

Assurance Argument

Sterling College - KS

Review date: 2/26/2024

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

1.A.1

The mission at Sterling College was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution. Sterling College's mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith" was created during the 1990-1991 academic year under the leadership of Sterling College's eighth President. The faculty was instrumental in the crafting of the statement. The mission statement was [approved by the faculty in February 1991](#) and unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees during its [February 1991 meeting](#). In [October 2015](#), [May 2019](#), and most recently in [October 2023](#) the Board of Trustees reaffirmed the mission of the College. The College's [Alma Mater](#), with lyrics penned in the 1960s, sung at opening [Keynote Convocations](#), [commencement exercises](#) and at events throughout the year, also supports the institution's Christ-centered mission.

1.A.2

So that both internal and external constituents may easily access them, all mission documents may be found on the College's website, in the [Academic Catalogs](#), in the [Faculty Handbook](#), in the [Employee Handbook](#), in the [Student Handbook](#) and in the [Board of Trustees By-Laws](#). In addition, prospective students to Sterling College receive a [spiritual formation document](#) from Enrollment Services with both the Mission and Belief Statement included. The mission documents include the following:

[Mission Statement](#)

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

[Vision Statement](#)

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

[Core Values](#)

Our core values flow out of our mission and vision and are the pillars which guide our relationships with students and community and strategic partners. The statement which introduces the core values acknowledges the need for integrity and quality and the role the institution plays in a larger society. Sterling College's core values were formally adopted by the Board of Trustees at the February 2000 Board meeting, and reaffirmed, along with the mission, vision, institutional learning objectives, and the faith and belief statements, at the [February 2009](#), [October 2015](#), [May 2019](#) and [October 2023](#) Board meetings.

The value of "faith" helps to define our mission as a Christian College. "Calling" makes clear that Sterling College is committed to the future success of our most important constituents -- students. "Learning" and "integrity" emphasize the College's commitment to high academic standards. "Service" acknowledges the commitment the College makes to servant leadership and to the benefits the institution and its members make to society. And finally, "community" acknowledges the diversity of the world in which we serve as members of the body of Christ and the attitude of respect we should carry in that service.

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

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

Our [Statement of Faith](#):

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

Institutional Learning Objectives

The mission documents, mission, vision, core values, priorities, process, and statement of faith described above are the basis for the faculty-created and Board-approved [Institutional Learning Objectives](#). The Institutional Learning Objectives are the basis of [program objectives](#) developed by faculty in the individual academic program areas which are assessed annually by faculty at the course

and program level. To support the mission of the college, a [Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning](#) was first appointed in 2017 and information about this initiative is available on [the college's website](#).

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

1.A.3

Planning and budgeting priorities align with and support Sterling College's mission to be a Christ-centered institution of higher education. Budgeting documents demonstrate that over the past ten years, the College spent, on average, [30% of its budget on instruction and academic support along with 25% of its budget serving students](#) in their academic, social and spiritual pursuits.

Consistent with its Christ-centered mission, the College employs a [Campus Pastor](#) who also supports cross-cultural mission experiences throughout the year through planned academic experiences such as budgeted [summer mission trips](#) and by encouraging staff to serve as mission team leaders by [granting staff PTO days](#).

Moreover, the College's [2020-2023 Guard and Guide Strategic Plan](#) and new [2023-2026 Guard and Guide; A Call to Action](#) are geared toward guarding, guiding, and enriching the academic ethos of the College by meeting the following objectives:

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

An in-depth discussion of the 2020-2023 and 2023-2026 strategic plans is outlined in the Criterion 5 argument.

1.A.4

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

The College mission statement guides the development of [non-academic department mission](#)

[statements](#). Within assessment worksheets, each department's mission statement is aligned with the College's mission statement.

Part of the mission is training “leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith.” The Theology and Ministry Department contributes to fulfilling this aspect of the mission. All students are required to take nine credit hours of [General Education](#) from the department, which include [specific reference to the mission statement](#). The College also offers a variety of [degree programs](#) through the department of Theology and Ministry: Biblical Studies, Christian Ministries, and Christian Thought. Sterling also has several interdisciplinary degrees in ministry. In January 2019 Sterling enrolled its first set of students in its [Master of Arts in Sports Ministry](#).

Sterling’s Christ-centered mission goes beyond the Theology and Ministry Department. All full-time students are required to [attend chapel](#). Residential students who are enrolled full time at Sterling College must earn a total of 18 chapel/convocation credits each semester. Full time commuter students who live outside of Sterling must earn 13 chapels/convocation credits each semester. Successful completion of the chapel/convocation requirements is required for students to graduate from Sterling College.

[Beyond chapel](#), Sterling offers a variety of bible studies, missions trips (domestic and foreign), and service opportunities (the biggest of which is “[Love Sterling](#),” focused on giving back to the town of Sterling). Campus ministry has a student-led [Worship Arts team](#), called “Pursuit”. *Pursuit* leads worship in campus chapels and goes to area churches and [Christian schools](#) to lead worship services for high school students. The Athletic Department's "[President's Cup](#)" emphasizes community service and the number of hours completed by student-athletes has grown from 1,500 hours in the competition's first year to [over 5,000 hours](#) during the 2022-2023 academic year. The wider Sterling College community -- students, employees, and alumni -- are involved in the spiritual life of the campus through programs like the “[Prayer Warrior](#)” and [Advent](#) devotionals.

Some new initiatives have furthered one aspect of the mission or another. To help develop “creative and thoughtful leaders,” the [Undergraduate Humanities Conference](#), which began in spring 2017, gives students the opportunity to present their research in relation to a unifying conference theme, and also to interact with the invited plenary speaker. This conference was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and has not yet been restored, though the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) highlights plans to continue supporting it. The Theology and Ministry Department organizes a “[Theology+](#)” [series](#), beginning 2018-2019, featuring a lecture-discussion on the intersection of theology with other disciplines, such as [Theology + Science](#) and [Theology + Athletic Training](#). Each year, several academic departments hold Departmental Chapels which involve students, faculty, and staff.

Faculty have many opportunities to develop their strategies regarding how they contribute to the mission of the institution. Every [August](#) and [January](#), faculty participate in a Faculty Worship Service centered on professional development. During the school year, [Faculty Renewal Sessions](#) are held once a semester. These workshops provide faculty and staff the opportunity to learn from a guest speaker and discuss current academic issues as well as areas for personal growth in relation to their work with students. All faculty are invited to gather in small-groups to read and discuss theological and pedagogical [books](#) to further their development as an educator in a faith-based liberal arts institution. During [New Faculty Orientation](#), the newly hired faculty participate in an onboarding session designed to explore the institutional emphasis on the integration of faith and learning.

The institution’s student support services also reflect the stated mission. A number of support positions underscore the institution’s commitment “to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who

understand a maturing Christian faith”:

- [Licensed Counselors](#), including a [Director of Counseling](#), are qualified to counsel students from both secular and Christian frameworks. A variety of [services](#) are offered free of charge to students.
- [Resident directors](#) of dormitories are equipped to nurture the spiritual growth of Sterling College students, leading Bible studies as alternatives to the traditional chapel program.
- A [Campus Pastor](#) oversees the College’s chapel program and helps coordinate a number of ministry initiatives.
- The [Director of Health Service](#) (a licensed Registered Nurse) is available to help students with any [health concerns](#).
- The [Executive Director of Student Success and Career Services](#) helps students and alumni find jobs and helps first-year students with their transition to College. The [Director of Academic Support & Student Engagement](#) closely monitors students on academic probation and manages all tutoring and the [Disability Coordinator and Success Coach](#) supports students with accommodation plans and interventions for success. These positions staff [The Office of Academic Support](#).
- [Athletic coaches](#) are encouraged to consider the spiritual and academic dimension of their athletes.
- The [Director of Online Programs](#) helps meet the academic and advising needs of the College's online students.
- The [Student Life Administrative Assistant](#) is the front line in responding to student issues and making referrals to the appropriate campus personnel or office.
- The [Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning](#) creates supportive resources, structures, and strategies to integrate faith and learning, focusing on the critical examination of academic content through the lens of a Christian student.

In addition, [numerous clubs or organizations](#) under the umbrella of the [Student Government Association](#) support students in their extra- and co-curricular endeavors. For example, during the 2023-2024 school-year, the following clubs exist on Sterling College’s campus: Campus Activities Board; Campus Activities Ministries; Chess Club; Fellowship of Christian Athletes; Man Monday; Student Leadership Association; Students Who Often Roll Dice; Theatre at Sterling College; and The Table. These clubs produce events like [intramurals](#), [dorm events](#), and [bible studies](#) that support students socially and in their [pursuit](#) of a "maturing Christian faith."

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

Sterling College leadership also realizes that in order “to develop creative and thoughtful leaders,” students must be required to have some degree of academic ability. Consequently, the College is not an open-admissions institution. The College responded to the lack of entrance exam availability during and following the COVID-19 pandemic by removing the ACT/SAT entrance exam requirement. The academic catalog outlines [criteria for admission](#) for students with and without entrance exam scores. Students who do not meet minimum requirements for admission must be

approved through a selective [admissions committee process](#).

1.A.5

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

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

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

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

1.B.1

In a number of ways, Sterling College's actions and decisions reflect an understanding that, as an educational organization, the institution serves not just its internal constituencies but also the public.

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

The College also makes its facilities available to the local community and groups passing through Sterling. The Sterling Public Schools (USD 376) [utilize the College's football field and track](#) for junior high and high school sporting events, and the College hosts a high school [basketball tournament](#) every January, bringing eight boys and girls teams to the campus and community and providing a valuable learning opportunity for students in the Sports Management program who earn event management hours as part of [SM248 Event Management](#). For several years, the [Reno County Sabres](#) have hosted a home-school volleyball tournament on campus and recently [Rose Hill](#) held a soccer camp. In 2021 the [Kansas Shrine Bowl](#) hosted their band camp at the College. The College rents spaces for [wedding](#) ceremonies and receptions. Other groups that use the College's facilities include [Rice County Kids' Camp](#) and space is made available for the [Sterling High School National Honor Society](#). The College hosts various law enforcement trainings on campus, most recently including [gang](#) and [de-escalation](#) trainings. The College cafeteria is open to [community members](#) during regularly scheduled meal hours and law enforcement eat for free.

The college hosts a number of lectures that are open to the public. The most notable is the [Freeman Lecture series](#), on [servant leadership](#). Also prominent are the [Oscar Schmidt Lecture Series](#) (on hiatus following COVID pandemic) on the free-market economy, and the [Peacemakers Convocation](#)

on [racial reconciliation](#). Departments and other offices on campus also initiate public lectures. For example, since 2014, once per semester the Criminal Justice program has hosted a [keynote speaker](#). The education department has hosted the [Santa Fe Children's Literature Festival](#), bringing over 1500 students and their teachers to campus to hear readings and talks by children's author Christine Taylor-Butler and children's illustrator Brad Sneed. The Theology and Ministry Department hosts [an annual fall conference series](#) (starting in 2017) that has been well attended by the public, as well as members of the college community. The Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning partnered with Humanities Kansas to offer a symposium, "[Virtues of Place: Wendell Berry and Rural Kansas](#)" which was free and open to the public.

