4.A - The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its programs.

Assurance Evidence
1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

The program review process at CSU was originally mandated by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and became institutionalized through University policy (Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual C.2.4.2.2.d) which requires periodic reviews to evaluate (1) departmental operations and (2) academic programs. Board policy requires program reviews at a minimum of every seven years. Because our initial process was a result of these mandates, it was perceived for many years as a compliance task. Further exacerbating this perception, departments went through the process with little or no feedback from either upper administration of the University or the CCHE, and few initiatives proposed by the departments for improvement were granted additional resources for implementation. Consequently, the process was seen as an unproductive, time-consuming exercise. Over the past eight years, the culture of the institution and the departments’ approach to program review has evolved to become more positive as the process has become more improvement-oriented. The review now emphasizes the values and aspirations of the departments for the coming five to seven years.

Oversight for department and program evaluations is the responsibility of the Office of Provost/EVP, managed through the Office of Assessment. The Office of Institutional Research supports the process by providing most of the performance data used in the analyses. Each department appoints three or more faculty members to its Department Review Committee and each department is reviewed by its own unique University Review Committee that includes three or more faculty members external to the reviewed department's college plus administrative leadership from areas such as the offices of the Provost Office, Vice President for Research, Engagement, and the Graduate School. Program Review Guidelines describe the process in detail. The process has tended to focus largely on the evaluation of departmental operations, and to a lesser extent, on evaluation of the quality of academic degree programs. As subsequently discussed, we expect the process to continue improving to become more evaluative of both operations and academic degrees' program quality.

The Plan for Researching Improvement and Supporting Mission (PRISM) is an institutionally-developed, interactive website for use in both program reviews and annual learning assessment activities. On this website, access is provided to the Program Review Guidelines, the Program Review Schedule, and program review self-studies organized by department. Each review section includes complete templates to guide the process and accept input of the data, narrative, and reviewer comments. The interactive nature of the process has been strengthened because reviews are produced electronically and reviewers may provide analysis and pose questions online for program responses. This balanced interaction between the department members and the reviewers allows everyone involved to focus on strategizing the implementation of improvements and fulfillment of goals.

Within PRISM, the specific format of the program review has evolved. Based on feedback from a series of focus group discussions with department heads and faculty members in Spring 2010, the review format was redesigned to resemble the structure of a grant proposal, whereby the department must initially evaluate its capacity to perform in future years followed by a discovery section that contains six years of performance data, narrative descriptions and evaluative findings, and ends with an executive summary. Beyond the format changes, the emphasis in department reviews has also evolved from a preoccupation with institutional inputs to more emphasis on evaluative processes and planning to revise goals and facilitate program improvement. The emphasis on a formative evaluative process rather than summative (or punitive) outcomes has engendered stronger engagement by the departments and their faculty members. A program review example from the Department of Art is provided to demonstrate the completed program review product.

The review process is designed to integrate assessment of student learning, research, outreach, diversity, and resource management accomplishments in relation to department goals. In some cases, the internal review process is supplemented by external peer review or special

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accreditation review. These reports are considered supplemental materials to the internal program review, but do not substitute for it because they often do not comprehensively consider all components of the department's mission. Data for the program review process are compiled from a variety of sources. The Office of Institutional Research provides data related to student enrollments, and human and financial resources for upload into PRISM. Departments may import student course survey findings and other data as desired. The Office of Assessment uploads Academic Analytics data to assist in evaluating PhD program research performance in comparison to peer programs. PRISM also has the capacity to map each program action goal for alignment with the institutional Strategic Plan. For organizational learning, campus users can drill down in any of the reports to view individual department strategies being used to accomplish University goals and best practices as highlighted on the PRISM website. The process guidelines encourage the comparative reporting of outcomes data for distance education programs and programs delivered at off-campus locations to ensure similar quality regardless of location. Guidelines also encourage use of post-graduation placement data for students at all degree levels as evidence of program quality and student success.

The FY12 annual summary report of program reviews submitted to the Board shows: (1) departments achieved nearly 90 percent of their goals, (2) department planning predominantly supported teaching and learning over other strategic areas, (3) reporting was beginning to show levels of Strategic Plan implementation, and (4) the website has evolved sufficiently to provide campus-wide access to the department strategies being used to achieve Strategic Plan goals.

Additionally, the Provost/EVP developed a Program Review Award that clearly began to link program assessment and performance with budget allocation. In FY12, the Provost allocated $100,000 in one-time funds among five of 14 participating departments.

