the overall mission of the college. Organizations such as the Campus Activities Board, MASC (Musicians at Sterling College), The English Blend and FSPA (Future Service Professionals Association) 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.

Students are represented by the [Student Government Association](#), an elected group that is headed by an executive committee and further strengthened by a student senate. The SGA offices in the student union and each of its cabinet members receive a stipend for their service. The student life handbook serves to provide expectations for academic integrity, social responsibility and community life on a residential campus. The Vice President for Student Life regularly meets with student groups to determine critical issues affecting the students and to give voice to their concerns.

Sterling College values the input of students and allows their input in decision making. One example of this is the recent proposal to include textbook rental in the cost of tuition and fees. This decision was made to resource our students, many of whom do not have the means to pay for their books outside of their financial aid package. Through a [student textbook survey](#), we learned that at least five percent of our students had zero textbooks and over half shared books with other students. Our academic support program confirmed the necessity of possessing books with regard to student success. Through board, faculty, student, staff and administrative inputs, the decision was made to include the cost of textbooks in tuition. We will continue to track data on retention, graduation rates, grade point averages and other metrics to determine if this initiative is having the desired effect.

Auxiliary & Informal Structures

Technologically, Sterling College has built an infrastructure for collaboration. One example of this is the implementation of [Microsoft Sharepoint](#), an online platform that allows collaboration in various functions that would traditionally be separate. Through Sharepoint, the Board of Trustees, staff and faculty have the ability to cross collaborate on documents simultaneously. While admittedly, this function is not yet being used to its fullest potential, the foundation for this type of teaming has been built.

Sterling College has developed strategic relationships with various constituencies. One example is the college's [National Advisory Council](#). The NAC meets [twice annually](#) and is made up of professionals from all walks of life and from many parts of the country. The council serves an advisory and strategic role to the president in helping guide the institution's financial and academic priorities.

The [Emergency Preparedness Planning](#) team meets regularly throughout the school year to review safety and security issues that could disrupt missional objectives of the college. Once again, this team has a varied cross section of members representing many constituencies across campus. The scope of this planning even throughout the Sterling community that includes public school officials and law enforcement. Decisions made by this team are communicated to faculty, staff and students.

[“The HUB”](#) is a weekly internal publication of all campus activities that is distributed to all staff members. Any staff member may submit to this publication that helps to keep all of the employees informed in a uniform fashion.

In addition to formal means of collaboration, the college works to build key relationships internally between colleagues to promote positive communication. Each school starts with a [“Kick Off Banquet”](#) where longtime employees are honored for their service and the entire staff enjoys a time of fellowship. The president also holds [“campus coffees”](#) and summer luncheons for faculty departments with the goal of building relationships intentionally and yet informally.

Communication with students is fostered through a weekly video production entitled, [“In the Know.”](#) This 2-3 minute segment in our chapel services serves to highlight key campus activities, programs and events.

Through both formal policies and informal practices, Sterling College seeks input from our internal constituents through a variety of effective structures.

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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

Sterling College engages in systematic and integrated planning.

5.C.1

Sterling College has invested significant time and resources to planning strategically for the future of the institution. The [current strategic plan](#) was developed in 2012 under the leadership of a former president. This plan focuses singularly on developing the academic program at Sterling College. In many aspects, this plan has been fulfilled, and has led to the ongoing development of a [new strategic plan](#) that will govern the activities of the college through the year 2020.

Practical resources have been applied to meeting some of the strategic 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 relaunched in 2012. While supporting top students is an important goal, the focus of the current administration is to resource all students who have chosen Sterling for its Christ-centered mission.

The fulfillment of the strategic plan meets the mandate of the [2009 visiting team](#) who encouraged Sterling College to commit "...time and resources to effectively and realistically reach any stated goal or through shared discussion with the appropriate personnel eliminate the goals from the plan. To build trust within the organization, the leadership needs to definitively state and prioritize goals and how they intend to reach them. Otherwise, there will be few who will count the strategic plan as a serious document worthy of attention" (p. 12). Sterling College has developed a culture where strategic planning leads to goals being accomplished in a timely manner and supported long term through budgetary allocation.

A key component of this plan will be to update it annually including critical success measures to determine when the initiative has been completed. In addition, the plan will be linked to budgetary constraints and integrated with any departmental strategic plans across campus.

5.C.2 & 5.C.3

Sterling College is preparing to successfully conclude its current strategic plan, which will transition out in June 2016. In May 2016, the Board of Trustees will approve the new plan that will guide the activities of the college through the year 2020. The current plan exists 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, many new interdisciplinary majors have been established and several successful educational technology initiatives have been implemented.

Since 2012, Sterling has had the vision to establish [master's degree programs](#). The internal planning has been completed with full approval by the Faculty Council and the Board of Trustees. If approved by the HLC on the [proposed timeline](#), Sterling College would offer its first master's courses beginning with the fall 2017 term. This would be a significant milestone in the history of the College.