The Warrior Women Leadership Coalition hosted a [keynote event](#) that was free for all with special invitation to local high school students. The College partners with other local entities to [support initiatives](#) that better the community as a whole. Events like the annual [Christmas tree lighting](#) welcome community members to campus.

The Sterling College arts programs have a long-standing tradition of support, cooperation, and partnership with area high schools, junior highs, and elementary schools. For well over 30 years the Sterling College Theatre department has hosted an annual [Theatre Workshop](#) for [high school](#) students and teachers. This event features active and informative workshops in the morning (including sessions on characterization, stage combat, scenic painting skills, choreography, auditioning and several others) followed by an afternoon performance of the spring main stage show – which is traditionally a classic from Shakespeare to Tennessee Williams. A major undertaking organized by the College Enrollment Services Office, the Theatre Workshop has brought crowds of 200 to 800 high school students to campus each year. SC Theatre promotes high school theatre attendance at all season productions, often hosting a pizza preview on the evening before a show opens so that students and teachers can see the final Dress Rehearsal free of charge. Last year over 20 high schools sent groups of students to SC Theatre productions – in addition to the Theatre Workshop.

The Sterling College Music department often hosts a [Composer Series](#) in which a professional composer/arranger is brought to campus to work with Sterling choirs and select high school students. The band director opens his athletic Pep Band and his Concert Band to select area high school students as well. He [travels to over 20 high schools](#) each school year to work directing with high school bands and individual students. Through his connections the music department was able to add [six new Music Education students](#) this fall for a total of 10 currently at Sterling.

Many small high schools in the area do not have active theatre programs. [Sterling theatre and art students](#) have assisted area high schools in providing leadership from directing to scene design and construction to costumes and choreography. Schools who have benefited from Sterling's theatre and art assistance include smaller schools like Little River, Lyons, and Inman to larger schools like McPherson, Goddard, Campus, Clearwater, and Andover.

The Sterling College Debate/Forensics team has hosted a high school [Forensics Showcase](#) featuring state champion forensics students at the Kansas State Fair for the last seven years (2020 not included). This year they also hosted a high school debate showcase at the Kansas State Fair as well. In addition, Sterling College [hosts a high school debate](#) tournament on campus each fall.

To further support recruitment in the Arts, the College hosts an [Arts Preview Day](#).

Several examples of academic departments engaging with the public could be mentioned here but two

examples are the Language and Literature faculty [visiting high school classrooms](#) and the Theology and Ministry faculty serving as guest preachers or teachers at local churches and [Christian schools](#). Education faculty volunteer time for events like [Educators Rising](#) and [Kansas Teacher of the Year Programs](#).

A number of employees serve in various professional and voluntary roles outside of the College:

- President Rich sits on the [Board of the KICA](#), chairs the KCAC board of presidents, serves as member of the [Council of Presidents](#) for the NAIA, and is on the board of the [Slavic Gospel Association](#).
- Asst. Professor Larry Brownlee serves on the [BOE for USD376](#) while both Asst. Professor Ken Troyer and Registrar Kendra Grizzle serve on the [BOE for USD405](#).
- Assistant Professor Shebuel Varghese serves as president of [The India Mission for Evangelism](#), a non-profit organization that supports education for Christians in India.
- Assistant Professor Glenn Butner serves as the head of the leadership team for a multi-church ecumenical effort to resettle Ukrainian refugees in Rice County through the federal Uniting for Ukraine program, with applications in to resettle 9 refugees in the 2023 calendar year. He also serves on the [Editorial Board](#) for the *Journal of Classical Theology* and has served as a peer reviewer for *The Journal of Markets and Morality*, the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, and for Rowman & Littlefield publishers.
- Scott Downing, Vice President for Athletics – Serves on the NAIA Football Championship Selection Committee.
- Justin Morris, Associate Vice President for Athletics and Facility Management - KCAC Governing Council Executive Committee Chair (2023-2025), KCAC Membership Committee, KCAC Games Fee Committee, KCAC AD Liaison – Men and Women’s Soccer Coaches, NAIA Women’s Soccer Championship Selection Committee, Sterling/Alden Entrepreneurial Community Board Member, Sterling Country Club Board Member
- KC Bassett, Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women Leader, Head Women’s Basketball Coach - KCAC Senior Women’s Leadership Executive Committee, KCAC Women’s Basketball Chair, KCAC Championships Committee
- John Harding, Head Volleyball Coach - KCAC Women’s Volleyball Chair
- Jeff Duke, Head Tennis Coach - AAU Basketball Lieutenant Governor for the State of Oklahoma
- Aaron Weber, Sports Information Director - NAIA National Player of the Week Committee, KCAC Player of the Week Committee, NCCAA Player of the Week Committee, Sterling Chamber of Commerce Board Member, Sterling Rotary Board Member
- Randy Stange, Head Men’s Basketball Coach – Kansas Special Olympics Board Member

Many others give of their time and talents, as well.

Students, likewise, serve in various ways. The student [Worship Arts Team](#), Pursuit, performs at churches, Christian high schools, camps, and other venues. Sterling has a rich tradition of [missions trips](#), both domestic and foreign, that serve those with various needs in tangible ways. Student Government Association organizes [regular blood donation drives](#).

Academic programs also interact with the community. Many majors require a service project of some kind, such as the Mathematics Department’s [Math Service Class](#), during which students learn to use their math skills for the good of others. Students in the Writing and Editing major complete Advanced Composition and Research, which requires a [service project](#) that draws attention to local stories and resources and culminates in a presentation open to the public.

Additionally, students in the Athletic Training program, one of the premier athletic training programs in the region, serve the local communities through clinical [practical experiences](#). In support of providing athletic training healthcare services to local high schools Sterling College, along with the Rice County Healthcare Foundation and Rice County school districts, reached an [agreement](#), beginning in 2015 to send Certified Athletic Trainers to the high schools in a Graduate Assistant position. This arrangement ended in 2021 when both Lyons and Sterling High Schools were able to hire full-time athletic trainers as district employees. Athletic training faculty and staff make a habit of hosting students from [high school](#) and [community college](#) sports medicine classes to learn more about the healthcare field.

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

1.B.2

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

1.B.3

The College engages with external constituencies and responds to their needs, as allowed by its mission and capacity. The institution is a [member](#) of the local Chamber of Commerce, and its Chandler Board Room in the cafeteria has been the meeting place for the local [Rotary Club](#) for decades.

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

- The College was one of the first Kansas independent colleges to pursue [articulation agreements](#) with [community colleges](#) throughout the state to facilitate the transfer of their students to Sterling College. Now, the KICA maintains these [agreements](#) for all member institutions.
- The College holds [agreements](#) for a 2+3 Advantage agreement for the Athletic Training program with local community colleges and provides preferred admittance for alumni of select institutions.
- The College has an articulation agreement with [Emporia State University](#) that guarantees Sterling College Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting admission to Emporia State University's Master of Accountancy program when those graduates have a 2.75 GPA.
- The College has an articulation agreement with [Southwest Baptist University's](#) Doctor of Physical Therapy program that guarantees that graduates from the health science major will have their prerequisites for the DPT program at Southwest Baptist fulfilled.
- The College maintains an articulation agreement that guarantees admittance into the nursing program at [Hesston College](#) for pre-nursing students who meet the minimum requirements.
- In fall 2018, the College finalized an [articulation agreement with Wichita State University](#) in Biomedical Engineering and Industrial Engineering, by which students would receive training and gain bachelor's degrees from both institutions.
- Every Thanksgiving, a [free community dinner](#) is held in the College's cafeteria.
- For over 20 years, Sterling College hosted an annual "[Sleepless in Sterling](#)" youth retreat for

the churches within the Southern Kansas Presbytery and the facilities are still open to them. The event brought over 100 youth to campus for three days and two nights and utilizes much of the campus.

- The College makes its swimming pool [available to the public](#), and because it is the only pool in the county open during the fall and spring, is used by people from Sterling and Lyons.
- The track around the football field is also available for [community use](#) when the complex is not being used by USD 376 or the College for events.
- Two major College/community events happen each fall: [Homecoming](#) and [Warrior Fest](#), each of which are big draws for community and friends of Sterling and Sterling College.
- Enrollment Services hosts [AVID](#) and [high school](#) groups to inform and educate them about the college search process.
- The Athletic Department supports local high school athletics by participating as a [game day sponsor](#).

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

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

Sterling College is one of approximately 180 Christian institutions around the world that belong to the CCCU. The purpose of the CCCU is to help colleges and universities more effectively integrate faith in learning. Through its Best Semester program, the CCCU offers students who attend member colleges the chance to study both abroad and at various locations within the United States. The organization coordinates and sponsors professional development events for the faculty and staff of member institutions, and it offers publications, research, and other helpful resources to aid professionals who work in Christian higher education. Employees of member institutions may also subscribe to CCCU-sponsored electronics mailing lists and dialogue about important issues with experts at other colleges and universities.

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

Sterling College is one of 21 member colleges of the Kansas Independent College Association. The KICA "develops and enhances the competitive standing of its 21 member independent, nonprofit, regionally accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities." Major initiatives of the association include "professional development and collaboration, governmental advocacy, and public engagement collectively aimed at supporting the ability of students to choose and afford an independent college education that fits their goals." The KICA provides another avenue of support for Sterling College administrators as the College competes with larger Kansas Regent colleges and universities.

The KICA exists to:

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

Through the KICA, Sterling College is able to offer an [education endorsement in Special Education](#).

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

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

International Alliance for Christian Education (IACE)

The College is a [member](#) of the IACE, an alliance that exists to "unify, synergize, and strengthen collective conviction around biblical orthodoxy and orthopraxy, cultural witness, scholarship, professional excellence, and resourcing of Christian education at all levels."

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

Sterling College is one of 29 colleges that have partnered with the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture to provide college students with internships in a major urban area. The Chicago Center specializes in coordinating Chicago-based internships with students' academic areas of interest. The partnership has been especially helpful to the College's Education department, as it allows students to complete their student teaching while encountering cultural diversity they would not otherwise encounter in central Kansas. Consequently, students develop skills necessary for responsibilities in an urban environment.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

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

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

Lilly Fellows Program (LFP)

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

resources and training for leaders in church-related colleges and universities.

Since becoming a member of the LFP network, Sterling College has applied for and received several grants which have supported faculty development in relation to the institution's mission. A grant awarded for the 2018-2019 academic year was titled "[Understanding Christian Faith,](#)" Academic years 2019-2021 saw a grant for "[Mentoring for Community, Diversity, and Hospitality](#)" administered, and another called "[Resilient and Prepared](#)" during the 2022-2023 academic year.

