Pennsylvania Western UNIVERSITY℠

CALIFORNIA | CLARION | EDINBORO

PENNWEST CALIFORNIA   **PENNWEST CLARION**   **PENNWEST EDINBORO**

Self-Study Design

SUBMITTED TO THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
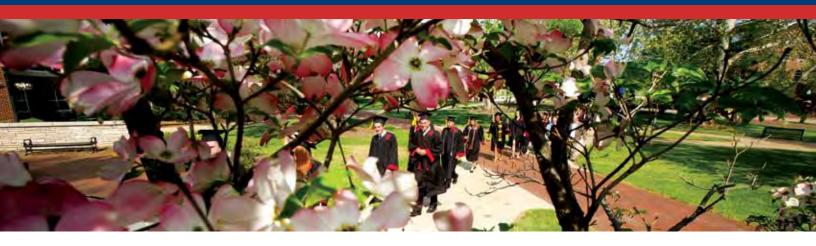
MARCH 22, 2023

SPRING - SUMMER 2023

Table of Contents

* Sections marked with an asterisk have been updated since the Spring-Summer submission to MSCHE

I. Institutional Overview

ONE UNIVERSITY, THREE CAMPUSES: FORGING A FUTURE TOGETHER

Pennsylvania Western University is a new university deeply rooted in service to the people and communities of western Pennsylvania. Created through the consolidation of three state-owned institutions — California University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1852; Edinboro University, established in 1857; and Clarion University, founded in 1867 — PennWest launched on July 1, 2022, as a single university dedicated to providing exemplary, career-relevant higher education for learners at all stages of life while supporting the region's economic and workforce needs.

PennWest is a member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), whose universities are the most affordable four-year option in the commonwealth. This is crucial because, systemwide, 70% of traditional-age students — those who enroll in a PASSHE school within a few years after high school graduation — are from families earning at or below the median household income in Pennsylvania. For these students, in particular, higher education is a springboard to the middle class, providing pathways to jobs that offer a family-sustaining wage and opportunities for career advancement. PennWest embraces its role as the higher education option of choice for a population that includes many rural, urban, low-income, and first-generation students, including those who require substantial levels of financial, academic, and/or personal support to thrive in a university setting.

Having completed the second semester of its inaugural year, PennWest continues to refine its operations. We have made strategic organizational and leadership changes in keeping with our financial stability and enrollment goals. Our faculty has synthesized the graduate and general education curricula to standardize academic offerings across all three campuses, and new curriculum versions for most undergraduate programs will begin in Fall 2023. We are utilizing technology not only as a teaching tool, but also to align processes and procedures as we deliver services to students, faculty, and staff. Our staff has created a strong scaffold of support for our students, empowering them to be successful in their studies and their lives. We have established shared governance bodies to promote communication and give stakeholders on all campuses a voice as decisions are made. We are transforming our physical campuses to better reflect the current and future needs of our students and employees. And we are actively engaged in developing a three-year strategic plan (2023-2026) that will further shape our institution.

Through it all, we remain unwavering in our commitment to the same "students first" approach that guided the integration of California, Clarion, and Edinboro. Our dedication to student success and operational efficiency remains steadfast. We are proudly PennWest — and together we are forging the future of our new university.

WE ARE PENNWEST

In Fall 2022, PennWest served 9,404 undergraduate and 3,376 graduate students (3,225 in master's degree programs and 151 seeking doctorates) on its three campuses and through PennWest Online. Of those 12,780 students, about 37% are eligible for federal Pell Grants, 34% are the first in their family to attend college, and nearly 18% are from underrepresented minorities. A high percentage of our students live off campus, many returning home to meet work and/or family responsibilities. Nearly 23% of our students live in campus housing, while 30% — including many working adults — are enrolled in fully online programs.

Among other topics, our self-study will describe efforts to recruit a diverse student population, retain those who enroll, and support our students both academically and personally throughout their PennWest journey.

Within our innovative three-campus model, undergraduate and graduate students have opportunities to take hybrid and online courses, as well as traditional campus-based, in-person classes. With the exception of those who teach online courses only, faculty members are assigned to one "home" campus; they utilize distance-learning technology to deliver course content and interact with students at other PennWest locations.

It is a point of pride that all PennWest courses are taught by expert faculty, not teaching assistants or graduate students. In Fall 2022, PennWest employed 779 faculty members — 602 full-time and 177 part-time. Of the full-time faculty, 52.6% were female and 14.5% were minority. Among our tenured and tenure-track faculty, 75.4% hold terminal degrees.

PennWest is committed to providing career-relevant education within a strong liberal arts framework that prepares students for a rapidly evolving workforce. Educational pathways include associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as certificate and certification programs.

These programs are housed in three academic colleges, each led by a dean: the College of Education, Arts and Humanities; College of Health Sciences and Human Services; and College of Science, Technology and Business. Within these colleges are 14 academic departments that deliver 90 undergraduate and graduate degree programs (some with multiple concentrations), as shown in Table 1 (revised):

*TABLE 1**

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS	GRADUATE PROGRAMS
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND HUMANITIES	
Criminal Justice, History and Politics	
Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice
History	Criminal Justice and Criminology
Political Science	
Education	
Early Childhood and Elementary Education	Advanced Study in Education
Early Childhood and Special Education	Education Administration and Leadership
Middle Level Education	Art Education

TABLE 1*

Preschool Education	Educational Leadership
Secondary Education	Educational Psychology
Special Education	Reading Specialist
	School Psychology
	Special Education
	Teacher Education
English, Philosophy and Modern Languages	
Arabic Language and Cultures	Arabic Language and Linguistics
English	
Interdisciplinary Studies	
Library and Information Science	
	Library Sciences
Visual and Performing Arts	
Media Arts	Fine Arts
Commercial Music Technology	
Graphic Design	
Studio Arts	
Theatre	
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND HUMAN SERVICES	
Communication Sciences and Disorders	
Communication Sciences and Disorders	Speech-Language Pathology
Exercise, Health and Sport Sciences	
Exercise Science	Athletic Training
Health Sciences	Exercise Science and Health Promotion
Physical Therapy Assistant	Health Science and Exercise Leadership
Sport Management	Sports Management