As evidence of assurance of program quality and program evaluation impact, the following examples are provided (also, see MBA assessment in Component 3.A.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor Of Social Work (BSW) Program Learning Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>The BSW program has developed the following specific learning goals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Graduating seniors will demonstrate entry-level mastery of the ability to function within agency structures and policies through: (1) an understanding of organizational development; (2) possessing skills for influencing organizational policies; and (3) skills in seeking organizational change through supervision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Graduating seniors will demonstrate entry-level knowledge and mastery of the ability to establish a helping relationship through: (1) knowledge of bio-psycho-social development; (2) possessing skills in the professional use of self; (3) skills in applying bio-psycho-social theories; (4) possessing communication skills; and (5) ability to relate to clients in a non-judgmental manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Graduating seniors will demonstrate entry-level mastery of the ability to adhere to the social work code of ethics through: (1) respecting dignity of clients; (2) maintaining client confidentiality; (3) establishing professional boundaries; and (4) respecting client self-determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Graduates will demonstrate entry-level mastery of the ability to apply culturally competent interventions to specific client situations through: (1) knowledge of theory about clients of diversity; (2) knowledge of the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination; (3) using communication skills based on needs related to diversity and different abilities; and (4) respecting cultural and social diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achievement of these learning goals was assessed using the following tools: (a) senior exit surveys administered in the capstone seminar, (b) evaluations of student interns by intern supervisors, (c) employer surveys, and (d) alumni surveys. Each assessment tool collected data for all of the goals and sub-goals. The majority of findings demonstrated achievement of the program’s learning goals. Generally, the student feedback was more positive while the alumni were more critical in some targeted areas. Alumni ratings for knowledge of theories of organizational development, and for their ability to influence organizational policies were lower than student ratings. Alumni ratings of (a) applying culturally competent interventions, (b) knowledge about client diversity theories, and (c) knowledge regarding the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination were below the program’s established benchmarks. Employers reported a decrease in graduates’ ability to use theoretical frameworks and in graduates’ engagement in agency advocacy.

In response to these findings, the program is seeking to improve its courses on theory and direct social work practice through revision to address areas of concern. Several course improvements have been approved by the curriculum committee. In addition, the curriculum is being revised to accommodate the core competencies and practice behaviors of the Council on Social Work Education’s new Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.
In the following examples, improvement as well as assurance of the quality of programs has been evaluated and validated by special accreditation review:

**BS In Construction Management Improvements**

In 2009, the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE) recognized the following program improvements that the BS in Construction Management program implemented to mitigate the listing of weaknesses discovered by the 2002 ACCE site-visit team:

- Physics 110/111 was changed from a set of descriptive courses to analytically based courses.
- To reduce a faculty ratio that was too high, the program arranged to have its enrollment capped at 800 students and hired three more tenure-track faculty with three more tenure-track faculty slots approved.
- Making up for the absence of an academic plan, the department developed its own mission statement and academic goals.
- Responding to the team discovery of an incomplete outcomes assessment program, the department “greatly improved” its assessment program. Full identification of academic program objectives still needed to be completed, however.

**BS In Environmental Health Science Improvements**

In 2010, the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC) recognized the following program improvements that the BS in Environmental Health Science program implemented to comply with the listing of recommendations made by the 2003 EHAC site-visit team:

- The program installed a “tenure-track” faculty person as program administrator as required by accreditation criteria.
- Faculty syllabi now universally include learning objectives, and more of these favor higher order critical thinking skills.
- To reverse inconsistent documentation of internship experiences, the program developed and implemented a “thorough evaluation tool” for oversight evaluation of such experiences.
- Acting upon EHAC recommendations, the program instituted closer relations with the Colorado Environmental Health Association (CEHA) and funded student engagement with CEHA conferences, e.g., presenting and networking. A National Environmental Health Association staff person delivers annual talks to the program’s students.
- The program significantly expanded its formal recruiting strategies to include a new Website, which included integration with the Center for Advisement and Student Achievement, and developed a liaison model with the Career Center.
- The program expanded its lab/field methods. It placed its field methods course before the lecture courses to attract more students to the major. More faculty members now link their classrooms to demonstrations and field trips, and some faculty members have added field methods into their courses, e.g., air and water pollution.

As further evidence that programs are evaluated and action is taken, the following programs were discontinued in the three-year period from Fall 2009 through Spring 2012:

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To continue improving the departmental operations and academic program evaluations, the following initiatives are being considered:

- "Program review" terminology should be replaced with a descriptor that suggests evaluation and assurance of quality.
- Reduce the emphasis on reviewing departmental inputs and outputs data unless the department is identified as an outlier from the norm, and increase the focus on more strategic evaluative analyses that can lead to improvement.
- Focus more on alignment of departmental goals and initiatives with the institutional mission rather than the Strategic Plan, thus providing more flexibility for unit initiatives to be specific to address improvement within the unit.
- Modify processes to yield strategically informative outcomes that can readily be integrated into the deliberations of the SPARCs and the university budgeting process.
- Consider changes in the academic program review process so that it parallels Phase II of the new program approval process (described in Component 3.A).
- Establish a clearly demarcated section of the review report that assesses and ensures the quality of each academic program in comparison to measurable learning goals.
- Ensure compatibility and interconnectivity between the program review process, the HLC assurances that will be required after this re-accreditation visit, and the institutional strategic planning and resource allocation processes.