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

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

Sterling College provides mission appropriate opportunities for civic engagement.

1.C.1

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

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

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

- The Honors Program offered a course in 2018, [HR289: Civil Rights Movement](#) that involved [travel to key Civil Rights landmarks](#) in Tennessee and Alabama. The Program also offers courses focused on ethnic, national, and gender diversity including [HR489: Immigration Ethics and Policy](#). The Honors Program encourages civic engagement through requiring ten hours community service per semester for [all honors students](#) and through offering courses with required community service components such as HR301: The Life of the Mind in Service of the World and [HR105: Honors Foundations of Servant Leadership](#).
- In the Athletic Training Program, students are required to obtain [clinical observation hours](#) at a general medical/family practice facility which allows students to work with patients from a variety of cultures, beliefs, backgrounds, financial situations, insured states, ages, and genders.
- Education students have many opportunities to interact with diverse populations, and during

their Kansas Teacher Work Sample (K-TWS), they must identify multicultural students within their clinical placement, address adaptations and accommodations, and create assessments based on student need.

- History majors take [HI461: Topics in Non-Western History](#), which include engagement with the history of a particular region of the world that is different in culture from our own. Example topics for the class include the Middle East, Latin American History, Ancient Egypt and its Neighbors, and [History of Japan](#). Other courses include [HI3711: History of Islamic Civilizations](#) and the world history courses, [HI101](#) and [HI102](#), which are not purely western focused in content.
- The Language and Literature department has a number of classes which incorporate readings and discussion of literary works produced by ethnic minorities, non-U.S. writers, and/or women. Classes include [LL356: Young Adult Literature](#), [LL 289: African Literature](#), [LL289: Native American Literature](#), [LL289: American Immigrant Literature](#), [LL289 Contemporary African American Literature](#), [LL251](#) and [LL252: World Literature I and II](#) and [LL151: Introduction to Literature](#).
- The Theology and Ministry department has a number of classes which challenge students with diversity issues, such as [TM340: Gender and Ethnic Issues in Ministry](#), [TM363: World Religions](#), and [TM438: Theology and Society](#). These courses reflect variously on issues of race, gender, class, politics, culture, religion, and social location. An example assignment is the [Minority Report](#), required of TM340.

Beyond the classroom, academic departments have implemented and initiated other activities and programs that carry out our commitment to educate for a multicultural society. We provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to learn about diverse cultures from a variety of perspectives.

- The Honors Program hosts educational opportunities for students to learn about injustice and racism in our society, such as a guest lecture titled "[The Murder of Emmett Till](#)". The program also offers events focused on ethnic, national, and gender diversity including the invited lecture "[Charles Curtis: The First Native American Vice President](#)" through Kansas Humanities, a screening of the film "[Romero](#)" on Salvadoran bishop Oscar Romero, and a reading of [Dorothy Sayers'](#) "Are Women Human?". [Honors Program students](#) tutor [members](#) of a [Ukrainian refugee family](#).
- The Language and Literature Department invited [Marwa Ghazali](#) to campus to speak about the Somali Civil War and African Refugee Stories.
- The Undergraduate Humanities Conference in 2018 featured [Jemar Tisby](#), President of *The Witness: A Black Christian Collective*, who gave a lecture titled "A Racial Reformation."
- The Art and Design Department invited [Yvonne Osei](#), a German-born Ghanaian artist, to give a lecture, "Who Discovers the Discoverer?" in April 2019.
- In Spring 2019, Faculty Council approved the creation of an ad-hoc [Faculty Diversity Committee](#). This committee existed to research diversity issues and led to the creation of a joint task force with members representing faculty, staff, and students. The group presented a [final assessment](#) to the President's Cabinet in the fall of 2020. The General Education Committee [discussed section five](#) recommendations during program review.
- A Student Diversity Club started in the 2017-2018 school year with the [support of a faculty advisor](#) and hosted gatherings for students such as "Salsa Night" and a film viewing of *The Hate U Give*.
- The Office for the Integration of Faith and Learning [received a grant](#) from the Lilly Fellows Program that will provide diversity training for all faculty from 2019-2021, beginning with

faculty attending the [CCCU Diversity and Inclusion Conference](#) at George Fox University in October 2019.

1.C.2 and 1.C.3

The College's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of all people while fostering a climate of respect among all. Early in the Academic Catalog, the College declares its commitment to [non-discrimination](#). Each syllabus is also required to include a [non-discrimination](#) and an [accommodation statement](#).

Other mission documents also serve as evidence that the College understands its role in a multicultural society. The Sterling College core values are introduced by [a pledge](#) that underscores the College's commitment to diversity. In its declaration to labor in "active, vital partnership with church, community, and strategic partners," the College not only acknowledges but also embraces its role in a diverse world. Recognizing that partnership with church, community, and strategic partners is "vital" implies an organizational awareness of diversity's importance, for these constituencies can be as diverse as the world itself.

Furthermore, the [core value of community](#) specifically recognizes the diversity of Sterling College learners and other internal constituencies, for the College has defined this value as "mutual respect amid diversity as members of the body of Christ." Likewise, Sterling's [institutional learning objectives](#) includes the goal that "The Sterling College graduate will: ... Demonstrate understanding of relationships between his or her chosen area of study and the world and its cultures." Through this organizational definition, the College publicly welcomes the diversity represented within the campus community. Demographically, Sterling College is much more diverse than the surrounding community. According to 2022 census information, [Rice County](#) has a minority population of 7.4%, while in fall 2022, minority enrollment at Sterling College was 33%. This is more in keeping with the national average. In 2022, the [U.S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts"](#) estimated that 58.9% of the population is non-Hispanic white and 41.1% is minority. The ethnic diversity of Sterling College also [compares favorably](#) with the other Kansas Independent College Association (KICA) colleges.

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

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Minority Students	25.5%	31%	31%	36%	38%	37%	34%	38%	33%	30%

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

The "Our Priorities" document also states that the College seeks to "cultivate a Christ-centered worldview through which students are able to explore and understand themselves, their faith, their *environment*, and their *heritage*" (emphases added). Implicit in this statement is the College's

understanding that its student body represents a number of environments and heritages.

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

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

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

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

- The Education Department awards a [Diversity Scholarship](#) every year.
- The College promotes and supports a number of [mission trips](#) every year, to countries that include [Mexico](#), China, Ghana, Panama, Peru and others.
- The College regularly sends students to Washington, D.C. to participate in events hosted by the [National Student Leadership Forum](#) which "encourages students to be better individuals as well as leaders by challenging their decision-making, values and beliefs systems using the platform of servant leadership."
- [Tuition Remission](#) for one course per semester for students over age 60.
- In 2015, the College introduced the annual [Peacemakers Convocation](#) which occurs during [Black History Month](#) each year. It affords students, faculty, staff, and community members the opportunity to hear from [African American leaders](#) who have been transformative in local, regional, and national culture.
- [Special missions chapels](#) are common at Sterling College. During these chapel services, students hear other students discuss their experiences with peoples from across the world.
- In [ED205: Cultural Diversity in Education](#), a required course for all Education majors, students demonstrate their understanding of a maturing Christian faith by exploring the relationships between current cultural values and their impact on American classrooms.
- Students who participate in a College-sponsored mission trip are required to take [TM107: Training for Cross-Cultural Ministry](#).
- Similarly, students in the Athletic Training program must take [AT541: Psychosocial Intervention](#) which familiarizes students with relevant psychosocial problems that student-athletes may encounter.
- In December 2018, Student Life and several Sterling College faculty organized an [Open Forum Discussion on Race](#) that allowed students to share their experiences and concerns on campus and in the community.
- We have sent students to the summer internship program at Yellowstone Theological Institute, whose President has delivered Chapel messages at Sterling and also written [a musical composition for our band](#).
- In fall 2019, Student Life launched an initiative to provide training, [Diversity Awareness for Students](#), to all students. Since this launch, the [training](#) has been offered to all new students.
- The Student Life Office utilizes social media to celebrate diversity through campaigns

- such as a series of Black History Month [posts](#).
- In spring 2022, art faculty and students [painted](#) a mural on the east side of the Student Union in celebration of the [College's ethnic and cultural diversity](#).
- In October 2023, a [Multicultural Committee](#) was formed by the VP for Student Life and Campus Pastor to work toward establishing a Multicultural Office.
- [Flags](#), currently 42, representing the various nationalities of students are displayed in Mabee Library. The Student Government Association (SGA) supports this initiative by purchasing the [flags](#).

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

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

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

The mission of Sterling College, "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith," was created and approved in 1991 through a process which included a broad section of the campus culture. The mission has been [reaffirmed most recently in 2023](#) and permeates the culture of the College. The mission documents are clear and drive the academic enterprise of the College and informs not only institutional learning objectives, but also departmental and course objectives and is visible across campus.

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

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

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

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

Opportunities:

The student population is quite diverse at Sterling College, and yet a small percentage of faculty and staff come from racial and ethnic minority groups. Fall 2023 IPEDS data show that of the 48 full-time and pro-rata faculty, only 9% come from racial and ethnic minority groups. Among non-faculty employees (staff), approximately 18% come from racial and ethnic minority groups. Additionally, the Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning is a woman. In 2018, a woman was appointed to the position of Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and in spring 2021, a woman was promoted to Vice President for Enrollment Services.

In an attempt to increase the population of racial and ethnic minority groups among employees, College administration have been evaluating hiring practices and researching best opportunities to advertise open positions.

[A final report](#) from the ad-hoc Joint Task Force on Diversity researched opportunities within the curriculum to promote diversity. The General Education Committee is currently completing program review and taking into consideration the suggestion of this report. The establishment of a Multicultural Committee to create a Multicultural Office will aid in further developing institution-wide multicultural opportunities.

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2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

Sterling College identified Integrity as one of its [six core values](#) along with Faith, Calling, Learning, Service and Community. Consistency is observed in the [board policy manual](#), [employee handbook](#) and [faculty handbook](#) in description of the core value of integrity: “Integrity in scholarship, the arts, athletics and all other co-curricular activities”.

2.A.1

The mission at Sterling College "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith" was created during the 1990-1991 academic year under the leadership of Sterling College's eighth President. The faculty was instrumental in the crafting of the statement. The mission statement was [approved by the faculty in February 1991](#) and unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees during its [February 1991 meeting](#). The Board regularly reaffirms the mission, most recently in [October 2023](#).

2.A.2

Sterling College operates with integrity in financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions.

Financial Integrity

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

In addition to Board oversight, the Business Office, under the direction of the [Chief Financial Officer](#), employs generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and “maintains its accounts in

accordance with the principles and practices of fund accounting". Fund accounting is the procedure by which resources for various purposes are classified for accounting purposes in accordance with activities or objectives as specified by donors. This practice of fund accounting adheres to regulations and restrictions imposed by organizations outside and within the institution.