Nursing and Health Professions	
Allied Health Leadership	Nursing
Allied Health	
Medical Imaging Sciences	
Nursing	
RN to BSN	
Psychology, Counseling and Art Therapy	
Psychology	Counseling
Social Work, Sociology and Human Services	
Human Services and Rehabilitation	Social Work
Social Work	Conflict Resolution
Sociology	

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS

Biology, Earth and Environmental Sciences	
Biology	
Environmental Science	
Fisheries and Wildlife Biology	
Veterinary Technology	
Business, Economics and Communication	
Accounting	Professional Accountancy
Business Administration	Corporate Communication
Communication	Legal Studies
Economics	MBA Business Administration
Finance and Personal Financial Planning	
Integrated Business	
Legal Studies	
Management	
Marketing	

TABLE 1[*]

Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics	
Chemistry	
Interdisciplinary Studies	
Mathematics	
Pre-pharmacy	
Computing and Engineering Technology	
Applied Computing	Cybersecurity
Applied Technology	Data Science & Analytics
Computer Information Systems	
Computer Science	
Digital Media Technology	
Electrical Engineering Technology	
Engineering Technology	
Mechatronics Engineering Technology	

Table is not inclusive of all concentrations or certificates. A full program array can be found at pennwest.edu/academics; list is representative as of September 10, 2023.

The integration resulting in PennWest was undertaken, in large measure, because of the financial challenges facing our legacy universities. We recognize that it will take several years to achieve stability, but since becoming one university in July 2022, decisive action has been taken to address our financial and operational challenges, including a change in leadership. Interim President R. Lorraine Bernotsky is committed to ensuring that university resources are deployed efficiently to serve our students' needs. Key steps taken under her direction include:

- Implementing a streamlined organizational chart and staffing plan that includes reducing the executive leadership team from nine members to six, eliminating vacancies, and continuing to align our workforce with current and future needs.

- Reducing the number of academic colleges from six to three, and finalizing a more sustainable general education portfolio and academic program array.

- Making structural changes in the Strategic Enrollment Management area to improve PennWest's recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts, with a resulting rebound in enrollment of first-year students.

- Continuing to review operational budgets for savings, identify contracts that could lead to savings through economies of scale, and eliminate redundancies by (for example) integrating crucial technology systems and back-office services.

- Demolishing outdated buildings on all three campuses, working to sell or lease underutilized assets, and collaborating with State System officials to pursue options for potential debt relief.

Despite these efforts, PennWest anticipates a budget deficit for the coming fiscal year. As the university begins operational budget planning for FY 2024, it will focus on developing a true base budget for PennWest, rather than relying on legacy data. And now that a base-year census has been established, enrollment projections for upcoming years will utilize a singular enrollment projection model. These data will guide the university as it continues to address longstanding issues and move toward a strong and sustainable future.

SERVING WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

PennWest is now the second-largest public university in western Pennsylvania, with more than 188,000 living alumni, nearly 127,000 of whom reside in Pennsylvania — and a "local" reach that extends from the shores of Lake Erie to the greater Pittsburgh region and beyond. PASSHE data peg the university's overall economic impact at more than $750 million per year. Consolidation allowed for more efficient use of personnel, especially in back-office operations and top-level administration, yet our campuses are still among the largest employers in their respective communities. In Fall 2022 PennWest employed 779 faculty members and 889 staff members, many of whom work directly with current and future students to enhance their college experience and support their academic progress and personal well-being.

With the exception of managers and university executives, PennWest's faculty, athletic coaches, professional and technical employees, and other staff members are unionized. Collective bargaining for all unions takes place at the state level, with no local control over collective bargaining agreements. The unions represented at PennWest are:

- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
- Association of Pennsylvania College and University Faculty (APSCUF)
- Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania (OPEIU)
- Pennsylvania Doctors Alliance (PDA)
- Pennsylvania Social Services Union (PSSU, Local 668 SEIU)
- Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America (SPFPA)
- State College and University Professionals Association (SCUPA)

Technology is a key ingredient in PennWest's singular design. Beyond the high-speed internet, campuswide Wi-Fi, learning management system, and videoconferencing tools that support teaching and learning, software solutions bind our campuses together as one. This fall PennWest united administrative and student information systems at the California, Clarion, and Edinboro campuses and moved them "into the cloud," the first step in OneSIS, a State System initiative to decrease maintenance costs and allow courses to be shared across PASSHE institutions. In addition, we have expanded successful solutions across the entire university to provide consistent support for recruitment and admissions (Slate), student success (Starfish), housing registration and assignments (THD, The Housing Director), alumni engagement (LiveAlumni) and more. A more robust pennwest.edu website is under development, and students, faculty, and staff have easy access to tools and information through a new myPennWest intranet site.

Technology evolves rapidly, and PennWest is moving nimbly to harness its benefits on behalf of our students and employees. Evaluation of current and potential "tech tools" is ongoing.

Our physical campuses also are being transformed. State-funded demolition projects on all three campuses are designed to reduce utility and maintenance costs while better aligning our physical footprint with student enrollment and university needs. California, for example, has relocated faculty offices and university police to Building B, a former residence hall, allowing for the demolition of Azorsky and Keystone halls (now underway). At the same time, we celebrate projects that enhance the campus experience for students, employees, and visitors. Among these are the imminent completion of the three-year renovation of Baron-Forness Library at Edinboro and a new Welcome Center at Clarion, and the re-opening of The Clarion Store in the Gemmell Student Center.

Our Mission

During the integration process that created PennWest, a committee with representation from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees of our three legacy universities met throughout the Fall 2021 semester to draft a mission statement for the integrated university. The committee reviewed the existing mission, vision, and core values statements for California, Clarion, and Edinboro, as well as research from communications and marketing firms working with each university that identified the unique "personality" of each campus.

At brainstorming sessions, the committee explored what PennWest could, and should, be: a university centered on the student experience, where decision-makers consider students first; and a strong, stable institution positioned to meet the State System's benchmarks — and the region's higher education needs — for years to come. The committee's draft mission statement set the tone and position of the integrated university. It defined the new university's purpose, identified its primary stakeholders, and articulated its values.

The committee shared the draft mission statement with stakeholders across all three campuses — leadership, faculty, staff, students, and trustees. Feedback was solicited, and the draft was edited based on that input. Now that revised mission statement is being reviewed through the strategic planning process, where further revisions will be made as needed. It now reads:

Through innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments, Pennsylvania Western University provides accessible education that cultivates career-ready, life-long learners and leaders, who enrich and engage each other, their communities, the region, and beyond.*

OUR VALUES

What sets PennWest apart? The work of identifying differentiators for the new university led to PennWest's Values. These principles guide our processes, interactions, and planning as a means of attaining and delivering excellence.

Learning: We are a community of educators who provide a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.

Growth: We are student-ready, guiding our students toward personal, financial, and academic success.

Inclusion: We advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide an equitable, supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Collaboration: We engage in innovative partnerships, programs, and opportunities to address the needs of regional communities and the commonwealth.

Culture: We share a sense of purpose that unites the Pennsylvania Western University community at large and provides opportunities to learn, work and thrive.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

PennWest is currently engaged in a year-long process to develop its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Because of PennWest's unique history, the strategic planning process is founded on the integration work that took place from Fall 2020 through Summer 2023, with the university's Values as the lens through which the university views its strategy and operations.

The strategic planning process includes a thoughtful review of the legacy campuses' previous plans, the deliverables generated through the integration process, public comments shared during the final stages of the integration, and other key documents. Strategies and initiatives for the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan will be defined by June 2023, at which point we will formulate the corresponding assessment plans for each of our strategies and initiatives.

The strategic plan calls for PennWest to enhance programming already proven effective in supporting student success, while also implementing innovative approaches with new leadership and new strategies mapped to our university mission and goals. Throughout the process, we seek to hear from all university stakeholder groups on each of our three campuses.

The strategic plan will take effect officially in September 2023, with a University Planning Council in place to provide oversight and monitor the plan throughout its duration.

TABLE 2

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE	
2022	
August-September	Identify Strategic Planning Leads Team (SPLT)
October	Identify strategic planning committees and Oversight Team (SPOT)
November-December	Synthesize existing work; prepare for stakeholder input
2023	
January 31-February 27	Collect stakeholder input
February 17	SPLT update, next-steps PowerPoint with SPOT and co-chairs
February 21	SPLT Strategy and Initiative Development working session with co-chairs
February 27-March 17	Synthesize feedback
March 13	SPLT Strategy and Initiative Development working session with co-chairs
March 17	Committees: Strategy and Initiative Development Worksheet due
March 19-31	SPLT refines plan
April 3-14	SPOT reviews plan
April 17-May 12	Draft plan available for widespread feedback
May 15-June 30	Executive leadership completes review/approval of Strategic Plan
May 22-July 31	Create assessment plans; identify University Planning Council
September	Launch 2023-2026 PennWest Strategic Plan

The Strategic Planning Leadership Team (SPLT), led by the vice president for Institutional Effectiveness, Student Affairs, and University Police, has been tasked with the work of developing and guiding the comprehensive process. The SPLT consists of:

- Susanne Fenske, *Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Student Affairs, and University Police*
- Doug Battleson, *Associate Professor, School of Business*
- Jim Wertz, *Associate Professor, Department of Communication*

Auxiliary member is Brenda DePaoli, executive associate for Student Affairs, the lead for strategic planning project management support.

A Strategic Planning Oversight Team (SPOT) provides oversight for the planning, participation, implementation, and assessment of the strategic plan. With members from all three campuses, this group involves representatives from key constituencies, including university trustees, vice presidents, Student Senate, and staff and faculty bargaining units.

In addition, five Strategic Planning committees, each focused on one of the Values, will each submit a set of three to five proposed strategies and initiatives to the SPLT based on the timeline above.

II. Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

PennWest has identified three Institutional Priorities to be addressed in the self-study. For ease of reference, each priority is associated with an acronym: Priority 1 uses SSL to reference student success and learning; Priority 2 uses FOS to reference fiscal and operational stability; Priority 3 uses PPL to reference people (faculty and staff).

- **Priority 1:** Enhance student success and learning through efficient registration processes and increased focus on retention and completion rates. (SSL)
- **Priority 2:** Achieve fiscal stability through a sound budgeting process, and increase operational strength by addressing the Middle States legacy areas of improvement. (FOS)
- **Priority 3:** Promote the professional growth of faculty and staff to enhance collaboration and a sense of belonging. (PPL)

The self-study will allow members of our university community to reflect critically on the ways that we have aligned our Institutional Priorities and our strategic plan with PennWest's mission, including its relatively new mission statement. The self-study process also will enable the university to confirm its alignment with the seven Standards for Accreditation, as well as the Requirements of Affiliation and Verification of Compliance with Federal Regulations.

Equipped with a mission statement focused on student success and a strategic plan that puts learning at the center of everything we do, we identified our institutional priorities by reflecting on our integration path, considering our Values, and identifying achievable goals that we are poised to realize.

III. Intended Outcomes for the Self-Study

PennWest University is leveraging the energy of new leadership, shared governance, and a dynamic mission and strategic plan to advance our institutional priorities. The university will achieve these outcomes through our self-study process:

1. We will demonstrate the ways PennWest meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation, Requirements of Affiliation, and Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations.

2. We will engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that actively and deliberately seeks to involve members from all constituencies and stakeholder groups.

3. We will measure and assess our progress in achieving continuous improvement in implementing the institution's mission, its institutional priorities, and its strategic plan; in further embedding educational effectiveness and overall assessment into the institution's culture; and in linking that assessment with planning and improvements in student learning and achievement.

IV. Self-Study Approach

While we have carefully mapped our institutional priorities against the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation and will provide an integrated discussion of both, we have opted for a standards-based approach to our self-study. This will bring more stakeholders into the conversation and allow for a rigorous analysis of our adherence to each standard as we take steps to align everything we do with our university's mission, strategic plan, and the institutional priorities we have identified. A standards-based approach creates opportunities to continue discussions begun during the integration process, keeping our key stakeholders engaged in the work of moving PennWest forward.

V. Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

We have charged a Steering Committee of 27 members to oversee the self-study process. The Steering Committee, which has been formed with the support of the interim president and the interim provost, includes the tri-chairs of the Middle States Self-Study process and committees for each of the seven standards and Verification of Compliance.

Normally we would seek out more faculty members to serve in leadership positions to create a more well-rounded Steering Committee. However, the university has relied on so many faculty throughout the integration process, a lengthy curriculum synthesis process, and the finalization of the academic program array that we wanted to give them time to focus on those other priorities. Therefore, we have sought additional faculty to engage in the self-study process at all levels of the Standards Committees' work. We will be rounding out committee membership with more students, faculty, and staff as we finalize those groups. To ensure faculty and students are well-informed and engaged in the process, we have addressed them as a key group in Section X: Communication Plan.

TABLE 3*

Standard	Tri-Chairs (Name, Title; Constituency Represented)
Steering Committee Leadership	Susanne Fenske, *Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness & Student Affairs* Becky McMillen, *Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness* Deb Kelly, *Dean, College of Health and Human Services; Academic Affairs*
I. Mission and Goals	Jim Geiger, *Vice President for University Advancement* Sheleta Camarda-Webb, *Assistant Vice President for Assessment and External Relations* Mary Paniccia-Carden, *Dean, College of Education, Arts & Humanities; Academic Affairs*
II. Ethics and Integrity	Eric Guiser, *Senior Associate Vice President for Human Resources* Erik Bentsen, *Assistant Professor of Special Education and former chair, Institutional Review Board* Matt Shaffer, *Dean of Students; Student Affairs*
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Experience	Dan Engstrom, *Interim Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs* Ron Craig, *Professor of Psychology and Director, Center for Faculty Excellence; Academic Affairs* Adam Roberts, *Professor and Chair, Department of Mathematics; Academic Affairs*
IV. Support of the Student Experience	Sarah Freed, *Interim Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management* Shawn Hoke, *Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs* Ambreena Siddiq, *Associate Professor of Chemistry; Academic Affairs*
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	Elisabeth Joyce, *Professor, Department of English, Academic Affairs* Justin Hackett, *Professor of Psychology; Academic Affairs* Alice Jenkins, *Director of Assessment; Institutional Effectiveness*
VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	Fawn Petrosky, *Vice President for Finance and Administration* Larry Sebek, *Associate Vice President for Student Affairs* Ed Matecki, *Associate Professor of Finance, Accounting, & Economics; Academic Affairs*
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration	Kelly Repinski, *Chief of Staff and Executive Director of University Affairs* Neil Weaver, *Member, PASSHE Board of Governors and PennWest Council of Trustees* Mario Majcen, *Professor of Geosciences; Academic Affairs*
VIII. Verification of Compliance	Sue Bloom, *Executive Director of Financial Aid* Shayne Gervais, *University Registrar* Steven Zidek, *Chief Data Strategist*

The individual working groups will be populated by communicating membership opportunities to university employees, other stakeholders, and key student leaders. Regular meetings and communication opportunities will be put in place to ensure that all teams are working together, engaging in discussion about common inquiries, and avoiding duplication of efforts.

To facilitate the analysis of the evidence generated, we will ask the tri-chairs to identify one of the chairs who can take the lead on running an objective review of that evidence. Because so much of what the university is doing now is new or in the process of being developed, the tri-chairs reflect the individuals who can ensure we have provided the right evidence for review. We believe this approach will lead to much-needed dialogue within the committees and greater understanding of the work that has evolved through the integration.

We view the self-study as a key step in an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement. As we work through the self-study process, we will identify strengths/opportunities for improvement in the process itself, while also taking steps to achieve continuous improvement in implementing the university's mission, institutional priorities, strategic plan, educational effectiveness, and overall assessment.

Each of the Institutional Priorities will be addressed by multiple working groups. Specific Requirements of Affiliation will be addressed by the working groups identified in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Standard	Institutional Priority #1: *Student Success and Learning (SSL)*	Institutional Priority #2: *Operational and Financial Stability (FOS)*	Institutional Priority #3: *Promote the Professional Growth of Faculty & Staff (PPL)*	Requirements of Affiliation
I. Mission and Goals	X	X	X	*Requirement 7, 10*
II. Ethics and Integrity	X	X	X	*All*
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	X	X	X	*Requirement 8, 9, 10, 15*
IV. Support of the Student Experience	X	X		*Requirement 8, 10*
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	X	X		*Requirement 8, 9, 10*
VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	X	X	X	*Requirement 8, 10, 11*
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration	X	X	X	*Requirement 12, 13*

WORKING GROUP CHARGES

Under the leadership of the Steering Committee, each working group engages in evidence-based analysis, the parameters of which are determined by the lines of inquiry (significant questions that develop a particular analytical focus related to each standard, institutional mission, priorities, and outcomes) identified in the Self-Study Design. See alignment below:

Standards for Accreditation

Institutional Mission

Institutional Priorities

Lines of Inquiry

Each working group has a specific charge, a set of deadlines, and a template for completing its work. Upon assembly, working group members will receive a charge that includes the following:

1. Review the relevant Standard, Requirements of Affiliation, and specific working group criteria.

2. Examine lines of inquiry and develop a set of research questions that will allow the working group to thoroughly examine PennWest's ability to meet the standards, requirements, and criteria.

3. Establish clear assignments for the members, including a data inventory lead who will ensure that all evidence related to their standard is shared with the designated data inventory specialist, who will upload it to the Evidence Inventory.

4. Analyze documents, processes, and procedures related to the Standards for Accreditation to generate written drafts that indicate each of the lines of inquiry. Since PennWest will be developing and formalizing its first assessment plans in Summer 2023, some assessment plans from the legacy campuses will be utilized in this process.

5. Submit a final report by February 2024 that identifies institutional strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement, addressing appropriate Requirements of Affiliation and Criteria for Accreditation, and noting connections to institutional priorities and intended outcomes of the self-study.

The recommendations presented will be reviewed and confirmed by university leadership. Upon confirmation, the Institutional Effectiveness and University Planning Council will work with the appropriate divisions to make connections to key documents, such as the strategic plan, and have those works updated to reflect implementation and assessment plans.

LINES OF INQUIRY

Lines of inquiry for each working group are broad lines of inquiry to examine compliance with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation.

Below are suggested research questions, which will be reviewed and adjusted as needed once the committees are established. Working groups will finalize the research questions and respond to them in their report based on the Requirements of Affiliation, Criteria for Accreditation, Intended Outcomes of the self-study, and Institutional Priorities.

Standard I: Mission and Goals: Are we a mission-driven and goal-oriented institution? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. How does the university develop, approve, and communicate its mission and goals, assess the process for effectiveness and inclusivity, and address any gaps? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

2. How has the mission informed institutional goals, and how well have those goals guided strategic decision making (e.g., planning and resource allocation)? (SSL, FOS)

3. How is the university using the strategic plan to ensure institutional adherence to its mission and goals? (SSL, FOS, PPL)
   a. *What is the plan for annual review, where is it located, and who is responsible for the work?*
   b. *How and to what extent are areas of improvement noted and shared with the appropriate division/unit?*
   c. *How and to what extent are compliance and change monitored and tracked?*
   d. *What trends in higher education are noted, and to what extent are they used to ensure best-practice work?*

4. Are the institutional goals realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with the university's mission? How are any gaps between goals and mission addressed? (SSL, FOS)

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity: Do the university's operations reflect a sustained commitment to ethics and integrity? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. How does the university support a climate that fosters respect and ethical conduct throughout all levels of the institution? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

2. What steps are taken to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in employment and admission practices and policies, and how does the university assess their effectiveness? (SSL, PPL)

3. How well does the university comply with all applicable federal, state, PASSHE, and MSCHE policies and regulations? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

4. How well does the university communicate transparently, honestly, accurately, and ethically with internal and external stakeholders? (SSL, PPL)

5. To what extent are institutional policies, processes, and practices assessed for ethics and integrity, and how effective are those assessments? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience: How well have the mission and institutional priorities guided the design and delivery of the student learning experience? (SSL, FOS, PPL).

1. How well does the range of programs and student learning experiences offered align with the university's mission? (SSL, FOS)

2. To what extent does the university demonstrate, and how does it assess, its commitment to empower and invest in credentialed professionals in enhancing the effectiveness, rigor, and quality of their teaching? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

3. Have PennWest programs been designed to offer sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support students' academic progress? (SSL, FOS)

4. How and to what extent does the university assess student learning experiences? (SSL)

STANDARD IV: SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: HAS THE UNIVERSITY STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE WITH OUR MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. Does PennWest recruit, admit, register, and retain students in a manner consistent with its mission and institutional offerings, and how successful are these efforts? (SSL, FOS)

2. How do PennWest's student support programs and services contribute to student learning and success through its policies, procedures, and programs? (SSL, FOS)

3. How well do the university's co-curricular programs and services promote student success and learning? (SSL)

4. How and to what extent does the university take effective steps to ensure that its faculty and staff remain current in their discipline or functional area, so PennWest students receive a high-quality experience consistent with contemporary best practices and graduate career-ready? (PPL)

5. How and to what extent has PennWest assessed the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs that provide student learning opportunities? (SSL)

STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT: HAS THE UNIVERSITY CREATED A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ON ALL LEVELS? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. Does the university clearly state educational goals at the institutional and degree/program levels, and how well are those goals interrelated, relevant, and aligned to the institution's mission? (SSL)

2. In what ways does PennWest ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of academic assessment in the following areas?
   a. *Program student learning outcomes (SSL)*
   b. *Resources and professional development (PPL)*
   c. *Processes and policies (FOS)*

3. How and to what extent do assessment data assist the university in improving and revising curricula to promote student success? (SSL)

STANDARD VI: PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT: DOES THE UNIVERSITY ENGAGE IN THE NECESSARY PLANNING TO ENSURE IT HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES NEEDED FOR IMPROVEMENT? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. How effectively have processes, resources, and structures been aligned to fulfill the mission of PennWest? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

2. How does the university respond and adapt to change that leads to ongoing improvement, particularly change related to these areas? (FOS)
   a. *Organizational structure*
   b. *Operational and fiscal stability*
   c. *Sufficient and adequate technology resources*

3. How and to what extent is the university assessing the effectiveness of its planning and budget processes in support of its mission? (FOS)

STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION: HOW DO OUR ORGANIZATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES SUPPORT THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

1. What is the reporting structure of PennWest's governance bodies, and how well do they exercise effective decision making? (SSL, FOS, PPL)

2. How and how well does PennWest evaluate and communicate the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance? (FOS)

3. How and to what extent do the university's shared governance processes shape:
   a. *Student success and learning? (SSL)*
   b. *Operational and fiscal stability? (FOS)*
   c. *Collaboration and a sense of belonging? (PPL)*

4. How are administrative operations reviewed, improved, and communicated, and are the processes effective? (FOS)

5. How do the Office of the Chancellor, Board of Governors, and Council of Trustees ensure the university's quality and integrity in a manner that allows PennWest to realize its mission and goals and benefit the university, our students, and other constituencies we serve? (FOS)

VI. Guidelines for Reporting

Each working group will produce the following products as part of their work:
- A preliminary draft of their section of the report (due Feb. 23, 2024).
- A list of items to be uploaded to the Evidence Inventory (due Feb. 23, 2024).
- A final draft of their section of the report (due May 20, 2024).

The template below will be provided to the working groups in the Self-Study Workbook and distributed to all members at the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester.

- **Overview of Working Group's Charge**
  A brief description of the Standard for Accreditation and related evidence, Requirements of Affiliation, and a summary of their alignment with the three identified Institutional Priorities and the institution's mission.

- **Description of Lines of Inquiry**
  Overview of the lines of inquiry addressed by the working group and how these enable the working group to fulfill its charge and the institution's self-study outcomes.

- **Criteria for Accreditation**
  Description of their specific Standards and Criteria and how they are fulfilled at PennWest.

- **Collaboration, Connections, and Evidence Inventory Approach**
  Overview of the working group's collaborations with those refining the Evidence Inventory and, where applicable, Verification of Compliance process and a list of documentation to be included in the Evidence Inventory. In addition, a description of collaborative discussions with members of other working groups and, where needed, strategies for avoiding undue duplication.

- **Assessment Information Utilized**
  Description (or listing) of assessment information utilized to conduct analyses consistent with lines of inquiry.

- **Analytical Report**
  Analytical report that addresses relevant strengths and challenges, with appropriate reference to Institutional Priorities, Criteria for Accreditation, and Requirements of Affiliation.

- **Areas of Strength**
  Based on the analytical report, evidence-based areas of strength consistent with the working group's charge and assigned Standards for Accreditation and Institutional Priorities.

- **Opportunities for Improvement and Innovation**
  Based on the analytical report, evidence-based opportunities for improvement and innovation consistent with the working group's charge and assigned Standards for Accreditation and Institutional Priorities. This section also must address suggestions in the three legacy campuses' previous self-study visit reports.

- **Initial Strategies for Continuous Quality Improvement**
  Suggested institutional strategies for improvement.

VII. Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

The final self-study report will follow the outline below:

Table of Contents

Index of Tables

Index of Figures

Glossary of Acronyms

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

Chapter 2: Introduction

Chapter 3: Standard I: Mission and Goals

Chapter 4: Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Chapter 5: Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Chapter 6: Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Chapter 7: Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Chapter 8: Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Chapter 9: Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Chapter 11: Steering Committee and Working Group Members

VIII. Verification of Compliance Strategy

The Verification of Compliance will be administered by a working group that includes the university registrar, the executive director of Financial Aid, and the director of Institutional Research. The working group will review the following components to ensure compliance:

1. Student identity verification in distance and correspondence education.
2. Transfer of credit policies and articulation agreements.
3. Title IV program responsibilities.
4. Institutional records of student complaints.
5. Required information for students and the public.
6. Standing with state and other accrediting agencies.
7. Contractual relationships.
8. Assignment of credit hours.

Along with the Evidence Inventory, the Verification of Compliance supporting documentation will be compiled and tracked within the MSCHE Self-Study SharePoint site. The working group will be able to identify any gaps while reviewing the workbook components.

IX. Self-Study Timetable

We have requested a Spring 2025 evaluation visit, with an initial visit by our liaison in Spring 2023. We recognize that we have set a very ambitious timeline; however, we are confident that the goals outlined below in Table 5 are achievable.

TABLE 5

Date	Activity/Task	Status
Fall 2022	Attend Self-Study Institute	X
December 2022	Meet with Middle States liaison	X
Fall 2022	Begin to draft self-study design; establish MSCHE Self-Study SharePoint site	X
February 2023	Assemble Steering Committee	X
March 2023	Submit self-study design	X
September 2023	Announce opportunities for participation (open call to university community)	
Subcommittees form and work begins		
March-April 2023	Finalize Steering Committee and working groups	X
March-May 2023	Working groups finalize lines of inquiry	X
April 2023	Host Middle States liaison for self-study preparation visit	X
Summer 2023	Revise self-study design for MSCHE acceptance	X
Summer 2023	Working groups meet	
September	Launch 2023-2026 PennWest Strategic Plan	
Subcommittees collect and analyze data; draft self-study report created		
August-December 2023	Working groups gather and analyze data, report to Steering Committee	
September 2023	Hold launch event for the university community to share self-study plan, timeline, and opportunities for participation	
Fall 2023	MSCHE selects self-study Evaluation Team chair MSCHE chooses visit dates Send accepted self-study design to Evaluation Team chair	
Spring 2024	Draft self-study report and share with university community	
May-September 2024	Revise self-study report draft and make available for campus review	
Final report created; MSCHE team conducts site visit		
September-November 2024	Send self-study report draft to MSCHE team chair (two weeks before visit)	
September-November 2024	Host preliminary visit by Evaluation Team chair	
January 2025	Finalize self-study report based on team chair's feedback; share final report with university community	
January-March 2025	Upload final PennWest Self-Study Report/Evidence Inventory/Verification of Compliance to portal (six weeks before site visit)	
March 2025	Host Evaluation Team site visit	
March-May 2025	Receive MSCHE Evaluation Team report	
March-May 2025	Develop and submit institutional response	
June-July 2025	Commission meets to determine action	

X. Communications Plan

The Steering Committee tri-chairs, in collaboration with the president and provost, will direct the communications team to deliver updates and information regarding the self-study process. By the time of the launch event, PennWest will have a website (pennwest.edu/self-study) dedicated to providing updates on the self-study process; that website also will announce open forums for the university community during key phases of the process. The launch event will be an opportunity to share the self-study's methods and goals with the broader community and direct them to sources for the most current information, such as the website, emails, social media, and reports to shared governance groups. The self-study website will include a feedback link to give community members an additional way to share their thoughts during the process. The communication plan (Table 6) outlines the communication channels that will be used to reach various university audiences.

TABLE 6

Purpose	Audiences	Methods	Timing	Responsibility
Ongoing communications				
To provide regular updates to PennWest leadership	President, Executive Leadership Team	Regular meetings and updates with Tri-Chairs and Steering Committee	2023-2024	Tri-Chairs, Steering Committee
To share data, documents, and reports in a secure, transparent and convenient manner	Steering Committee and working group members	MSCHE Self-Study SharePoint site	2023-2024	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs
To provide regular updates to key PennWest constituencies	Students	MSCHE Self-Study website; email updates; social media; reports to shared governance groups*	Regular updates to website; emails and social media as needed	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; comms team
	Faculty / Staff	MSCHE Self-Study website; email updates; reports to shared governance groups*; social media	Regular updates to website; emails and social media as needed; governance group meetings	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; comms team
	Alumni / Community members	MSCHE Self-Study website; alumni emails; university magazines; social media	Regular updates to website; emails and social media as needed	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; comms team; alumni relations team
	Council of Trustees	MSCHE Self-Study website; emails and copies of email updates; quarterly meetings	Regular updates to website; emails as needed; quarterly meetings	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; President's Office
Targeted communications				
To gather feedback about the self-study design	Steering Committee	MSCHE Self-Study website; virtual kickoff event	Fall 2023	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; comms/IT teams
To gather feedback about working group reports and draft report	Students	MSCHE Self-Study website (feedback link); campus-based and/or virtual open forums; feedback from shared governance groups*	Spring 2023	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs
	Faculty / Staff	MSCHE Self-Study website (feedback link); campus-based and/or virtual open forums; feedback from shared governance groups*	Spring 2023	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs
	Alumni / Community members	MSCHE Self-Study website (feedback link); campus-based and/or virtual open forums	Spring 2023	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs
	Council of Trustees	MSCHE Self-Study website (feedback link); campus-based and/or virtual open forums; quarterly meetings	Spring 2023	Steering Committee, Tri-Chairs; President's Office

* e.g., Student Government, Faculty Senate, University Leadership Council, University Assembly, People and Culture Taskforce

XI. Evaluation Team Profile

TEAM CHAIR AND MEMBERS

The team chair and team members ideally will be familiar with rural campuses that enroll a student body similar to PennWest's. Given our institutional priorities and our most recent changes, individuals with specific expertise would be especially welcome, as would those familiar with the Complex Substantive Change process. Candidates that have experience with student success and learning, finance and operational effectiveness, new enrollment strategies, and enhancing university culture would be especially welcome. Ideally, all team members will have experience with a campus environment with multiple bargaining units.

PEER INSTITUTIONS

Using an analysis of past data, including previous self-study documentation as well as previous IPEDS feedback report peer listings, the following list consists of MSCHE regional schools that PennWest relates with.

Institutions considered comparable peers within the Middle States Region:

- Frostburg State University (MD)
- Montclair State University (NJ)
- Morgan State University (MD)
- Salisbury University (MD)
- Stockton University (NJ)
- SUNY at New Paltz (NY)
- SUNY College at Oswego (NY)
- SUNY College of Brockport (NY)
- SUNY Cortland (NY)
- The College of New Jersey (NJ)
- William Patterson University of New Jersey (NJ)

Institutions considered aspirational peers within the Middle States Region:

- SUNY Albany (NY)
- SUNY Binghamton (NY)
- SUNY Buffalo State (NY)
- Towson University (MD)

Institutions whose representatives might present conflicts of interest include sister institutions within Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

XII. Evidence Inventory

The Evidence Inventory is a working list of all documents and evidence supporting the self-study. Maintained through a SharePoint site by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the inventory is divided by standard, with an additional folder for compliance. Items from the inventory can be downloaded as needed by any committee member, and any working group can use any information in the inventory.

During the integration and Complex Substantive Change processes, evidence was saved and set aside for use in the self-study. The self-study chairs also asked working groups to provide a list of anticipated evidence based on the lines of inquiry, Requirements of Affiliation, and Standards criterion. A detailed list of expected evidence is below. The Evidence Inventory will be edited, enhanced, and refined as committees pursue their lines of inquiry throughout the self-study process.

Types of evidence will include data points such as (but not limited to) policies, procedures, handbooks, minutes, surveys, assessments, budgets, records, and reports. An inventory lead will be identified for each standard; those individuals will work with the designated data inventory specialist to transfer the appropriate information for each group.

TABLE 7

Standard	Evidence
Standard I	Mission Statement
	Course and program catalogs
	Program brochures
	University Strategic Plan
	Student Handbook
	Minutes from Council of Trustees
	Committee charges for relevant committees
	Collective bargaining agreements for faculty and staff
	Institutional Assessment Plan and report
	Website audit (review for alignment with mission and goals)
	Campus surveys (to measure knowledge/usage of institutional mission and goals)
	Documentation of integration work related to mission and goals
	Documentation of strategic plan work related to mission and goals
	Cabinet/other leadership group agendas and minutes (review for inclusion of mission and goals)

Standard	Evidence
Standard I (continued)	Review of Student Success, Finance, and faculty/staff support processes (review for inclusion of mission and goals)
	Documentation of budget decisions aligned with mission and goals
	Audit of PennWest policies (review for connection to mission and goals)
	Audit of PennWest forms (review for connection to mission and goals)
	Plan to address and communicate any misalignment
Standard	**Evidence**
Standard II	Student/employee/faculty handbooks
	NSSE and climate surveys
	Data from Financial Aid
	Consumer Information website links
	Grievance Policy and records of resolution
	Conflict of Interest Policy
	Human Resources policies
	Advertising and recruitment materials
	University Strategic Plan
	Athletics compliance reports
	Collective bargaining agreements (all bargaining units)
	Academic Integrity Policy
	Search guidelines and policies
	General Education menu
	Financial Literacy program
	Policy statements and compliance procedures on Equal Education and Employment Opportunity (EEEO) and Social Equity
	Student Code of Conduct
	Student-Athlete Handbook
	Policy for Student-Funded Research

Standard II (continued)	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Procurement Codes
	Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act
	Occupational Exposure to Hazardous Chemicals Policy
	PASSHE Expenditures of Public Funds
	Pennsylvania Public Official and Public Employee Ethics Act
	Right to Know Act and records of communication/resolution
	State Ethics Commission Statement of Financial Interests form
	State System Alternative Retirement Plan
	State Employees Retirement System plan
	Title IX Policy
	University Housing Resident Handbook
	Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) report
	Admission policies
	Retention data
	Dashboards metrics (e.g., ethnicity/race, underprivileged, first-generation, etc.)
	Budget policies
	Climate surveys
	Employee surveys
	Shared Governance documents
	DEI reports and data (e.g., term persistence, registration progression, etc.)
	PASSHE DEI dashboard

Standard	Evidence
Standard III	Course syllabi
	University Curriculum Committee (UCC) minutes
	Faculty CVs
	General Education curriculum and policy
	Program Review data
	Degree Audit information
	PennWest program array (final version, integration documentation, UCC program sheets)
	UCC data (e.g., guidelines, General Education program document, lists of publications and other scholarly activities of faculty)
	Center for Faculty Excellence documentation
	Title III funding documentation
	Career Services data (e.g., PASSHE dashboard on workforce outcomes, First Destination Survey, internships data, service-learning data, job shadowing data)
	Professional development funding data
	Data on instructional designers (e.g., number of designers, faculty usage data, technology acquisitions, efforts to engage faculty)
	Data on Office for Students with Disabilities (e.g., retention and graduation rates for OSD students, services offered, usage, communications with students and faculty, data on OSD faculty training)
	Data on accredited programs (e.g., list of accredited programs and accrediting bodies, number/percentage of students enrolled in accredited programs, graduation and 1-year retention rates)
	Program Assessment Plan
	General Education Assessment Plan
	Survey of departments on "key" learning experiences in their programs and resources available for those

Standard	Evidence
Standard IV	Student Handbook
	Enrollment trend data
	Transfer of Credit Policy
	Recruitment materials and application
	Affordability and financial aid information
	Percentage of students receiving financial aid
	Admission policies and procedures, including admission decision matrix
	Documentation of student registration and enrollment process
	Assessment of the effectiveness of registration and enrollment support services
	Data on student satisfaction with the registration and enrollment process
	Number of academic advisors and their caseloads
	Program array
	List of nationally accredited programs
	Evidence of career-focused learning and focus on student success
	Alumni surveys related to career/post-college satisfaction
	Participation rates for co-curricular activities, clubs, and organizations
	Data on student involvement in community service/civic engagement
	Data on the impact of student life programs on student development and engagement
	Student Learning Outcomes assessment for co-curricular programs
	Applicable student fee rates and policies
	Usage and assessment data related to Financial Aid; orientation; Welcome Weekend; Student Support assistants; Student Success coaches; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion; Office for Students with Disabilities; Career & Professional Development (career services); counseling; Behavioral Intervention Teams; Judicial Mentoring program; academic advising; academic support services
	Professional development policies, programs, and funding data

Standard	Evidence
Standard IV (continued)	Data from the Center for Faculty Excellence (e.g., professional development grants; number of applications and awards; number of workshops, seminars, trainings, book clubs offered and attendance; Global Online campus studio space trainings offered and attendance)
	Data from institutional trainings for faculty and staff (e.g., DEI, Title IX, SourcePoint, HRConnect, etc.)
	Assessment plans/data

Standard	Evidence
Standard V	Curriculum maps
	Program Assessment Plans and reports
	General Education Assessment Plan and report
	Institutional Assessment Plan and report
	Non-academic assessment plans and structure
	NSSE results
	Academic program review
	Specialized accreditation reports
	Professional development events for faculty
	Developmental courses and outcomes
	Data on Student Success coaches and retention
	Data on Supplemental Instruction
	Data on tutoring
	Data on Writing Center

Standard	Evidence
Standard VI	Audited financial statements
	Enrollment management plans
	Facilities master plans
	Campus Master Plan approach

Standard	Evidence
Standard VI (continued)	Enrollment trend data
	Organizational charts
	SAP business area structure
	Data on integration and technology resources
	Data on Banner OneSIS (ancillary software, systems, etc.)
	Student computer labs data
	Faculty/staff technology – computer inventory
	Process for evaluating changes made during integration
	Enrollment forecast model
Standard	**Evidence**
Standard VII	Council of Trustees minutes/resolutions
	APSCUF minutes (Including minutes from curriculum and tenure committees, as relevant)
	Faculty Senate minutes/resolutions
	Organizational charts
	Credentials for trustees, administrators
	Conflict of Interest Statement
	Board of Governors bylaws
	Council of Trustees bylaws
	University Assembly bylaws
	Faculty Senate bylaws

Standard VII (continued)	Presidential Commissions bylaws
	PennWest website
	PennWest employees' SharePoint
	People and Culture Taskforce charge and recommendations
	Strategic Plan: Employee section
	Climate survey
	Change Management survey
	Performance Evaluation Policy
	PASSHE evaluation policies
	Pennsylvania Act 188
	PASSHE Mission and Goals

Pennsylvania Western

UNIVERSITY

CALIFORNIA | CLARION | EDINBORO