In analyzing the current [strategic plan](#), the need to expand the scope of the plan outside of academics was recognized. While strengthening the academic profile will remain a primary goal, several other areas were addressed including the management of regulatory and compliance commitments.

In order to transition successfully from one strategic plan to another, the perspectives of various internal and external constituent groups including faculty members, administration, a national advisory council and the Board of Trustees have been sought. A valuable part of this process has been the [strategic planning luncheons](#) for faculty and staff members that took place between November 2015 and March 2016. These luncheons gave the staff 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.

In addition to staff input, technology and data gathering continue to become a vital and growing aspect of planning at Sterling. The college has added a [degree audit](#) component that allows the registrar and students to track progress toward graduation. Retention data is collected through a predictive analysis retention system that allows several offices (registrar, financial aid, student life and controller) to submit early alerts and provide support mechanisms for students even before they arrive on campus. For the fall of 2016, Sterling College will initiate an [academic planner](#) which allows the college to schedule courses up to six years out, providing valuable space assessment and course schedule data to both faculty and staff. This planner also allows students to enroll based on real time information.

5.C.4 & 5.C.5

Operating within its capacity is a commitment of the current administration and is reflected in the strengthened financial metrics of the college. The college has met the 2009 visiting team's challenge to "establish confidence" by rectifying "a seemingly [tenuous financial position](#)" (p. 15).

Confidence in strategic planning is built through the dual vision to both avoid harmful circumstances while also taking advantage of opportunities. The new strategic plan sees [managing compliance and regulations issues](#) as a key function. 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 threats to the financial health of Sterling College.

One example of this type of planning involves water rights for our campus. Sterling College sits atop a massive water aquifer (the Ogallala) that provides several states with water for agriculture. Currently, the state of Kansas is creating new regulations for the measurement and use of water throughout the state. Sterling is currently pursuing options to reduce our need for water through conservation efforts (such as planting Bermuda grasses on our athletic fields) while also acquiring

additional water rights that will serve the college's potential future needs as well.

In addition, the college is planning extensively to comply with the anticipated Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) changes relating to overtime and exempt employees. It is anticipated that the final ruling will take place in July 2016 and will be enforced in 2017. The president has formed an [FLSA committee](#) to plan and prepare for the significant changes that this ruling will bring.

Implementation of the new strategic plan also highlights the need to [support outstanding faculty and staff](#). A plan to resource and provide professional development, continuing education, mentoring and evaluation for all employees will be a significant part of achieving this objective. While future challenges cannot always be predicted, having excellent, mission-committed staff and faculty will allow the college to avoid, address and overcome the inevitable obstacles of higher education.

The data collected in preparation of the new strategic plan monitors changes both nationally and on our own campus. Demographically, Sterling College is much more diverse than the community it resides in. Rice County has a minority population of 5.9% while the college enjoys a much higher [minority enrollment](#) of 31 percent (Fall of 2015 data). The Kansas Independent College Association ([KICA](#)) member mean is 37.3% non-white, with the median being 33.4% non white. Effectively serving an ever-growing minority population academically, socially and spiritually will take planning that addresses these demographic shifts.

One of the major needs of the college with regard to strategic planning is to develop a comprehensive [technology plan](#) that addresses the entire student experience while also resourcing faculty and staff to serve the needs of the student experience. Currently, no such plan exists. A [technology committee](#) has been formed to develop this plan that will complement the overall strategic plan.

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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 works systematically to improve its performance.

5.D.1

Working from the premise of data driven decisions, Sterling College requires the collection of data to both inform and drive positive, mission-minded decisions. Sterling measures its effectiveness, in part, through its "[Dashboard Metrics](#)" which are a list of metrics which provide data for critical areas of performance. The following metrics are reported twice annually to the Board of Trustees.

- The [Department of Education Financial Ratio](#)
- The [College's 20th day discount](#) rate
- The "[Top 10 Lost To](#)" list
- Percentage of [Faculty with Terminal Degrees](#) (Consistent with Renee's document)
- Total [Annual Fund](#) revenue
- [Community Life Violations](#)
- [Employee Turnover Rate](#)
- [Total Gift Income](#)
- [Total Trustee giving](#)
- [Graduation Rate](#)
- [Degrees Awarded](#)
- Overall [Enrollment Data](#)
- [Spring to Fall Retention](#)
- [Federal College Scorecard Data](#)

This data provides "at a glance" performance in critical areas year over year and is reviewed twice annually by the Board of Trustees. When performance significantly drops in a particular area, that area is analyzed and resourced for improvement. For example, the turnover rate of our faculty was the highest its been in five years, which has caused the number of faculty with terminal degrees to drop to a four-year low. These indicators suggest that the college should continue to invest in our faculty in a variety of ways including ongoing education benefits, professional development and course resources. Conversely, when dashboard items improve, such as in the areas of financial ratio and retention rate, we also "drill down" to verify what actions are causing positive growth and continue to support strategic decisions that will keep these metrics at a high level.

The 2009 visiting team commended the college for "stabilizing [spring to fall retention rates](#) in the low 70 percents." This percentage has continued to rise and in budget planning meetings a rate of 86 percent was used to project income for the 2016-17 academic year.

5.D.2

Sterling College conducted an [academic space assessment](#) in 2012 that analyzed the use of all classrooms and offices on campus 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 a recommendation to improve technology access to classrooms. Several of the recommendations with regard to inefficiencies in building systems have already been implemented through the [building intelligence program](#), completed during the 2014-15 academic year.

Sterling has recently had a consultant visit the campus to assess the institution's readiness to implement an environmental management system. It was determined that a [chemical hygiene management plan](#) was needed as a first step toward this overall goal. Through the evaluation of this independent consultant, the college now has a plan for making the campus more environmentally friendly and safer for our employees and students.

Many of the [technology deficiencies](#) have also been addressed. One recent issue was the need for increased bandwidth throughout campus. Due to the exponential increase in bandwidth needs of students over the past several years, the college built the infrastructure that made consolidating vendors possible. This change provided an increase in bandwidth.

These examples are evidence that Sterling College learns from "best practice" outside of our campus as well as from our own operational experience. Applying these improvements will increase the sustainability of these programs and improve the effectiveness of the institution.

With regard to tracking institutional 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 leadership.
- 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 drive the required course content, faculty training and spiritual life programs that make up a Christ-centered, liberal arts education.

Sterling trains its faculty by implementing a three-tiered approach beginning with [new faculty orientation](#). This one day training for all new faculty mostly focuses on items such as teaching performance, expectations within the classroom, the role of academic affairs, etc. Plans for fall 2016 include a second day focused on teaching and learning.

Second, Sterling normally holds a two-day [faculty retreat](#) each fall (this year, however, it was one-day, due to the transition in the VPAA position). This retreat focuses engaging learning activities such as integrating writing, critical thinking and active learning into our classrooms (via John C. Bean's "Engaging Ideas" book). Activities to create a more focused vision and definition on the integration of faith and learning were also presented.

Beginning with the fall of 2016, the Faculty Welfare committee is constructing a [professional development proposal](#) that outlines a more strategic approach to train our faculty, in terms of teaching performance and tracking their skills and needs. This new structure will be led by a professional development committee under the leadership of the VPAA.

These plans come from a recognition that the college seeks always to strengthen its teaching practices and evaluate the specific areas of weakness that currently exist and put metrics in place that will allow the college to measure continuous improvement.

The [new strategic plan](#) that will be implemented in July 2016 outlines eight major areas of operation where data will be collected to discern the effectiveness of the college. The current strategic plan focused solely on strengthening the academic profile, which, while arguably the primary function of the institution, provided little direction to other areas critical to institutional success. Six strategic planning luncheons were held to garner critical input from faculty and staff members that will shape the future of the college. The 2016-2020 strategic plan focuses on the following strategic areas:

- [Strengthening the Academic Profile](#)
- [Fostering a Vibrant Spiritual Community](#)
- [Growing Enrollment Strategically](#)
- [Managing Regulatory & Compliance Issues](#)
- [Developing Sustainable Giving](#)
- [Supporting Outstanding Faculty & Staff](#)
- [Equipping Students for Excellence](#)
- [Improving Facilities, Technology & Infrastructure](#)

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

- 1300 20091207 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1300 20091207 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 3)
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- STULIFE_Community Life Violations_2015
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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

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

Strengths:

Sterling College's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission as evidenced by the improved DOE financial ratio, significant improvements in technological infrastructure and the launching of a \$25 million capital campaign.

Sterling College is, through careful planning and collaboration, striving to continually improve the teaching and learning processes as evidenced by its budgeting process and collaborative efforts in developing its new strategic plan.

Through the development of an overall strategic plan, endorsed by our Board of Trustees, Administration, faculty, and staff, Sterling has addressed its strengths and unmet challenges that are critical to achieving the overall mission.

Sterling is creating a plan for faculty development that includes a strong emphasis in the integration of faith and learning while also providing targeted resources for staff development as well.

Opportunities:

While many strides have been made with regard to technological infrastructure, an overall technology plan to drive decision making, resource allocation and student learning is in process but not completed.

Sterling must build upon the positive financial gains made over the past few years and through the capital campaign and other initiatives, address the facility needs that will enhance learning.

While these challenges exist, Sterling College has a strategic plan to address them in a prioritized manner and looks forward to a bright future for our employees, students and community.

Core Components Needing Organizational Attention per 2009 Evaluation Team:

The [2009 visiting team](#) rightly assessed that Sterling College had struggled for years to provide resources to effectively serve its students and adequately compensate faculty and staff. The improved DOE financial ratio, combined with an institution-wide 3 percent raise last year, are evidence that the college has met this challenge.

The [2009 visiting team](#) also encouraged the College, through collaboration and commitment of

resources, to build trust in the strategic plan. Sterling College has developed a culture where strategic planning leads to goals being accomplished and supported through budgetary allocation.

Sources

- 1300 20091207 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1300 20091207 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 10)
- 1300 20091207 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 15)