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

Academic Integrity

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

The College displays integrity in upholding its internal [academic status policies](#). There are four levels of academic discipline that are in place for students who fail to maintain academic standards: academic warning, academic probation, academic suspension, and academic dismissal. The VPAA [tracks](#) academic actions and ensures policy is followed.

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

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

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

"We, the faculty of Sterling College, recognizing that the education profession must accept responsibility for the conduct of its members, agrees to judge our colleagues and be judged by them in accordance with this Code. We adopt the following three statements edited from the Council of the American Association of University Professors as premises for our Code: 1) The faculty's responsibility to defend its freedoms cannot be separated from its responsibility to uphold those freedoms by its own actions; 2) Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators and trustees the following obligations: a) to respect the dignity of others; b) to acknowledge the right of others to express differing opinions; and c) to foster and defend

intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off campus. Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive to learning and to evenhanded treatment in all aspects of the teacher-student relationship. We affirm that the spirit of this Code is grounded in the Christian ethic of love for all persons and in individual responsibility to God and people. To this end, the aim of the Code is to encourage responsible actions, sensitivity, and mutual support among all members of the academic community”.

Human Resources

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

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

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

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

In 2015, the College named a Title IX Coordinator who reports directly to the President. The Title IX Coordinator and members of the team have attended [trainings and educational seminars](#) on current regulations, and trends within the discipline. During the 2018/2019 academic year, the College changed the way that By-Stander and sexual harassment intervention trainings were administered. In addition to in-person trainings and written materials the College partnered with Get Inclusive to offer Campus Save & Title IX training to students and employees. The training, internally referred to as "[Shield Training](#)", is required of all [employees](#) and [students](#).

In order to strengthen its position to help the victims of sexual assault find resources and healing, the College employs [campus counselors](#), whose services are free to students. The College also participates in bystander education, provides a [Circle of 6 link](#), and offers a resource to file a complaint or report a concern on the [Student Life resources page](#) of the College website.

[Employees](#) and [students](#) are annually given the College's [Alcohol and Drug Policy](#) which details the College's commitment to The Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989. The

policy includes a description of the student alcohol and drug policy as well as information for employees regarding the College's commitment to "safe, healthy, and efficient working conditions." Sterling College believes it is important to have a strong alcohol and drug policy and promote it to all employees and students. [Biennially](#) the program is evaluated and assessed of the program's effectiveness.

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

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

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

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

The [President's Cabinet](#) meets regularly to discuss issues which have arisen as well as institutional planning and strategy. When an employee has an issue which he/she believes should be addressed by the Cabinet, the employee brings that issue to the appropriate Vice President who will bring that issue to the Cabinet.

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

In 2018 the [Staff Welfare Committee](#) was formed and led by the Director of HR. The group met monthly and served as an avenue for staff concerns to be brought to Cabinet. The group also developed [Sterling College Staff Connections \(SC²\)](#), a time for staff members to meet monthly to hear from different departments on campus, ask questions, and highlight "good news moments" from across campus. While the committee became inactive during the COVID-19 pandemic, work began in the [summer of 2023](#) to reactivate the [committee](#).

Employees are kept informed on what is happening through [all-employee meetings](#) held [the week after](#) most Board Meetings.

Employees have a time for community building during beginning of the school year festivities and a [Christmas](#) Celebration in December. During these gatherings, the President addresses employees.

The weekly email newsletter, [Campus Events](#), further keeps employees informed on campus happenings.

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

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

Auxiliary Functions

Sterling College maintains relationships of integrity and ethical business practice through its many auxiliary services including, but not limited to, food service, bookstore, transportation services, physical plant, and informational technology. Many of the vendors that serve the college are local businesses located within 60 miles of Sterling. The College has outsourced many of its functions, including its food service, IT services, and much of College travel, in order to bring greater efficiency and value to our students.

One area that the College continually strives to improve is cash flow. The College seeks to be a good partner and to act with complete integrity with regard to keeping our accounts current.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

2.B.1

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

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

The [Faculty Handbook](#) is available [online](#) for current faculty and also those considering employment with the College.

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

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

The College maintains an [online employee directory](#) and [roster of adjunct instructors](#).

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

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

[The Marketing and Communications Office](#) includes a full-time Director of Marketing and Communication, a Web and Visual Arts Specialist, and a Creative Director. It also employs student workers through campus employment and work study. The student workers assist in photo and video coverage, graphic design, and miscellaneous tasks that enhance and expand marketing capacity.

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

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

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

Parents have the opportunity to stay up-to-date with happenings via the [Warrior Wire](#), a monthly publication about events and important information.

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

During the spring 2023 semester, scwarriors.com received an overhaul, improving on the website's ease of navigation and information accessibility. The main page integrates with Sterling College's [social media outlets \(directory provided\)](#), reinforcing Sterling College's transparency, and making it easy to follow the Warriors.

2.B.2

Sterling College ensures evidence is available to support claims it makes regarding contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

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

The College seeks opportunities for students to present research and participate in experiential learning. Some examples:

- As evidenced by the areas of [psychology](#), [mathematics](#), and [biology](#), students present their research projects at relevant professional conferences.
- Students studying in areas of theology and ministry deliver [sermons](#) in chapel.
- Criminal Justice students participate in a [mock trial](#).
- Art students collaborate with another art program to experience an [iron pour](#).
- Business students participate in an [etiquette dinner](#) and compete in [national banking contest](#).
- [Students](#) from a variety of majors makeup the staff of the [Great Plains Review](#), a student-led [literary journal](#) with entries from [students, staff, and faculty](#).
- Business and graphic design students and faculty team up to present [Shark Pool](#).

Sterling College students are involved in a variety of activities, through which they are able to develop as servant-leaders. The College maintains a strong tradition of excellence in the [arts](#). In spring 2021, the College appointed an [Executive Director for the Arts](#) to provide enhanced [support](#) for programs across the arts. Students participate in and achieve recognition and awards in a variety of disciplines within the arts:

- Debaters have earned four national [awards](#) under the leadership of a [Hall of Fame coach](#).
- [Highland Singers](#), [Jazz Band](#), and other [ensembles](#) share their talents through [on-campus performances](#), off-campus travel, and regular performance [schedules](#).
- Theatre maintains a [heavy production schedule](#), and features student [projects](#), while gaining [recognition](#).
- [The Observer](#), the [Sterling College Observer Online Post](#)(SCOOP), and the [Sterling College Observer Radio](#)(SCOR), all student media productions, allow students to practice their craft in [authentic](#) and effective learning experiences. [Several students](#) have won [awards](#) for their contributions.
- Art [faculty, students](#), and guests celebrate strong [exhibits](#), awards, and [recognition](#).

While participation in athletics is extra-curricular, approximately 60% ([59% of total Fall 2023 headcount](#); [87% of campus undergraduate headcount](#)) of the students at Sterling College participate at some level in intercollegiate athletics. As a division of the campus which directly touches a majority of the students, the athletic program at Sterling College is a strong influence in the character development of our students. The athletic programs support the core values of the College.

Sterling College has a long history of being named a Five Star Champions of Character Institution by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), most recently for the [2022-2023](#) academic year. A [Five Star Champions of Character Institution](#) shows commitment in athletics to five key areas: character training, conduct in competition, academic focus, character recognition, and character promotion. These five areas measure the Institution's commitment to the Champions of Character core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership. Institutions earn points based on exceptional student-athlete grade point averages and by obtaining zero ejections during competition throughout the course of the academic year. Sterling student-athletes are regularly recognized for both [academic](#) and [athletic](#) accomplishment, as [individuals](#) and as [teams](#). A graduate athletic training student was [honored with a national award](#).

Sterling College joined the [National Christian College Athletic Association](#) (NCCAA) in spring 2021, noting a clear alignment of its mission and [philosophy](#) with the College's. Student-athletes have directly benefitted from this membership in opportunities to [compete](#), [serve](#), and grow with student-athletes of other member institutions. A [number](#) of Sterling College [student-athletes](#) have been recognized by the NCCAA.

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

- The coaching staff [meets at least twice each year](#) with all of our student-athletes and discusses in depth the values and rules of the college and what their responsibilities are. They discuss academic values, spiritual growth aspect, opportunities for bible studies, and athletic development, and how all areas develop a well-rounded individual.
- The [administrative](#) staff conducts group sessions with coaches each [August](#) to help them develop the knowledge and discernment needed to become well-balanced leaders. Continuing education in leadership occurs during [monthly](#) staff meetings.
- The coaching staff encourages and has led students on [mission trips](#) to Alaska, Peru, Africa, and Panama internationally, as well as Joplin, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; and Wilmington, Delaware domestically. These trips help student-athletes develop servant leadership attitudes and skills.
- Teams have worked with Hearts for Homes over the last three years and assisted in [serving breakfast](#) at the community Veteran's Day celebration.
- All athletic programs participate in [Love Sterling](#).
- The teams serve at the community Thanksgiving dinner in our college cafeteria and help [assemble Christmas boxes](#) for Goodfellows of Southern Rice County.
- [Men's](#) and [women's](#) basketball and [soccer](#) teams have put on youth clinics where the Champions of Character values of the NAIA are shared.
- Our football team mentors [elementary school children](#) and invites them to attend practices and games.
- In 2022-2023 our [Men's Swimming](#) and [Women's Softball](#) teams were the KCAC Team of Character for their respective sport. Additionally, the NAIA named our [Women's Softball team](#) the national team of character.

- Athletic teams volunteered over 5,000 hours in our community during the 2022-23 school year. This increased by 2,000 hours over the 2021-22 school year.
- At the [Warriors of Excellence Banquet](#) each year, the athletic department honors student-athletes who exemplify academic, spiritual, and athletic excellence and demonstrate strong servant leadership qualities.
- The [football](#), [golf](#), softball, tennis, [soccer](#), baseball, and volleyball teams have held free youth clinics and spent afternoons with Kids Cove for several years.

These and other activities illustrate the College's investment in the educational experience of our students, in alignment with the mission and core values of the College. By living out their faith and through the knowledge and skills gained through serving others, Sterling College achieves its mission of developing thoughtful and creative leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

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

The role of the Board of Trustees at Sterling College is outlined in the [Board Policy Manual \(3.2\)](#). Board members must be "...accountable to its stakeholders and the general public for competent, conscientious and effective accomplishment of its obligations as a body". The board commits to "[Ensuring financial solvency and integrity through policies and behavior](#)" (3.2.6).

2.C.1.

The Board embraces the [mission and vision](#) of the College and [believes](#) that "the moral owners to whom the Board feels accountable are the current and future students, employees, alumni, and donors of Sterling College (2.5)" and that "the primary beneficiaries of our services are the students, parents, alumni and community of the College (2.6)."

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

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

- volunteers in fundraising). 3.2.6
- Require periodic financial and other external audits to ensure compliance with the law and good practices. 3.2.7
- Evaluate and constantly improve performance as the governing board and set expectations for board members' involvement as volunteers.3.2.8

In the [Summary of Motions Passed](#) by Sterling College Board of Trustees, the board has verified its knowledge and approval of the board for annual audits, changes in tuition, investments and capital projects.

2.C.2.

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

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

During meetings, the Trustees hear from members of the President's executive Cabinet as well as from student leadership. As stated in [Article XIV, Section 4](#) of the trustee *Bylaws*, "The Chair of any committee, with the consent of the Chair of the Board, may request the President of the College to assign an Officer of the College or a member of the administrative staff to serve as a liaison between the committee and the office of the President, and the President shall designate such a person to perform that service. Such liaison person shall assist the committee in the carrying out of its duties."

Board policy ensures that the interests of internal constituencies are heard at each meeting. Because a member of the President's Cabinet attends each meeting of the standing committees of the Board, the Board is kept informed of the operations of the College, and the College can seek advice and feedback from the Board.

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

2.C.3. and 2.C.4.

[Article XVI](#) of the *Bylaws* is the Board's policy about conflicts of interest, and [Addendum C](#) of the *Board Policy Manual* contains more detailed information about how the Board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors or other individual or parties. Board members sign a [conflict of interest certificate](#) annually. In addition, during the audit process, key administrative and board members are surveyed concerning any activity that could be considered a conflict of interest with regard to the finances of the college.

Another policy that protects from undue influence being placed on decision making is the [Nepotism Policy \(3.8\)](#). This policy prohibits board members or employees from supervising "...family or

household members or have audit or control functions over family or household members.”

2.C.5.

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

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

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

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

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

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

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

The Faculty Council and Academic Affairs Committee meetings are open to all employees. Moreover, after most trustee meetings, the President gathers [all employees](#) to debrief the campus community about significant business conducted during the Board meetings.

One of the College's core values, [learning](#), emphasizes a "love of learning and a dedication to the pursuit of truth" within the College community.

Students, of course, also have freedom in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Student media productions including [The Observer](#), [SCOOP](#), and [SCOR](#) allow students to make editorial decisions and produce content under the supervision of an advisor. Additionally, students publish an annual literary journal, [The Great Plains Review](#). Student Government Association serves to support students and is [guided by](#) the College Mission and Vision Statements.

The College opens its [chapel](#), [convocation services](#), and lectures to the public, and the strives to feature guest speakers who represent different perspectives within the Christian tradition. On campus speakers have included the [Federal District Attorney for the District of Kansas](#), the [Kansas Secretary of Corrections](#), [a poet laureate](#), and other [famous](#) authors, [artists](#), pastors, teachers, [writers](#), business leaders, and entrepreneurs. The [Ross and Fern Freeman Lecture Series](#) was founded in 2014 on the idea that servant leadership not only has the potential to influence societal change, but can also provide both practical and successful management skills that can easily be applied to diverse situations. The series seeks to educate individuals on the various values and applications of leadership by highlighting the servant leadership attributes present in others.

In 2017, three departments, History, Literature, and Theology, began the annual Sterling College Humanities Conference, in which top students in each major were encouraged to present their research on specific themes, such as [Science and Faith \(2017\)](#), [Reformations \(2018\)](#) and [Justice \(2019\)](#). This program was suspended during the COVID-19 Pandemic and has not yet been reinstated.

In addition, The Theology department has initiated a program called [Theology Plus](#) which attempts

to integrate theology with various other disciplines such as science, literature, and math. Professors or staff members are invited to join their theological colleagues in discussing issues, which dissect both their disciplines, such as translation, causation, and pre-determination. Additionally, the department regularly hosts a [Theology Conference](#).

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

The Honors Program provides courses and other opportunities during which students are encouraged to wrestle with complex [ideas](#) and [topics](#).

In recent years, the English Department, in collaboration with the Enrollment Services Department, initiated a [Visiting Professors program](#) for [local high schools](#). Professors were invited to give [workshops](#) on *Beowulf*, Old English, and Writing Poetry to six area high schools. Additionally, theology and ministry faculty [provide lectures](#) at area Christian schools and churches while athletic training faculty share about their profession with [high school](#) and [community college](#) students.

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

Each year, Psychology students attend the SWPA convention and often [present posters and full sessions](#) on their research.

Many other examples could be cited, but the evidence shows that Sterling College encourages and supports faculty and students in their pursuit of truth and learning.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1 and 2.E.2

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

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

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

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

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

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

[2.11.2](#) Faculty Development Funds are available "to facilitate and nurture the professional growth and academic enrichment of faculty members."

Prior to the 2018-2019 academic year, each faculty member had \$400 per year available for his or her use, but the faculty member could elect to pool three years worth of funds, \$1200, in order to attend a more distant conference. While \$400 per year was still not adequate money per faculty member, it was considerably better than the funding in 2009. Across the board budget cuts in the 2018-2019

impacted the budget for faculty development, and budgets have not yet returned to the previous level. As seen in the table below, with the exception of years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty have used this funding to better themselves professionally.

Year	Funds Distributed	Funds Available
2013-2014	\$6,144	
2014-2015	\$7,242	
2015-2016	\$16,652.71	\$15,000
2016-2017	\$12,843.54	\$15,000
2017-2018	\$14,509.95	\$15,000
2018-2019	\$7,892.95	\$9,891
2019-2020	\$2,951.06	\$9,891
2020-2021	\$2,683.35	\$9,891
2021-2022	\$9,008.54	\$9,891
2022-2023	\$7,386.86	\$9,891

In addition to the professional development opportunities and policies for faculty, the *Faculty Handbook* also provides provisions for [educational leave](#) (2.11.1.2) and describes the guidelines for the College's [Forgivable Loan Program](#) (2.11.4) so that faculty without terminal degrees may pursue those degrees with assistance from the college, without sacrificing their faculty development funds.

The Institutional Review Board [Coordinator](#) facilitates the College's IRB processes, including regular review and updates to official documentation and training for reviewers.

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

Likewise, the registrar and admissions offices belong to the [Kansas Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers](#) (KACRAO). The Registrar and Assistant Registrar attend the annual conference. As members of [KICA](#) (Kansas Independent Colleges Association) both the financial aid

and registrar's offices meets regularly with local members for collaborative training and networking.

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

Recognizing that professional development opportunities for staff have not kept pace with the professional development opportunities for faculty, the [2020-2023](#) and [2023-2026](#) Strategic Plans include a goal to "establish professional development policies for all employees."

2.E.3

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

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

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

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

Students may also seek citation and anti-plagiarism help from the Writing Center, which is staffed with student writing tutors and located in Mabee Library. Additionally, students have access to 24/7 writing help from [tutor.com](#), linked within each course in Canvas.

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

2.E.4

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

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

The Academic Affairs Office began [analyzing data](#) in the Fall 2015 semester after observing an

apparent increase in the number of reported violations. This led to discussions related to clarifying the procedure and strategies to better inform and train students in preventing violations, which seemed to be effective until the emergence of AI programs like ChatGPT during the 2022-2023 academic year.

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

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

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

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

The College employs a Title IX Coordinator and HR Director to ensure that ethical practices are followed in the hiring and training of new employees and in the treatment of current employees and students. The College is an equal opportunity employer, within the limits of its stated mission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opportunities:

While professional development of all employees has been a component within recent strategic plans, and some departments on campus participate in a variety of professional development and continuing education activities, the College has yet to take firm action forward to meeting objectives associated with this part of the plan. As such, it remains a strategic objective within the [2023-2026 plan](#).

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3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

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

Argument

3.A.1

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

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

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

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

- Candidates must have completed 124 credit hours (no more than 65 credit hours from a two-year college), with a cumulative GPA of 2.00.
- Candidates must have completed at least 32 credit hours at Sterling College.
- A minimum of twelve credits in a student's major must be taken at Sterling College; a minimum of six credits in a minor must be taken at Sterling College.

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

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

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

3.A.2

On May 1, 2017, the IAC of the HLC approved the College's Substantive Change Requests to offer both a Master of Arts in Sport Ministry, as well as a Master of Science in Athletic Training. The College currently offers 25 bachelor's degree programs, and 2 master's degree programs. In an effort to articulate and differentiate the learning goals for both undergraduate and graduate programs, the College follows the Faculty Council Bylaws which state that the Academic Affairs and Graduate Committees are charged with ensuring that all undergraduate and graduate offerings are "relevant to the academic standards and programs of the college." The approval process for all degree programs shows that the faculty at Sterling College take seriously the mandate within those Bylaws. Furthermore, the master's degree in Athletic Training is accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Athletic Training Education ([CAATE](#)).

3.A.3.

The College ensures its program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery. The institution offers seven bachelor's programs online, all having the same curricula and [program-level learning objectives](#) as their residential program counterparts.

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

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

At the graduate level, Sterling offers its Master of Arts in Sports Ministry, solely online and the Master of Science in Athletic Training, solely on campus.

Every class taught at Sterling College is expected to have a syllabus which conforms to the [syllabus template](#). Every [online syllabus](#) additionally includes information [unique to online delivery](#), including: online learning behavior, respect and etiquette, and a specific participation requirement. All syllabi are reviewed for compliance with the syllabus template before classes being. Sterling College Online designed a [custom Canvas course](#) to collect and provide feedback for online syllabi. All syllabi must include the required textbooks, instructor's contact information, office phone number, office hours, and their Sterling College email address. Adjunct instructors are not required to provide office hours, but are available to help students by appointment. Also included is the course description and course objectives aligned with course activities and assessments. Courses which fulfill education licensure requirements must also include the connections to the appropriate KSDE

standards. In addition, the grading policy for the course must be clearly evident. Each syllabus must also include a statement about academic integrity, instructor attendance requirements, late work policies, statement of nondiscrimination, disability accommodations, and any other classroom management issues unique to each class or instructor, such as a cell phone or tardy policy. The syllabus must also include a course outline, although the detail of that outline can vary greatly from instructor to instructor.

[Sample Online Syllabus](#) (ED272 - Online)

[Sample Campus Syllabus](#) (ED272 - Campus)

Sterling College has offered dual credit with [Sterling High School](#) for many years, added [Berean Academy](#) (Elbing, KS) to its offerings during the 2007-2018 academic year, and added [Central Christian School](#) (Hutchinson, KS) starting the 2022-2023 academic year. Before the start of each academic year, the Sterling College Admissions Office sends an informational letter and forms detailing the dual credit program to the parents of juniors and seniors at partner schools.

Additionally, the Vice President for Enrollment and the VPAA make a presentation to interested parents/students regarding each of the school's potential dual credit classes to describe the program and go over admission processes. After seven to ten days, the dual credit forms along with a master promissory note and enrollment card are submitted to each high school's office. The high school principal or school counselor must approve each student. The packets are then processed through the Enrollment Services and Registrar Offices.

Dual credit courses must abide by the syllabus policies of Sterling College and must include the same information regarding objectives, assessments, academic integrity, and other relevant information for the high school classroom, as do the equivalent courses taught either online or on campus at Sterling College. The determination of the faculty qualifications for dual credit instructors is covered in 3.C, but in brief, the College has carefully vetted the instructors of all courses offered in all modalities, and verifies those each academic year to ensure compliance.

[Sample Dual Credit Syllabus](#) (MA110, Central Christian High School)

[Sample Dual Credit Syllabus](#) (HI212, Sterling High School)

Some education students take their content methods course through the Kansas Independent College Association (KICA), comprised of 21 independent, non-profit, regionally accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities. Students enroll and pay for those courses through Sterling College, and the academic quality of those courses is monitored by the Sterling College Education Program (STEP), the Teacher Education Programs of all participating KICA member colleges, and the Academic Program Advisory Committee (Deans/VPAA's of KICA member colleges). The KICA education courses fulfill the program objectives of the STEP program and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) program standards, which may lead to education licensure for the student.

[Sample KICA Methods Course Syllabus](#) (ED440)

The rigor of degree programs at Sterling College is appropriate to higher education.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1

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

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

3.B.2

The general education curriculum at Sterling College is grounded in the [institution's mission documents](#), which include a mission statement, a vision statement, core values, a statement of priorities, a statement of process, a statement of faith, and institutional learning objectives. The general education curriculum has [five overarching purposes](#): to provide students with general

knowledge about God's created order, to develop in students certain intellectual skills, to promote in students civic learning, to encourage students to apply their learning, and to teach students about Christian faith and servant leadership. Four of these overarching purposes were adapted from the essential learning outcomes proposed in the [LEAP initiative \(https://www.aacu.org/leap\)](https://www.aacu.org/leap) by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

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

3.B.3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Art and Design students [study a variety](#) of practitioners both historic and contemporary including some variety from eastern and ancient cultures.

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

Students have an opportunity to engage a diverse world not only in their course work but in different programs and opportunities offered on campus. While it is not a requirement for graduation, many Sterling students look forward to participating in one of the college's [mission trips](#), traveling to places such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru, and share their experiences on these trips with the broader campus community in a missions chapel each fall. Before participating on a missions trip, students must take [TM107: Training for Cross-Cultural Ministry](#), a one credit course which "examines the area of global interconnectedness of Christian ministry, exploring the challenges of multi-ethnic cultural diversity. The focus is on preparing students for cross-cultural ministry opportunities, in the United States and abroad. Through a theological and anthropological study of key dimensions of cultural differences, students are enabled to foster international relations and better avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings." Students may further reflect on their cross-cultural experiences by taking the two credit [TM108: Cross-Cultural Ministry Reflection](#), which requires students to participate in "an intentional debriefing and written reflection on the trip expressed in a paper that gives a report on the trip and applies the taxonomy of key dimensions of cultural differences to the mission trip."

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

The [Honors Program](#), an academic related experience, also engages its students with the diversity of the world. Recent opportunities are outlined in the argument for Criterion 1.C.

In the spring semester of 2019, Faculty Council convened a faculty ad-hoc committee on diversity to explore ways to improve how Sterling College shows hospitality to students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, languages, and genders. In spring 2019, an efficient process and objective for the diversity initiative was developed. At Faculty Council's request, the President's Cabinet approved convening additional ad-hoc staff and student committees, which formed a [joint task force](#) with the faculty committee in the fall semester of 2019. The joint task force collected individual survey data from students, faculty, and staff to assess campus climate and institutional strengths and weaknesses. Based on data, individual working groups explored specific improvements on campus. For example, our Latino Hospitality Working Group implemented changes to the campus website, tutoring services, and new student orientation to better serve ESL students. Additional working

groups worked to: 1) develop position papers on rationale and best practices for Christian diversity work; 2) form a proposal for establishing a diversity office on campus; 3) explore curricular changes to facilitate better diversity education; and 4) planned awareness and advocacy programming starting in the spring 2020 semester. The task force presented a [recommendation](#) to Cabinet in August 2020.

3.B.4

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

- Professor of Biology Dr. Jonathan Conard continues to conduct and [publish](#) research in addition to guiding students through the process of research, [presentation](#), and [publication](#).
- Assistant Professor of Language & Literature Dr. Mark Watney [published](#) in *Philosophy Now*, *St. Katherine Review*, and *Dappled Things* during 2023.
- Associate Professor of Theology & Ministry Dr. Glenn Butner [authored](#) multiple [articles](#) in peer reviewed [journals](#) and published [two books](#), one which [won an Award of Merit](#) in the [Christianity Today](#) book awards.
- A theology and ministry student [presented](#) a conference paper at the Great Lakes Theology Conference, while all are [required to write](#) and present a [senior thesis](#).
- Assistant Professor of Media Dr. Todd Vogts published his [article](#) "U.S. Student Media Associations' Mission Statement Provide Discursive Leadership in Support of Civic Culture" in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*.
- Professor of Athletic Training Dr. Pete Manely has [co-authored](#) several [articles](#) as part of his service to the National Athletic Trainers' Association [Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine](#).
- Associate Professor of Biblical Studies Dr. Tim Gabrielson is very active in [research](#) and [publication](#), including a [forthcoming book](#), *Tailoring Scripture with Citation Formulae*.
- Assistant Professor of Art and Design Katie Petersen is [accepted](#) for [two international artist in residence](#) programs.
- Assistant Professor of History Dr. Emily Becker will [present](#) "A Mother and a Queen: Maternity and Child Death in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Leon and Castile."
- Assistant Professor of Psychology Dr. Jennifer (Dyson) Froese regularly [presents with students](#) at the Southwestern Psychological Association's Annual Meeting.
- Assistant Professor of Language and Literature Luke Brake was [published](#) in *Mere Orthodoxy*.
- A math professor, in addition to a math student, [presented](#) at the [Mathematical Association of America Conference](#) in Spring 2023.
- [Nine students](#) were selected to represent the College in the [2024 Kansas Intercollegiate Band](#).
- A Writing and Editing major [published a book](#) in fall 2023.
- [Mathematics](#) alumnus continues [scholarship](#) in graduate school and beyond.

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

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1

The fall 2022 IPEDS report reflected 49 full-time instructional staff and 59 part-time (adjunct) instructional staff. The increase in adjunct instructors reflects an increased number in dual credit partners and additional programs offered online at Sterling College. For fall 2023, the College employs [48 full-time faculty](#) (one is pro-rata) of which [50% have a terminal degree](#). The College utilizes [adjuncts](#) as dual credit instructors, online instructors, and as campus needs arise. The undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is approximately 11:1.

As reported for fall 2022 IPEDS, among fulltime and pro-rata faculty, 8.3% are of a minority culture, while 47.9% are women. Among non-instructional staff, 18% are of a minority culture and 50% are women. While the minority student population was 33% of the student body for the same time period, the College acknowledges that recruiting minority faculty and staff to central Kansas is a challenge. In addition to location and qualification expectations, the College recognizes that not all candidates can affirm [the statement of faith](#) and respond to the [faith questionnaire](#). In an attempt to recruit a more diverse faculty and staff, the College has taken steps to research opportunities for advertising open positions.

3.C.2

Each full-time faculty member is expected to teach [27 credit hours per year](#), usually as 12 credits in one semester and 15 in the other. Exceptions exist; some faculty are given a load reduction because of auxiliary duties, such as directing a play, coaching forensics, or serving as the Director of the Honors

Program; others are given a load reduction as required by an external accrediting body, such as the CAATE (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education) and the KSDE (Kansas State Department of Education) for our Sterling Teacher Education Program.

The removal of Interterm has provided opportunity for faculty to review the [standard workload](#) policy. Discussions began with the Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs Committee in the [spring of 2023](#), with In fall 2023, [Faculty Council](#) took the lead on investigating the plausibility of moving the workload from 27-credit hours per contract year, to 24-credit hours.

In order to effectively transition to their position as full faculty members, new faculty are expected to participate in [New Faculty Orientation](#) which is held in August as a two-day retreat and then continues through the fall semester with [monthly lunch meetings](#) led by the New Faculty Mentoring Director, covering topics such as using the Learning Management System (LMS), advising, assessment, and academic alerts. New faculty members are also assigned a faculty mentor outside of his/her discipline and are expected to rely on their department chairs as another mentor. Additionally, to ease the transition to the College and the associated load, new faculty members are given 3 credit hours of load release (thus reducing total load to 24 cr./hrs.) for their first year at SC. This release allows them to spend more time planning and developing their courses.

The faculty-as-a-whole meets at a [1-2 day Faculty Retreat](#) and a 1-day [Faculty Professional Development Day](#) (in August prior to the launch of the fall semester) and monthly throughout the year at [regular all-faculty meetings](#) to remain current with any changes and to offer feedback on any potential changes. The removal of the Interterm session has allowed for an [additional Faculty Professional Development Day](#) in [January](#) before spring classes start.

In addition to classroom responsibilities, faculty serve on both faculty and institutional committees, advise students, meet with prospective students, and have course and program assessment responsibilities. These responsibilities are clearly outlined in the [Faculty Handbook, section 2.6](#).

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

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

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

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

Of the 42 new full-time faculty hired between the academic years of 2009-2010 through 2014-2015, only 17 (**40%**) remained employed as full-time faculty in fall 2015. For the academic years from 2016-2017 to 2019-2020, only 20 new full-time faculty were hired, of which 16 (**80%**) still remained employed at that time. More recently, and for the academic years from 2020-2021 to 2023-2024, 26 new full-time faculty were hired, with 21 (**81%**) still employed as of the current date. ***Sterling continues to see an increase in the longevity of our faculty, which creates continuity for students as well as the faculty who remain employed at SC.***

At the time of the 2016 HLC visit, only fifteen faculty (**34%**) had been teaching full-time for **5 years or more**, and only 4 (**9%**) for **ten years or more**, resulting in a lack of senior faculty leadership positions on faculty committees. Four years later (2020), the **5-year tenure** had increased to 17 (**39%**), while the **10-year tenure** number had increased to 11 (**26%**). Furthermore for the '19-'20 academic year, 28 out of 43 FT faculty had **extended contracts**, equating to **65%** of the faculty with 3-year contracts. Most recently, and for the academic years from 2020-2021 to 2023-2024, 27 faculty (**56%**) have been teaching full-time for **5 years or more**, while the full-time faculty teaching **10 years or more** has risen to 14 (**29%**). Additionally, and for the '23-'24 academic year, **27** out of 48 full-time faculty (**56%**) have **extended contracts**. ***The tenure of Sterling FT faculty continues to increase steadily, with over half of all faculty having extended 3-year contracts.***

3.C.3

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

Those faculty who do not have a graduate degree in their teaching field, must be (or have been) approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, through the Faculty Welfare committee, where the candidates education, credentials, and experience is evaluated. The procedures, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook, are followed.

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

The 2109 visiting team included in their final report concerns about instructor selection for [GD105 Foundations of Servant Leadership](#), a course designed to introduce students to the College's mission and approach to education. Despite the team's recommendation being overturned by the Institutional

Actions Council of the HLC, the College took steps to formalize the process for evaluating [GD105 instructor qualifications](#).

An area of concern for the 2009 comprehensive review team was the low percent of Sterling College's faculty holding the doctoral degree, which stood at 35% in 2009-2010. The number is currently 43%. When terminal degrees are factored in, the number is 50%. An additional four full-time faculty are currently pursuing terminal degrees; three are ABD in their doctoral program studies, and one nearing completion of his terminal degree program.

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

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

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

2023-2024: 48 full-time faculty; 21 with doctorate; 3 with terminal degree = 43% or 50%

In Fall 2019, institutions making up the [Kansas Independent College Association \(KICA\)](#) averaged 60.5% terminal degrees, with a range of 18% on the low end and 100% on the high end. At 47%, Sterling College was behind both the average (60.5%) and median (66.2%). For Fall 2023, [the KICA](#) average is 50.3%, median 59.1%, minimum 1.0%, and maximum 100%. Given this updated data, Sterling College is in line with trends among the KICA institutions.

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

3.C.4

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

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

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

[Course evaluations](#) are completed online by students. They are made available in each Canvas course and [via email](#) for those classes with three or more students enrolled. Prior to Summer 2 2023, the College utilized the [IDEA evaluation](#), offered by Campus Labs/Anthology. Following Campus Labs changes in evaluation delivery, the College's response rates plummeted. Administration and faculty alike sought to improve both response rates and quality of feedback provided. After exploration of available products, the Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs committee approved the adoption of Watermark's Course Evaluations and Surveys. Faculty Welfare was charged with developing an

institution specific evaluation, which was approved to be implemented beginning with the summer 2023 session. Like classroom observation reports, course evaluation results become a part of each faculty member's permanent file, and they may also be used in consideration of promotion and reappointment.

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

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

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

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

3.C.5

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

While [forgivable loans](#) are not, strictly speaking, faculty development funds, those funds do provide significant benefit to the faculty who are seeking doctoral degrees. For academic years 2013-2014 through 2022-2023 the College [distributed \\$137,593](#), in the form of thirty-one forgivable loans, to thirteen different faculty members.

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

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

- and in conjunction with the [Diversity Task Force](#), *Between the World and Me* (2019).
- flipping classrooms;
- integrating critical thinking and writing into the classroom;
- understanding and engaging Generation Z students;
- an [Engaging Modern Learners Workshop](#), led by Dr. Christiane Price (national authority on innovative teaching techniques for engagement, and 2012 Carnegie Foundation Outstanding U.S. Professor at the Baccalaureate level);
- an [OER Workshop](#) led by Lee Miller, Director of Innovation and Compliance at a local community college, with sessions on [Open Educational Resources](#) and textbook availability in following years;
- [diversity training](#) by the College's Interim Associate Chaplain & Diversity Officer (employed position for 2021-2022 academic year)
- [best practices in creating syllabi](#) using the updated SC syllabus template;
- a [writing workshop](#), led by faculty from the language and literature department, to help faculty incorporate and evaluate writing development across their courses;
- a group of faculty researched and presented on [Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education](#) and LLM-proofing classes;
- a session for [renewing teaching practices](#) with Dr. Quentin Schultze, plus best practices in pedagogy;
- continuing our efforts toward the effective [integration of faith and learning](#), led by the Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning, which include:
 - [Faculty Worship](#) services,
 - the [Faith & Learning Faculty Book Program](#),
 - and [Faculty Renewal Sessions](#).

3.C.6

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

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

3.C.7

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

The President is assisted in leadership by eight members of the [President's Cabinet](#) who, with the exception of the athletic director and CFO, hold the executive title of Vice President. Each member

of Cabinet oversees specific aspects of the college: enrollment, student life, athletics, advancement, academics, financial services, and operations. The Cabinet meets together to plan and report on the day-to-day functions of the college and, in consultation with the faculty and Board of Trustees, to make plans for the future success of the college.

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

- [Executive Director for Student Success and Career Services](#)
- [Campus Counselor](#)
- [Director of Counseling](#)
- [Director of Academic Support and Student Engagement](#)
- [Director of Financial Aid](#)
- [Campus Health Director](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Athletic Training Staff](#)
- [Campus Pastor](#)
- [Resident Director](#)
- [Student Accounts Coordinator](#)
- [Student Life Administrative Assistant](#)
- [Disability Coordinator and Success Coach](#)
- [Executive Director for the Arts](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

All employees -- faculty, staff, and administration – continue to participate in campus emergency preparedness training each academic year. In addition, all employees must complete [Title IX](#)

training, and starting in August 2020, the college implemented mandatory [online FERPA training](#) for all employees (staff and faculty), which will be continued annually prior to the launch of the new academic year.

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

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

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

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

Argument

3.D.1

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

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

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

[Counseling Services](#) by Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors are available at no charge to students. The counselor provides services to improve [students'] academic performance and their emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.

The [Campus Pastor](#) supports the spiritual growth of students by providing pastoral care for both their academic and personal journeys.

The structured support services outlined here are housed within the Office of Student Life, and assessed within non-academic program assessment.

3.D.2

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

In order to be [accepted for enrollment](#) at Sterling College, the following acceptance guidelines are used:

- For first-year students:
 - For full admission, first-year students must have a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or above on a 4.0 scale.
 - Students may use the ACT/SAT for admission, scholarship, and course placement purposes in addition to acceptance into specific programs (if required). A student who has an ACT of 18 or SAT of 960 or above will be fully admitted with a GPA of 2.2 or above.
 - Students below a 2.75 cumulative GPA will be required to submit an academic recommendation from a counselor or teacher along with a personal essay. Once all documents have been received the student's record will be considered by the Admissions Committee. Should a student be accepted on academic probation they will be required to enroll in GD104 Academic Support and it is recommended they enroll in no more than 15 hours.
- For transfer students:
 - For full admission to Sterling College, transfer students must have a 2.0 cumulative college grade point average (on a 4-point scale).
 - If less than 12 semester credits have been attempted at the college level, students will be evaluated based upon first-year student criteria. They must provide a final high school transcript with a 2.2 cumulative high school grade point average (on a 4-point scale) and have a minimum ACT composite score of 18 or SAT composite score of 960.
 - If it has been more than five years since high school, transfer students are not required to submit a high school transcript or ACT/SAT scores unless they are required by a specific program. Admittance to the college does not guarantee admittance into a specific program.
 - Transfer students who do not meet the minimum admission requirements may appeal to the Admissions Committee to be considered for acceptance on a probationary status.

Admission requirements are consistent for all, whether campus or online.

The College adjusted its entrance exam requirements starting the Fall 2020 to reflect the nationwide move to "exam optional". Entrance exam scores may still be submitted to aid students in awarding of scholarships and placement in courses. Some students may come to Sterling College inadequately prepared for college writing and college math. Students with no scores or an ACT in English of 17 or below (or the equivalent SAT) are enrolled in [LL095: Basic Writing](#). During a Jump Start Day or Orientation Weekend, these students are provided the Accuplacer WritePlacer, and students may be moved to [LL101: College Composition I](#) if they [score above the cutoff](#). Students must pass Basic Writing with a C- or better in order to move to College Composition I. Basic Writing does not meet the general education English requirement and does not count toward the 124 credits required for graduation.

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

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

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

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

Moreover, the College continues to office the [Writing Center](#), conveniently located in Mabee Library, staffed with peers who have demonstrated strong writing ability, supervised by the Director of Academic Support in cooperation with Language and Literature professors, which offers walk-in times and appointments for any students of whatever writing ability who desire writing-specific assistance. [Disability](#) and [ESL](#) services are also provided by the Academic Support Office.

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

If a student files a Disability in the Office of Student Success, they complete a "[Verification and Release](#)" form allowing the office to share the student's learning accommodations with the requested

faculty and staff. Students must fill out a new verification form each semester for any classes in which they would like to use their accommodations.

The Office of Student Success developed "[The Decision Tree](#)" to create a clear process on how to address students who are having academic issues. The purpose is to use the tree as a resource/documentation outlining the steps that have been taken to help the student and plans on how best to move forward. When a student is entered into the early alert system, the Decision Tree is implemented to provide guidance on when alerts should remain open or closed.

In addition to the support Sterling College provides to under-prepared or at-risk students, the [Sterling College Honors Program](#) provides alternative general education and other enrichment courses and activities in history, literature, and philosophy to students. With an [aim](#) to "widen students' view of the world and their purpose, especially the stewardship of their academic and intellectual gifts, and to allow themselves to be shaped by new ideas, experiences, challenges, and service." The Honors Program is lead by a Director of the Honors Program who is assisted by an Assistant Director.

3.D.3

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

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

Section [2.6.2.2 in the Faculty Handbook](#) describes the importance Sterling College places on quality advising:

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

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

3.D.4

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

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

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

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

To support physical infrastructure a \$25 million capital campaign was launched in 2015 that included three major construction projects. Further detail of this campaign is included with Criterion 5.B. A 32,000 square foot addition onto the Gleason Physical Education Center was opened for the fall 2020. Four academic programs are based in this building, Health and Human Performance, Health Science, Sports Management, and Athletic Training. Gleason is home to the College's first campus-based master's degree program.

The next phase of the plan includes construction of a 34,000 square foot Science and Academic Center. This building will add state-of-the-art labs, classrooms, equipment and office space for our science and mathematics staff. Finally, a third phase plan involves the renovation of Thompson Hall, to accommodate the Art and Communications departments.

Mabee Library is home to an extensive collection comprising over fifty bibliographic databases and more than 87,000 volumes of diverse resources, ranging from books, magazines, and newspapers to academic journals, CDs, and DVDs. Conveniently located at the heart of the campus, the library offers public-use computers, a computer lab, color printers, and study rooms. Users can access additional resources through Interlibrary Loan and explore a vast eBook collection featuring over 249,000 titles.

The library provides various equipment for checkout, including projectors, DVD players, scientific calculators, and headphones. During the semester, the library operates until midnight from Monday to Thursday, 5:00 pm on Fridays, and from 7:00 to 11:00 pm on Sundays. Our digital library ensures 24/7 access to the eBook collection, online catalog, Inter-Library loan requests, and full-text articles from anywhere.

As a recipient of a South-Central Kansas Library System Grant, Mabee Library offers community members borrowing privileges, assistance in identifying and retrieving materials, access to wireless

internet and library computers, faxing services, and Inter-Library loan services upon request. To continually enhance our resource collection, the Director encourages faculty feedback and collaboration to assess holdings for efficient use of physical space and budgets.

Three library staff and five student workers are available to assist users. The Director also conducts library and research instruction tailored to specific disciplines or research projects upon faculty request. Mabee Library provides additional amenities, including six individual study rooms, a video conference room, a computer lab, academic support services, tutoring services, and various study areas.

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

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

The requirements for courses and programs offered through Sterling College are the same whether those classes are taken on campus, online, or through dual credit agreements with area high schools. Degree requirements and course policies are published in the undergraduate and graduate Academic Catalogs and/or on the syllabus for each course.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The staff and administration of Sterling College are highly qualified and support the academic enterprise of the College through student support services, health services, counseling services, career services, academic support and tutoring services, financial aid, registrar, and campus ministry. Students in the online division of the College have access to the same services, with the exception of in-person health services.

Faculty are responsible for the academic advising of students but have the support of the registrar, a general education planner, the academic catalog, and the JICS online enrollment system.

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

Opportunities:

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

While many staff have access to professional development opportunities, a focus on the professional development objectives within the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan must be emphasized, not only for the efficient operation of the services those staff provide but also to emphasize the value the College puts on those positions and the employees in those positions.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Argument

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

4.A.1.

Sterling College maintains a practice of regular program reviews. The [2008-2009 Assessment Plan](#) outlined a six-year cycle for Program Review, during which every academic program would undergo review. While the specifics of the Assessment Plan have evolved since its inception, the foundational details remain the same. The [program review template](#) was created to guide program faculty through the process and establish the minimum requirements for program review. Early each fall, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA) meets with the faculty of programs scheduled to undergo review during that academic year. An overview of the review process is provided, brainstorming of resources is conducted, and a plan for moving forward with the review is created. The program review process typically spans the course of one academic year from introductory meeting to submission of the final report. In recent years, programs have completed the review in one year and proposed curricular improvements through the faculty governance procedures in the following academic year. Examples of completed program review documents are provided for

the [Biology](#), [Business Administration](#), [Mathematics](#), and [Health Science](#) Programs.

The comprehensive [program review](#) process requires program faculty to consider eight key areas: 1) assessment data collected since the last program review; 2) input from outside stakeholders; 3) benchmarking of peer institutions; 4) changes to program and/or course objectives; 5) how those changes affect the alignment matrices; 6) guidelines and/or standards from appropriate accrediting bodies; 7) guidelines and/or standards from professional associations; 8) anticipated program or curriculum changes as outcomes of review; and 9) budget implications for implementing changes as a result of program review. From this review, program faculty can reaffirm the program as it stands or make recommendations and proposals for improvement.

Following the 2016 mid-cycle visit, a revised schedule for program review was provided to the HLC as part of an [interim report](#) associated with non-academic program review and Criterion 5. Because this process is cyclical, the [schedule](#) is [updated](#) at the completion of each academic year, to reflect progress and plan for future years.

In addition to institutional program review, several programs undergo review as part of external program accreditation processes. Eleven programs are regularly reviewed through the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) because the College offers professional teacher preparation in those areas. Athletic Training is accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE).

Details regarding each program's current review status are outlined in the [Detailed Program Review Schedule by Program](#).

In spring 2020, an [Assessment Proposal](#) was made to aid in closing the assessment loop. It was determined that the Academic Affairs Committee should be responsible for ensuring completion of programs reviews and formal acceptance of completion. Beginning in [fall 2021](#), the Academic Affairs Committee has reviewed, recommended revisions, and [accepted program reviews](#) for completion.

4.A.2 and 3

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

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

Through the [Global Transfer Agreement](#) with community colleges in Kansas, transfer students holding an A.A. or A.S. from those institutions have their Sterling College general education requirements met, with the exception of bible courses required of the general education curriculum. Any courses which those transfer students have taken which may meet a major or minor requirement

must be evaluated by through the College's standard process for evaluating transfer credit.

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

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

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

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

Several programs require some type of practicum course as a requirement for graduation. For example, [SM362 Field Experience](#) is a requirement of the sport management program and allows students to gain practical experience related to their career field. The [health science practicum](#) course supports students in gaining experience with healthcare professions they may want to pursue through graduate school opportunities. The graduate Athletic Training program, which launched in the summer of 2018, requires to participate in eight sessions of [clinical experience](#), through which program faculty ensure that students are qualified and prepared for their clinical experiences by following their [cohort progression plan](#) and upholding the prerequisite requirements for each course.

Students may submit a [Request for Independent Study](#). An independent study is a specific program of study, for 1 to 3 credits, under the direct supervision of a faculty member. Enrollment in an independent study course is limited to juniors and seniors in their major area(s) only and for a maximum of 6 credits toward degree completion. Along with the Request for Independent Study, the faculty member must design a syllabus to meet the requirements of this [individualized course of study](#) including a course description, learning objectives, activities and assignments, assessment procedures, grading policy, and contact expectations. The VPAA or Associate VPAA must approve all requests for independent study before a student can be enrolled in the course.

4.A.4

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

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

On campus and online students have access to [Mabee Library](#) and its resources, to [turnitin.com](#), to [mySterling](#), to [Canvas](#), to [counseling services](#), [Career Services](#), and to [tutoring and other academic support services](#). Dual credit students are made available the same resources as campus and online students. The courses offered for dual credit include the course objectives set by the Sterling College department responsible for that content, and the syllabus used for the dual credit courses includes Sterling College course policies. [HI212 US History II](#) taught at Sterling High School serves as an example.

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

The faculty at Sterling College are appropriately credentialed, including those in the dual credit programs and those who teach education courses through KICA (Kansas Independent College Association). The Office of Academic Affairs keeps record of what degrees current [full-time, pro-rata](#), and [adjunct](#) Sterling College faculty have earned as of August 2023. Dual-credit instructors are listed as adjuncts.

Those faculty who do not have a graduate degree in their teaching field, must be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs through the Faculty Welfare committee. The candidates' education, credentials, and experience are evaluated. During fall 2015, the VPAA [revised and clarified the procedure](#) for verifying faculty qualifications. The Faculty Welfare Committee approved the revision in January 2016, and the new [policy](#) went into effect February 2016. Since that time, the policy and procedure have been effective in ensuring the hiring of qualified faculty.

The College makes exceptions to the requirement for graduate degrees only in situations where the search for a highly qualified candidate has been exhausted. The procedure requires that the faculty member's credentials be [documented](#). If it is determined that the faculty member needs to earn graduate credit to remain qualified, a [continued education plan](#) is created and reviewed annually. The only other exception is in the [selection of instructors](#) for GD105 Foundations of Servant Leadership. As a general policy, the College seeks to hire appropriately qualified and credentialed faculty.

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

4.A.5

The College maintains specialized accreditation for two programs:

Education:

The Education department offers 12 different licensure programs [approved by the Kansas State Department of Education \(KSDE\)](#). In spring 2019, the College decided to take action in the [non-pursuance of accreditation](#) with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As other national accreditors emerge for professional teacher education programs, the College will continue to review the benefits and pursuance of national accreditation for this program.

Athletic Training:

The Athletic Training program is [accredited](#) by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). In the fall 2017, the substantive change application to transition the baccalaureate degree program to the master's level was submitted and [approved](#) by the CAATE following review. The program is [accredited through](#) 2030-2031, with a self-study due July 1, 2030 and a site visit during the 2030-2031 academic year.

4.A.6

Sterling College evaluates the success of its graduates.

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

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

The [Athletic Training Program](#) keeps consistent [data](#) on the success of their graduates. Three-year aggregate data includes a first-time pass rate of 82%, with 100% of graduates passing the exam regardless of number of attempts.

Similarly, the Education department keeps consistent [records](#) on the success of their graduates. The Sterling College Education Program (STEP) has an [impressive pass rates](#) on the PLT Exam and the PRAXIS II content exam. In addition, STEP excels in graduation rate of accepted majors and graduate placement in the field of education.

Graduates of both athletic training and [education](#) are heavily recruited by employers who know the quality of alumni.

During institutional [program reviews](#), the many program faculty choose to survey alumni regarding the program under review. The names of the alumni are provided to the department under review, and a link to a survey is emailed to those alumni. Many programs have sent surveys to their alumni since 2010.

The Education and Athletic Training programs administer both alumni and employer surveys. The Education department surveys their alumni and building principals one, two, and three years' post-

graduation while the Athletic Training program surveys their graduates and their employers one year after graduation.

Involving alumni in [academic program-level advisory groups](#) is one way academic programs monitor and evaluate alumni success. These groups are formed to [serve academic programs](#) in an advisory capacity as they explore curriculum improvements, internship opportunities, qualities for which employees in the field expect from new graduates, and more.

Other ways the College monitors and evaluates graduate success is through relationships maintained by the Alumni and Advancement Offices. These offices supported a campaign to update the Alumni Directory in 2021 and they maintain a data-base of information that allows them to connect with alumni in a variety of ways, including through social media. The Alumni and Advancement Offices see great potential in accessing current employment and graduate school information from the LinkedIn profiles of former students and graduates (this information is self-reported by the user). A significant effort to ensure graduates are connected to Sterling College in [LinkedIn](#) has resulted in the number of former students and alumni properly connected to SC from 595 in June 2016 to 1,639 in July 2019 to over 3,000 in December 2023. Efforts continue to encourage alumni to properly connect in this way.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

The 2019-2020 Reaffirmation Visit Team Report recommended an embedded report related to Core Component 4.B on assessment processes and collecting data using those processes. In each of the following sub-components, progress made toward achieving the 2019-2020 team's recommendations is highlighted.

4.B.1

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

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

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

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

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

are strongly tied to the generally education curriculum, at minimum, program objectives must align with institutional objectives one and two.

The College does not claim any learning outcomes for its co-curricular programs. In conversation following the 2019-2020 visit, the College decided to continue to not set learning outcomes for co-curricular programs. Some activities that could be defined as co-curricular according to the HLC's definition include spiritual life, student organization, and athletics. Success of those programs is assessed through non-academic program assessment.

Any learning outcomes that might be attached to co-curricular activities (activities required as part of a plan of study) are covered in the corresponding course some students take while active in those activities. For example, a student could be involved in forensics and debate without being enrolled in [CM150D: Debate Laboratory](#) or [CM150E: Forensics Laboratory](#). [GD190: Chapel and Convocation](#) is required each semester a student is enrolled full-time at Sterling College, but the course carries no credit and is recorded as pass/fail; therefore, no academic assessment is attached to the course. However, the Office of Spiritual Life is assessed through non-academic program assessment.

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

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

Beginning in 2012, at the end of each academic year, faculty complete a [course report](#) template, using a 6-point scale, to record how well students in the courses taught that year met the program objectives in those courses. The document is numerically driven with optional places for faculty responses. The standardization of this process has made reporting at all levels easier and more intuitive and has made assessment of institutional objectives much easier. Faculty retain the opportunity to comment and reflect on what is going well and what may need to be improved the next time the course is taught to better meet the program objectives. All faculty are required to complete an annual course report which keeps student learning objectives in the forefront and helps to create a student learning focused culture on campus.

The course reports for each program are gathered by the respective program chair and compiled, using the same 6-point scale, into a [program report](#). The [program report](#) gives the program a broader perspective into what is or is not working in the program. The chair considers the suggestions made

by program faculty to make changes or revisions in the program, and to be sure that all program objectives are being met. Outcomes identified in program reports are discussed among program faculty. