



MERCYHURST

UNIVERSITY

MSCHE

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Final Report

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

Criteria

An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

1. Commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights;

Standard: II-1

Potential Evidence: Faculty Handbook, Undergraduate & Graduate Catalogs, Syllabus Repository, Employee Handbook, REACH curriculum, Affirmation of the Mercyhurst Mission and Guidelines, Rev. 10-25-18.

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst demonstrates a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights through the various policies, practices, and procedures that faculty, employees, and students can access and follow. The Faculty and Employee Handbooks each contain policies that protect and instruct members on those commitments, and the Faculty Handbook and student catalogs contain information that encourages scholarly inquiry among faculty and students while maintaining a respect for intellectual property rights.

According to the American Federation of Teachers, “Academic freedom is the right of faculty members, acting both as individuals and as a collective, to determine without outside interference: (1) the college curriculum; (2) course content; (3) teaching; (4) student evaluation; and (5) the conduct of scholarly inquiry.” Using this schematic definition, the following provides substantial evidence of the existence of academic freedom at the university.

Faculty contribute regularly, freely, and significantly to the formation and reformation of the university’s liberal arts core curriculum and to the curriculum of its various departments and programs and their

respective majors and minors. For example, the university revised its liberal arts core curriculum in 2010-2012 and again in 2017-2018. The 2010-2012 core revision was guided by parameters set by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate's Academic Planning and Assessment Committee, and the revision was carried out by an all-faculty Core Revision Committee. The 2017-2018 core revision was initiated and guided by the Provost's Office, which set the parameters for the revision, and the revision was carried out by the faculty-led Liberal Arts Core Revision Committee, which resulted in the current REACH Curriculum. The REACH Curriculum was subsequently approved by the Faculty Senate and recommended to the President and the Board of Trustees.

According to the Faculty Handbook, faculty have ownership and oversight of their department's curricular requirements (subject to accreditation standards and/or requirements), the creation of new courses, the revision of existing courses, the scheduling of courses, the subject content of courses (again, subject to accreditation standards and/or requirements), and the assessment of those courses and students enrolled in them. Regarding program assessment, although the policies and procedures are set by the Office of Institution Effectiveness, the assessment process is carried out by departmental faculty members. It is the job of faculty to make sure there is congruence between the university's mission/core values, the department's/program's core values and objectives, and its curriculum and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, student learning outcomes, and especially their respective importance, are set by the faculty, as are expected levels of student achievement and the measurement and assessment of that achievement. Finally, faculty are responsible for the formulation and application of a department's/program's action plan, which guides the program development. In sum, the university's curriculum is squarely in the hands of its faculty.

Faculty are encouraged and guided by the Faculty Handbook to take ownership and responsibility for the development and maintenance of their teaching effectiveness and are significantly involved in the assessment of teaching excellence. The Faculty Handbook lays out the roles and responsibilities of faculty for teaching and faculty are entrusted with and free to make independent decisions regarding the content and methodologies used in their teaching. Evidence of this can be found in the diversity of courses and course content found in the Syllabus Repository. Faculty are free to determine and employ the teaching philosophies and methodologies they think are best suited to carry out their professional responsibilities in the classroom. Evidence of this can be found across the entire range of the professional life of faculty, from job descriptions and hiring decisions to the Faculty Handbook, the faculty evaluation process, the rank and tenure process, the program assessment process, and the assessment of teaching and student learning outcomes by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Regarding faculty evaluation of student learning, the Faculty Handbook's section on faculty roles and responsibilities articulates the range of duties for which faculty are responsible, including faculty taking leadership in the educational mission of the university, ensuring instructional competency, the creation of course syllabi, class meetings and content, course examinations, grade reports, student attendance, accommodation of student needs, and the participation in academic program assessment and assessment of the REACH curriculum.

Regarding student evaluation of faculty teaching, the Faculty Senate formed the Teaching Evaluation Committee (2016-2018) to study the evaluation process of faculty teaching and to make