2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer. (Combined response to #2 and #3).

CSU has extensive policies and procedures for the evaluation of transfer credit and other forms of prior learning that are disclosed in the General Catalog (1.3), the Graduate and Professional Bulletin (E.1.6), and online. Most regular academic courses from regionally accredited institutions of higher education are generally accepted in transfer. To aid prospective students in determining transfer course equivalencies, the Registrar provides access to u.select. u.select enables prospective students to obtain consistent and accurate information about how courses will transfer from another institution to CSU and how those courses will apply to meet academic program requirements at CSU.

Documentation of prior learning for credit is accepted through The College Board Advanced Placement Program, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate examinations. Policies and procedures also provide minimum standards for students to obtain credit from international transfer, Service Schools and Courses of the Armed Services, and some non-collegiate institutions. The Registrar’s Office also has policies for awarding Prior Service credit in the Military Science Minor, and for a Fire and Emergency Services Administration (FESA) program challenge exam for portfolio review for credit.
Students are encouraged to participate in accredited study abroad programs. Credit is granted for courses taken in programs approved in advance by the University, subject to certain conditions.

Credit may be transferred to a graduate program at CSU with the approval of adviser, committee, and Graduate School. There is no right to transfer credits; each case is assessed individually and accepted or rejected on its merits. The number of credits that may be transferred is limited. Additional details are provided in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin.

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.

In most aspects of program quality, the University has policies and procedures that guide academic units and may require initial review and approval, but ultimate compliance and oversight is generally delegated to the academic unit responsible for the degree program. The following examples illustrate:

- Prerequisites for courses: Prerequisites are established through the regular course proposal and review process through the University Curriculum Committee concluding with Faculty Council approval. Through the student information system, the Registrar enforces prerequisite requirements at the time of registration for courses. However, final responsibility for enforcing prerequisites is delegated to the academic departments through authority to waive prerequisites for students deemed to be otherwise adequately prepared for the course.
- Rigor of courses: The rigor of courses is evaluated through the regular course proposal and review process through the University Curriculum Committee concluding with Faculty Council approval. Oversight and maintenance of the rigor of approved courses is delegated to the academic units as they are responsible to assign qualified instructors to teach, review student course surveys, and assess learning outcomes.
- Expectations for student learning: As described in Component 4.B.1, goals for student learning are established for all programs, and the processes for assuring fulfillment of these goals are described there.
- Access to learning resources: The identification of learning resources, such as textbooks, handouts, reserve library materials, laboratory guides, etc. is deferred to the course instructor after initial approval of the course. The instructor and department are responsible for communicating such requirements to the Libraries, bookstore, and other units as appropriate.
- Faculty qualifications: The assessment of instructor qualifications and assignment to teach courses is the responsibility of the academic department (described in more detail in Component 3.C).

In Colorado, dual credit courses that meet both high school and college requirements simultaneously are commonly known as concurrent enrollment courses and are regulated by the state. CSU complies fully with all state policies and procedures for maintaining minimum standards for these courses. At present, CSU does not offer any special sections of concurrent enrollment courses on high school campuses or exclusively to high school students. All courses currently approved for concurrent enrollment are courses regularly offered to university students and taught by university instructors. Therefore, learning outcomes and levels of achievement expected from concurrent enrollment students are equivalent to those for other university students.

One minor exception to prerequisite enforcement is allowed for courses taken through the Division of Continuing Education. Before distance students are fully matriculated as degree-seeking candidates, they are allowed to explore the distance-education option by enrolling online for a course. This self-selection process bypasses the usual transcript evaluation for prerequisite requirements.

5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
Specialized accreditation is maintained by 34 programs through 18 accrediting agencies as listed in Federal Compliance section 4.0 (i). Specialized accreditation is also known as programmatic or career-related accreditation. These specialized accreditations serve as important indicators of quality to the public, employers, students, and other institutions of higher education. Specialized accreditation standards are frequently linked to the requirements for professional licensing of individuals by state or professional regulatory agencies, and candidates for professional licensing are frequently required to show evidence of graduation from a program with specialized accreditation. Through the process of self-study and external peer review for specialized accreditation, emphasis is placed on the quality of student learning experiences within the discipline, assessment of learning, and continuous improvement of academic programs (see examples above in section 1 of this Component). As a result, the process ensures that programs are incorporating or aspiring to best practices. Specialized accreditation reviews also supplement internal program reviews (Component 4.A.1) to inform program improvement and resource allocation.

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).

Five major sources of data are collected from multiple perspectives and utilized to better understand the learning accomplished by students and their successes as graduates.

Graduation Survey: Each year, all graduating students are asked to respond to a Graduation Survey that asks about employment and educational plans after graduation. The survey includes questions about future employment (including military or special program participation) as well as future educational plans. The Career Center and the Office of Institutional Research, in collaboration with the academic programs, have redesigned the survey and its analysis to ensure robust cross-tabulation with other significant data points in the CSU data warehouse. The final form of the survey is approved by the President’s Cabinet. Beginning in Spring 2012, the survey was incorporated into the Graduation Ready process. Individuals who indicate that they do not have employment or educational plans are surveyed again six months later. Combining the two survey administrations, the response rate is consistently above 50% and recently has been as high as 61%. The raw data are tabulated (as illustrated in the exhibit template) and sent to the Deans (or designated associate deans) for additional analysis as needed for internal and external usage. A summary report of Graduation Outcomes is prepared for public presentation on the Career Center website and is used as part of on-campus discussions with many stakeholders. These survey results are used to inform evaluations and improvement initiatives for curricular and co-curricular programs.

Additionally, some programs survey their graduates separately to better understand their level of preparedness for future employment and/or graduate education. As an example, see the College of Business Career Management Center.

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC): Each year a file is submitted to the NSC to be matched for subsequent enrollment to ascertain where our undergraduates enroll for further education after graduating from CSU. The NSC Student Tracker process searches for those students in the enrollment data of more than 2,500 other participating institutions. This level of participation allows us to access about 85% of the nation’s enrollment. This data was used to construct the chart in Component 4.C.

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE): In 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the CDLE by which CSU receives data files, upon request, that contain the quarterly wages for anyone employed in Colorado. We then match that file against our graduation file to better understand the wages of our graduates who find employment in the state. Not only does this help us to see how average incomes increase as a function of time since graduation, it also helps us to understand the economic contribution our graduates make to Colorado immediately after graduation and for many years thereafter. The MOU is the first of its kind between CDLE and any university in the state and it is modeled after one between CDLE and the Colorado Community College System (CCS). In 2012, the Colorado State University
Department of Higher Education (CDHE) announced a pilot project, funded by the Lumina Foundation through College Measures, to implement a similar MOU for all of the public postsecondary institutions. CSU Institutional Research staff will provide input regarding that process. The 2012 report provided the following information about earning experiences of graduates.

This analysis displays median annual salaries at various points after graduation to reflect the belief that higher education is an investment that pays dividends over the lifetime of our graduates (for them and for the state of Colorado). The CDLE data allow us to demonstrate several outcomes that are important to the public. About one-third of CSU graduates are employed long-term in Colorado after graduation. They contribute to the state’s intellectual capital, and to the state’s economy (spending, taxes, etc.). Although the analysis hasn’t been done, it is possible to use these data to estimate the state’s return on investment (ROI) for supporting public higher education.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): Every three years the NSSE is administered to all seniors. The survey asks many questions to provide insight into student satisfaction and engagement but also asks to what extent their experience at CSU has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas:

- Acquiring a broad general education.
- Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills.
- Writing clearly and effectively.
- Speaking clearly and effectively.
- Thinking critically and analytically.
- Analyzing quantitative problems.
- Using computing and information technology.
- Working effectively with others.
- Voting in local, state, or national elections.
- Learning effectively on your own.

NSSE results are analyzed at a variety of levels internally and are also used to compare CSU to other institutions as described in detail in Component 4.B.2.

Licensure and professional examination success: CSU prepares an annual report and analyzes the student outcomes on licensure and professional examinations which becomes a public disclosure through Board minutes and subsequent submission to CDHE. Student performance on these examinations provides evidence that assures the educational quality of the programs. The results are also used to inform improvement initiatives for the related programs of study.
In sum, the combination of data from each of these sources allows us to evaluate more fully the success of our graduates at the program and institutional levels. The outcomes are also used to inform curricular and co-curricular program improvement.

Sources

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4. Academic Program Review, Board Policy 803
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7. College of Business Career Management Center
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12. Graduation Survey Data
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16. PRISM
17. PRISM Tabulation of Department Goals with University Strategic Plan
18. Program Review Award Department Initiative Criteria
19. Program Review Guidelines
20. Program Review Schedule
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23. Student Course Survey Report Excerpt
24. Transfer Course Equivalencies
25. Transfer Evaluation