recommendations for revisions to the process and the tools used. This was a faculty-led initiative and it led to the switch from the usage of the Educational Testing Service's SIR-II instrument to the usage of the IDEA-SRI instrument, produced by Campus Labs. Along the way, the committee experimented with creating its own instrument but chose instead to use the IDEA-SRI. After a pilot study in the Spring of 2018, Mercyhurst University began using IDEA evaluations in the Fall of 2018 and its administration is shared responsibility of both the Institutional Effectiveness Office and individual faculty members. The IDEA surveys are emailed to every student in nearly every course taught at the University. Faculty have access to the results of the student surveys after final grades are posted. Faculty can view detailed results of the student surveys that include summative, formative, qualitative, and quantitative data. The IDEA system offers specific help for faculty in areas that need improvement based on the students' responses. Additionally, the Faculty Senate created a faculty-led IDEA Oversight Committee to study, monitor, and advise the usage of the IDEA evaluations by faculty, academic supervisors (deans, associate deans, and chairpersons), the Rank and Tenure Committee, and the Provost's Office as well as to work with the Faculty Development Committee and the faculty-led Center for Teaching Excellence to provide workshops and training in the usage of the IDEA instrument. Finally, in like fashion, the Faculty Senate Teaching Evaluation Committee revised the classroom observation forms used by academic supervisors to evaluate and provide formative and summative feedback to faculty, which contributes significantly to the rank, tenure, and promotion process. Overall, faculty evaluation and development is profoundly in the hands of the faculty, which confirms that academic freedom is alive and well at the university.

Lastly, faculty are encouraged and guided by the Faculty Handbook's section on Faculty Roles and Responsibilities to engage in scholarship and professionalism and to provide evidence of such activity for the purposes of rank, tenure, and promotion. Each year, scholarly inquiry is celebrated at the end of the academic year through the Celebration of Scholars (faculty scholarship) and the Illumination (student scholarship) publications and events. Additionally, when engaging in scholarship that involves human subjects, faculty and student scholars must complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and submit it to the IRB committee for review in order to work with human subjects. This IRB committee is populated each year by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate and confirmed by the Faculty Senate. Mercyhurst University's IRB committee is committed to the protection of human subjects anytime research includes such participation. These examples demonstrate that Mercyhurst is committed to the academic and intellectual freedom of its faculty members and students.

Regarding freedom of expression, the university balances the complimentary interests of a liberal arts education with the mission and core values of the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Church. Importantly, as a university with a Catholic identity through the Sisters of Mercy, is in an essential relationship with the Catholic Church. Although not a diocesan university, the Vatican document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* calls all Catholic colleges and universities to be in relationship with the local bishop, especially as it relates to academic freedom and the pursuit of truth in academic inquiry and expression. Each year, faculty are presented with an Affirmation of the Mercyhurst Mission, which outlines and guides faculty as they assess their course content, consider bringing speakers to campus, and bestow honors or awards on behalf of the university.

Finally, Mercyhurst promotes respect for intellectual property rights through policies in the Employee, Faculty, and Student Handbooks. If issues involving intellectual property arise, they would be handled by

the offices and personnel that oversee the area from which they emerged and they would, if necessary, make their way to the Provost and/or General Counsel.

Summary of compliance:

Mercyhurst University complies with and demonstrates a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights through the various policies, practices, and procedures that faculty, employees, and students can access and follow. This workgroup found that with respect to freedom of expression, it is recognized that the religious identity of a private institution can have particular impacts on academic subjects of interest to faculty and students. The university recognizes that “sexual and bioethical matters” are of special concern to the Catholic Church. It is therefore important that the university continues to defend academic freedom of its faculty and attend to its Catholic identity, conscious of the principled tension involved in these matters, without denying opportunities for faculty and students to freely express themselves academically.

2. A climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.

Standard: II-2

Potential evidence: Employee Handbook 2019, 2019-2020 Faculty Handbook, 2019-2020 Student Handbook, 2019 Graduate Catalog, Student Athlete Handbook, Human Resources Employment Opportunities external website, Multicultural Student Services HUB site, Evelyn Lincoln Institute for Ethics & Society website, Evelyn Lincoln Institute for Ethics & Society 2017-18 Summary Report, LGBTQIA Allies HUB site, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Initiative 2020

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst University provides a wide variety of inclusive policies, practices, and programs that foster respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.

The Mercyhurst handbooks and catalogs for students, student athletes, graduate students, employees, and faculty each contain non-discrimination policies, and that policy is echoed on the main Mercyhurst external website under Policies & Compliance. In addition, the Human Resources department includes a non-discrimination policy on every employment position posted to both the internal and external website. These policies seek to ensure that students, employees, and faculty from diverse backgrounds feel welcome to apply to study and work at Mercyhurst University.

There are numerous departments and offices that offer programming about diversity. The Multicultural Student Services (MSS) office is housed within the Campus Involvement Center, and the goal of the office is to assist with the educational, cultural, social, and personal needs of all students, with special emphasis on ethnicity, gender, and minority issues. Examples of regular programs offered through MSS include Leadership and Diversity Workshops, Hispanic/Native American Heritage Month Celebrations, Black/Women’s History Month, Unity Week, Cultural Awareness celebrations, and even a Multicultural

Graduation Ceremony. Many of these events are open to the entire campus community. Through these programs, faculty, staff, and students are engaged in events that reflect the diversity of campus.

The Evelyn Lincoln Institute for Ethics & Society (ELIES) works to raise awareness of ethical issues that confront people in their social and professional lives. Established in 2008, ELIES annually runs a distinguished speaker series open to the public, which typically has over 100-200 attendees, and a series of roundtable discussions for small groups of 5-10 students. Recent examples include a spring 2020 lecture by Danielle McGuire entitled "Rey Taylor, Rosa Parks, and the Radical Roots of #MeToo;" a 2019 panel discussion hosted by three World Languages faculty members called "The Berlin Wall: 30 Years Later;" and a 2018 Student Symposium titled "What are the moral implications for failing to respond to environmental problems?" Through these lectures and discussions, the Mercyhurst community is made aware of current social issues and a variety of ethical perspectives that align with the mission and core values of the university.

Mercyhurst's Campus Ministry (CM), housed under the Mission Integration office, creates a hospitable environment and venue for the spiritual development of the entire university community. Grounded in the Catholic tradition and Mercy heritage, CM supports all faith traditions and provides several faith-specific and non-faith-specific programs for faculty, employees, and students. Initiatives that originated out of CM and the Mission Integration office include the Mercy Emissary program tracks for students and faculty/staff, LGBTQ+ Allies training for faculty/staff/administration, and the Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Initiative of 2020. The Mercy Emissary program fosters an understanding of the Sisters of Mercy and Catholic/Mercy tradition at Mercyhurst and has trained about 150 faculty/staff/administrators and over 40 students as of fall 2020. The LGBTQ+ Allies training is offered each year during the Employee Professional Development Day. The training is provided to individuals called "Allies" who are recognized on campus as being available to members of the LGBTQ+ community for support and assistance, particularly in the face of prejudice, hatred, or bullying of any kind, and at present has 60 faculty, staff, and administrator "Allies." Finally, the Equity, Justice, and Inclusion (EJI) Initiative was established during the summer of 2020 to improve the university's policies and practices and help Mercyhurst become a more anti-racist campus. Most recently, the officer of EJI has been advocating for a common language to be adopted around anti-racism by providing weekly inserts into the all-employee bulletin.

Summary of compliance:

As evidenced by the many inclusive programs, practices, and policies that are provided to students, faculty, staff, and administrators, Mercyhurst University is committed to fostering a climate of respect among its diverse constituents. Data on whether this has an impact on current faculty, staff, administrators, or students is not readily available. For example, there are no formal feedback processes for the Ethics Institute's programming beyond counting the number of attendees and unsolicited appreciation after the fact. Data is not collected on whether any of the campus community members have approached the LGBTQ+ Allies or made use of the resources on the HUB site. The Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Initiative is in its inaugural year, which means solid assessment data is unlikely before 2022. Finally, there is no formal data collection for the Multicultural Student Services programming, so it is unknown how many students or employees attend those events each year or to what effect. However, despite the lack of data, the attendance rates at the Ethics Institute's programming, the

increasing number of LGBTQ+ Allies trained each year, the existence of the Equality, Justice, and Inclusion Initiative, and the annual traditions of the Multicultural Student Service programs speak to the importance and impact the inclusive policies, practices, and programs have on the Mercyhurst community.

3. A grievance policy that is documented and disseminated to address complaints or grievances raised by students, faculty, or staff. The institution's policies and procedures are fair and impartial, and assure that grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably.

Standard: II-3

Potential evidence: Student Grievance Policy, Student, Employee and Faculty Handbook

Summary of evidence:

The Student Grievance Policy is located on the Mercyhurst Website under the Student Consumer Information page as well as in the Student Handbook. The Employee and Faculty Handbooks also indicate a grievance procedure. These are readily available to all Employees and Faculty.

For students, the policy on the Student Consumer Information page outlines who they should contact/email with complaints. For example, if they have a complaint related to their living arrangements, they should initially work with their Resident Assistant. If there is no resolution, the students may go to their Hall Director or Assistant Director of Residence Life. If the issue is still not solved, they can contact the Office of Residence Life via the email provided.

The Employee Handbook explains a problem-solving procedure that employees should follow when they have a complaint. The complaint should initially be brought to the attention of the immediate supervisor. If the issue is not solved, the employee may take the complaint up with the supervisors' superior, followed by Human Resources and the Vice President. The procedure also explains that no discriminatory or disciplinary action will be taken against any employee for using the problem-solving procedure.

The Faculty handbook outlines the Faculty grievance policy. It states that Faculty should go to their relevant academic department and college leadership with complaints. The complaint may be brought to the attention of the department chair, dean and/or provost.

Summary of compliance:

This working group could not find any specific form that is to be used when a student, faculty, or staff member submits a grievance. There is no formal procedure or timeframe outlined for grievances. There is no way to track whether grievances are addressed appropriately and in a fair and timely manner. It is recommended that grievances become more streamlined with formal documentation and procedures.

Standard II workgroup has found it necessary to address the need for an ombudsperson position at Mercyhurst University. The review of ethics and integrity has led to a discussion on oversight and direction during conflict resolution and identifying issues of concern that have not surfaced by other means. The International Ombudsman Association (IOA) describes the role of the ombudsperson as "akin to a conflict coach, helping all parties define the problem, understand each other's concerns, and explore options that may resolve or manage the dispute." The current system of conflict resolution is lacking in the IOA's four ethical standards of practice, which are independence, confidentiality, impartiality, and informality. At Mercyhurst, grievances are often enough received by peers and people in power, which in certain circumstances may lead employees to feel uncomfortable about coming forward, especially if they are in lower-level positions or are seeking to move through a promotion system. The University, no doubt, has good intentions in assisting in conflict resolution; but it should always strive to make improvements and to create an environment that respects the concerns of all its members. Establishing an ombudsperson office could provide numerous benefits, such as enabling the University to manage better workplace related conflict, prevent poor behavior, motivate ethical behavior, and effectively deal with concerns. At the same time, the ombudsperson could aid in providing clarity and direction to policies, processes, and practices that already exist at the University. Too often, people and institutions find themselves reacting to conflicts rather than proactively cultivating a safe

place for employees to voice their concerns. Ideally, an ombudsperson would be someone sufficiently knowledgeable of the university's policies and processes to welcome grievances without fear of negative repercussions or judgement.

4. The avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents.

Standard: II-4

Potential evidence: Employee Handbook 2019, 2019 Faculty Handbook, Mercyhurst University Revised Bylaws 2020, Conflict of Interest Policy Disclosure 2020, Board of Trustees Statement of Confidentiality FY 2020-2021

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst is committed to the avoidance of conflict of interest and/or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents, as demonstrated by the policies and procedures found in various resources.

All policies related to personnel are managed by the Human Resources Office. This includes the collection and processing of conflict-of-interest statements for all institutional employees and representatives, including faculty, staff, and trustees. The Human Resources office consults with the Provost's Office, as appropriate, to discuss conflict of interest disclosures and any related concerns for employees in the academic units, both faculty and student services.

The Employee Handbook, to which all members of the community are subject (including faculty), includes an Employment of Relatives policy. This policy outlines the institution's stance on the hiring of relatives, a definition of that term, and a clear statement that "employees who are related to other employees [may] not be placed in job situations in which one employee directly supervises or influences the terms of employment and working conditions of a family member or relative." There are examples of this policy being engaged across campus. While it would be a breach of confidentiality to discuss the specific arrangements, steps have been taken so that a relative is not engaged in the supervision or evaluation of any employee. For example, if it were inevitable that one member of an academic department had a relative in the leadership of that department or College, all administrative duties related to that person would be reassigned to a different member of the academic leadership.

Mercyhurst University engages in a constant informal evaluation of the ethics and integrity standards and policies at the institution. These informal evaluations occur each time an incident, however large or small, is brought to the administration. Evidence of this ongoing evaluation can be seen in the adaptations to the policies that have happened over time. Formal evaluations occur on a variety of levels, including by General Counselor for legal and risk analysis, through Human Resources for use analysis, and by various stakeholders, including the Cabinet and various Board subcommittees. Finally, for whistleblower complaints, there is a designated phone number, and the line/voice mailbox is checked weekly. To date this year there have been no reported complaints.

Further evidence of the effectiveness of the university's conflict of interest policies can be found in the functioning of the Faculty Senate's various committees, one of which has recently used the Faculty

Handbook's conflict of interest policy, along with the Faculty Handbook's two confidentiality policies and the Faculty Senate's Roberts Rules of Order, to guide the removal and replacement of a member of a committee. Additional examples could be provided of faculty who have recused themselves from one committee or another and/or recused themselves from the consideration of various issues for various reasons. Finally, a very recent (and public) example can be found in the replacement of a member of the university's Presidential Search Committee who was promoted to an upper administration position that could cause a conflict of interest if the person had remained on the search committee.

Summary of Compliance:

As evidenced by the many examples above, Mercyhurst demonstrates a commitment to avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents. The Employee and Faculty Handbooks show evidence that conflicts of interest that may occur among the faculty and staff are addressed and have the mechanism for being appropriately handled. Likewise, the Board of Trustees collects and shares with Human Relations conflict of interest statements.

5. Fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation of employees;

Standard: *II-5*

Potential evidence: Employee Handbook, Faculty Handbook

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst University abides by the following practices when hiring for an open position. The open position needs to be approved by the department Vice President and Budget Team. Once approved, the position job description is posted on the internal website for 10 days. The position may also be posted on the Mercyhurst University external website. Each job description that is posted has an equal opportunity and non-discrimination statement. The Human Resource Department collects the resumes and makes them readily available to the hiring committee for the position. The hiring committee conducts interviews. Once they choose a candidate to hire, hiring paperwork needs to be completed. The paperwork needs to be signed by the Vice President and Budget Team. Once signed, Human Resources will create a new hire appointment letter, which then gets signed by the university's President.

Since open positions are posted on the internal Mercyhurst webpage, employees have the opportunity to apply for positions that will allow them to be promoted within the organization. Employees are required to submit their resume to the Human Resource department, which is then provided to the hiring committee. The hiring committee will conduct interviews and choose an appropriate candidate for the job.

The University follows a progressive disciplinary action model. This model allows employees to be made aware of and correct any problems that may arise. Initially, the employee will receive a verbal warning for a first violation of the University rules. If the violation continues, they will receive a written warning. The employee will then be asked to sign the warning to acknowledge receipt of it. If the problem persists, the employee will be discharged from the University. These steps are normally followed, but

they can be amended or superseded depending on the nature and severity of the situation. The steps are located in the Employee Handbook as a guide for all supervisors.

If an employee voluntarily terminates their employment, they are asked to submit a resignation letter to their supervisor and the Human Resource Department. If a termination is involuntary, the supervisor and Director of Human Resources will meet with the employee. A list of involuntary causes can be found in the Human Resource Handbook. Upon termination, whether it is voluntary or involuntary, the employee will participate in an exit interview with the Human Resource Department. This allows the employee to give feedback about their length of stay with the University.

Summary of compliance:

The summary of the evidence above shows the hiring, promotion and termination process is consistent among all departments and employees of Mercyhurst University. Each employee is treated equally and fairly. In addition, the progressive disciplinary action that is used by the University is fair amongst all employees. The process gives the employees a chance to acknowledge and correct any problems.

Employee evaluations have not been completed for the last several years. This working group suggests that evaluations should be completed yearly for all employees.

6. Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as in internal communications.

Standard: II-6

Potential evidence: Employee Handbook 2019, Faculty Handbook, Undergraduate and Graduate Course Catalogues, Branding Standards Manual, Mercyhurst University Admissions Division of Enrollment HUB page, external Mercyhurst website

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst is committed to demonstrating honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admission materials and practices, as well as in internal communications.

There are policies included in the Employee and Faculty handbooks, as well as under the Marketing department's Brand Guidelines, that outline how information is to be communicated to internal and external audiences. For example, in the Brand Guidelines manual, it states that authenticity is a requirement: "We're genuine and sincere. We tell the story and communicate transparently. We back up assertions with facts and speak frankly." When Mercyhurst announced the consolidation of the North East campus, it was framed as a necessary move to strengthen the vitality and viability of our health care programs. Significant efforts were made to be open and honest about the eventual consolidation of the North East campus, and what this would mean for student populations, employees, and the town of North East, Pennsylvania. University officials met individually with community stakeholders and were made available for public comment in local news (TV and print). A separate webpage was maintained to explain the decision, walk the public through the process, and provide details on how the decision would

affect current and prospective students. In addition, numerous communication emails were sent out to the faculty and staff with updated information regarding the consolidation of the North East campus.

Another recent example is related to the unexpected spike in COVID-19 cases on campus stemming from Athletics teams, and the university's subsequent decision to move a remote mode of course delivery and instruction. Throughout the pandemic, Mercyhurst has been as forthcoming, if not more so, than other universities in explaining the numbers of active positive cases among students and employees and providing detailed information on the numbers of students in quarantine at any given time (whether through close contact with a positive individual or because of travel). When the infection numbers spiked in late October and early November, a university-wide email was publicly posted on our COVID-19 webpage, and Vice President for Student Life was made available for comment on the situation and how the university was responding. A thorough explanation of what appeared to have happened (student-athletes contracted the virus at an off-campus gathering), how they were discovered (routine testing of student-athletes), and what it meant for the community (contact tracing, extra precautions, remote learning, etc.) was provided.

In addition to open and honest communication via email, the President holds a yearly presidential address at the beginning of each fall semester. The whole Mercyhurst community is invited to attend to hear university and departmental updates. This presidential address promotes a climate of accountability and transparency for each employee.

Mercyhurst's Branding Standards Manual guides the marketing department in the creation of advertisements and admission materials. In recruitment marketing, assertions about academic programs and student outcomes are backed up with statistics and figures to support them. All academic-specific material comes from departments themselves (via the course catalog or university website), and public-facing sites are kept as up to date as possible, reflecting current curricula standards, faculty, and recent student successes. Student Ambassadors are rigorously trained to ensure they are providing the most accurate information possible about the university to prospective students and families during visits. Notably, the department considers it extremely important to be transparent when it comes to financial aid and scholarships. They provide honest, up-to-date tuition and room/board amounts to prospective students and they take great pains to guide students and families through the financial aid process. A collateral piece is included in the packet that goes out with an accepted student's preliminary financial aid offer that breaks down what each number in their letter means (which are scholarships, which are loans, etc.). Admissions counselors and SFS counselors are always more than willing to meet with students and families. Each spring, an online appointment scheduling feature is launched for admissions counselors to offer to their prospective students so they can sign up for a time to discuss financial aid, among any other matters.

Summary of compliance:

The various policies, practices, and examples above provide adequate evidence that speaks to ethics and integrity in this institution's honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as in internal communications.

7. As appropriate to its mission, services or programs in place:

- a. to promote affordability and accessibility;**
- b. to enable students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt;**

Standard: II-7a. To promote affordability and accessibility

Potential evidence: Undergraduate Course Catalog, Graduate Course Catalog, Student Financial Services HUB and external websites, Student Scholarship Program website, Admissions and Aid external website, Awards and Scholarships website

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst strives to promote affordability and accessibility to prospective and current students through various policies, practices, and programs that are made available to all.

The Undergraduate and Graduate course catalogs are updated annually by the Office of Academic Affairs. Both Undergraduate and Graduate course catalogs are available electronically on the university's internal (HUB) and external webpage. Students can also easily access the Student Financial Aid office through the HUB or schedule an appointment to meet with their assigned Student Financial Services (SFS) counselor. Each student is assigned a financial services counselor if they have any concerns regarding their bill, loans, payment, and if they have any questions. The course catalogs provide updated information about the areas of student billing schedule, tuition and fees, scholarships, financial aid awarding policies, and loan repayment options. The sections provide a thorough examination of tuition, fees, room and board costs, loan and grant education, the financial aid awarding process, campus amenities, SFS calendar and procedures, and enrollment requirements. The catalogs and SFS webpage also provide comprehensive information regarding scholarships, grants, loans, repayment, and refunds. The Student HUB provides a clear description of the various types of loans and repayment guidelines so that students can be fully informed.

During a traditional first year student's fall semester, financial aid is a topic of discussion as part of a required iMU course. This discussion revolves around students understanding the value of their education, both holistically and financially. Mercyhurst offers a robust financial aid program in which 99% of incoming freshman qualify for some level of assistance. In addition to state, federal, and private funding sources, Mercyhurst offers scholarships to incoming students based on academic merit, financial need, and athletic and artistic performance to help them meet tuition costs. Unless otherwise noted, all financial aid is automatically renewable for four years of study. Additionally, Mercyhurst offers a flexible education designed to address a diverse range of disciplines leading to careers in cutting-edge fields. A customizable core curriculum with a range of courses helps students remain on track for a timely graduation. Mercyhurst has the highest four-year graduation rate in Erie County.

The Alumni Office focuses on raising funds for the Student Scholarship program. Through this program, donors help support financial aid and current-use scholarships directly to Mercyhurst students. This program is critical in allowing students of all backgrounds to access higher education, and specifically afford a Mercyhurst education. Mercyhurst awarded approximately \$56.7 million dollars of direct student aid in the 2019-2020 academic year. There are several different scholarships, some of which have been earmarked for general students, including first generation students, single-parent families, Erie community students, and diverse students.

Finally, Mercyhurst also assists students financially by supporting Federal and Institutional work study programs. Students qualify for Federal aid due to personal and family financial situations. Students also can earn money on campus by applying for institutional work-study programs.

Summary of compliance:

The summary of the evidence shows that Mercyhurst promotes affordability and accessibility. There is compelling evidence of easy access to information about the cost, financial aid opportunities, calculation of cost, external and internal scholarships, and awards. The alumni office focuses on fundraising efforts to support a range of student scholarship programs that benefit all students and targets specifically those who may have greater financial need or have been marginalized.

Standard: II 7.b. to enable students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt.

Potential Evidence: 2019-2020 Undergraduate Course Catalog, Graduate Student Course Catalog, Mercyhurst.edu external website, Student Financial Services HUB page

Summary of evidence:

The Undergraduate and Graduate course catalogs provide a thorough examination of tuition, fees, room and board, loan and grant education, the financial aid awarding process, campus amenities, SFS calendar and procedures, and enrollment requirements. This document is updated by the office of academic affairs on an annual basis. The undergraduate and graduate course catalogs are made available to all students on both the university's internal and external websites.

Students are mandated to take the Entrance Loan Interview provided by the federal government prior to taking out a loan and they are required to complete an Exit Loan Interview prior to graduation. This is mandated by the federal government but is not a mandatory graduation requirement for Mercyhurst University.

Students are provided with access to accurate and comprehensive information regarding expenses, financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, repayment, and refunds through the undergraduate and graduate Course catalogs. Financial aid is a topic of discussion during week 6 of the Fall iMU course that all traditional first-year students are required to take and complete successfully. This discussion revolves around students understanding the value of their education both holistically and financially.

Students can determine the net price of their education by using the net price calculator located on the external Mercyhurst website. This calculator is intended to provide estimated net price information, which is defined as the estimated cost of attendance (including tuition and required fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other related expenses) minus estimated grant and scholarship aid to current and prospective students and their families based on what similar students paid in a previous year.

The financial aid webpages (internally on the Hub and externally on the university's website) provide information on federal, state, and external scholarship opportunities. In addition to state, federal, and private funding sources, Mercyhurst offers scholarships to incoming students based on academic merit, financial need, and athletic and artistic performance to help students meet tuition costs. Unless

otherwise noted, all MU financial aid is automatically renewable for four years of study. Some scholarships do include enrollment and grade requirements for renewal.

Finally, students are made aware of alternative methods to repay student loans through post-graduate service programs, such as AmeriCorps. The Community Engagement department hosts a post-graduate service fair each year and encourages students in their third and fourth year to consider this as an alternative to starting a traditional job after graduation. This year, due to the university's COVID-19 mitigation policies, which restrict social events, the Community Engagement department invited service programs to submit videos so that the information can still be disseminated to students in a virtual environment. This is an example of alternatives provided to students to help them better understand and manage the repayment of their student loans.

Summary of compliance:

This summary of evidence shows that the Admissions and Student Financial Services offices offer a robust amount of educational information that enables students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt. The one area of concern is in educating students who leave or graduate with debt what this looks like in monthly payments and the number of years it may take to pay off student loans. Additionally, post-graduate service programs are not as widely considered as they could be if more departments embraced and advocated for their students to participate in these programs.

8. Compliance with all applicable federal, state, and Commission reporting policies, regulations, and requirements to include reporting regarding:

- a. the full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates.**
- b. the institution's compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation.**
- c. substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues which must be disclosed in a timely and accurate fashion.**
- d. the institution's compliance with the Commission's policies; and**

Potential evidence: Mercyhurst.edu website, Programmatic Accreditation Document, National Center for Educational Statistics, Office of Post-Secondary Education website, Assessment Handbook, MSCHE Statement of Accreditation Status, CMHE Self-Study, Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act Report, NCAA Academic Success Rate Report, Clery Report, Higher Education Opportunity Act 2008

Summary of evidence:

There are multiple documents that demonstrate that Mercyhurst complies with all reporting requirements for all applicable federal, state, and Commission reporting policies, regulations, and requirements.

Mercyhurst provides a full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates on the external website. There is a page accessible to the public called Student Consumer Information. On that page are links to several different applicable sources of information, including the Student's Right to Know College Navigator site,

graduation rates, licensing and accreditation, retention rates, and more. All the links direct an individual to the proper information described under the title, and most of the information accessible via those links are up to date. Regarding assessment, a separate page located on the external website labeled Assessment and Planning includes information about strategic plans, institutional research, and compliance. This page contains active links and is available to the general public.

Mercyhurst provides information about the institution's compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation via the inclusion of the Self-Study Guide available on the external website. The MSCHE Statement of Accreditation is updated when warranted by the Assessment and Planning office and is available on their webpage. The Self-Study is evidence of the university's campus wide commitment to complete the on-going assessment process to fulfill the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation.

Mercyhurst reports substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues in a timely fashion. This is evidenced by the information found on the external website's Student Consumer Information page. There are various reports that the university submits on an annual or scheduled cycle for assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, the CMHE self-study, NCAA academic success rate, Clery Report, EADA, crime log, graduation reports, licensure, and certification pass rates, MSCHE accreditation, Student Right to Know Act information. These reports, which are updated and disclosed in a timely manner, are the responsibility of many offices at the university. Coordination of required consumer information occurs through the Assessment and Planning Department, which houses institutional research.

Finally, the university demonstrates compliance with all federal, state, and commission reporting policies, regulations, and requirements. To meet the reporting requirements outlined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the university has a Student Consumer Information page on the external website, which includes information about graduation and retention rates, student financial aid, and health and safety information. The university achieves the objective of complying with these reporting requirements with a comprehensive and collaborative approach engaging the Offices of the Provost and Educational Affairs, Enrollment Management, Assessment and Planning Department-Institutional Research, Student Financial Services, and Admissions, among others. Board pass rates for students studying in academic programs that require licensure, are published on the website of the appropriate school. The University specifically meets the requirements specified in Middle States Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation.

Summary of compliance

Whether for institutional and/or public use, it is challenging to find information on campus-wide assessment on the Mercyhurst internal or external websites. The workgroup recommends having a principal place to publicize information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates. This information is attractive to families when searching for an institute of higher education for their child to attend. Further, the graduation and retention rates on the College Navigator website is from 2011-13, which does not help prospective students to have a current idea of graduation/retention rates. Finally, on the MU document that is linked under the Graduation Rates on the external website, the information is confusing and does not accurately provide the information the consumer is led to believe will be demonstrated on that document. Clearer information should be included in that document.

Regarding the assessment data, this work group recommends that there should be a more robust use of the data collected within the college community. There should also be a centralized location to access the evidence and a calendar of due dates for submission of data.

9. Periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.

Standard: II-9

Potential evidence: *Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook; Undergraduate & Graduate Catalogs; CMHE Self Study; Board Committee Charters; Equity, Inclusion, & Justice Strategic Plan document; Assessment HUB page*

Summary of evidence:

Mercyhurst University engages in a constant informal evaluation of the ethics and integrity standards and policies at the institution. These informal evaluations occur each time an incident, however large or small, is brought to the attention of the administration. Evidence of this ongoing evaluation can be seen in the adaptations to the policies that have happened over time. Formal evaluations occur on a variety of levels, including by General Counselor for legal and risk analysis, through HR for use analysis, and by various stakeholders including the Cabinet and various Board subcommittees. Recently, Mercyhurst went through a Mission self-study and assessment through the Conference for Mercy Higher Education and submitted a report in the fall of 2020.

Another example is a recent assessment of Mercyhurst's ethics and integrity that was led by the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce (DIT), formed in 2016 by President Victor. The taskforce evaluated campus policies, processes, and practices, and determined that a new student government council was needed (Multicultural Activities Council) in 2017. Another example is the 2020 Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Initiative that resulted from a DIT assessment of campus policies, processes, and practices around multiculturalism, racism, and privilege. A new position was created to spearhead the initiative and is currently filled by a Sister of Mercy.

Further, the Faculty Senate, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook, includes a committee that periodically evaluates academic administrators (i.e., deans and the provost) and provides a confidential summary report of their job performance (based on their job description), including their ethics and integrity in relation to the mission of the institution. Those annual reports are provided to the appropriate supervisors (dean reports go to provost, and the dean and provost reports go to the president), but it is unclear if and how they are used for assessment.

At the department/program level, Mercyhurst provides resources for departments to complete assessments of their areas, located on the internal Assessment HUB page. For example, departments are required to complete self-studies every five years, and those studies require an evaluation of their unit mission and goals and how they align with the university's strategic plan and core values. All these guidelines are also included in the Assessment Handbook, which was most recently updated in 2019.

Within the 5-year program review cycle, both internal and external review processes and bodies are involved with accrediting bodies having their own ethics and integrity criteria and measures.

Overall, Mercyhurst has created a culture of assessment that contributes significantly to the creation of a culture of ethics and integrity. It enhances the factual basis needed for understanding and decision-making and it enhances the accountability of all stakeholders involved.

Summary of compliance:

The summary of evidence demonstrates that Mercyhurst is committed to periodically assessing ethics and integrity within its institutional policies, processes, and practices. Overall, this workgroup assesses the university's policies and procedures for the formal and informal assessment of ethics and integrity to be currently adequate while acknowledging opportunities for growth and development. In general, a range of opportunities exists for the expansion of centralized, comprehensive, formal, and periodic assessment of ethics and integrity across the various areas and levels of the university.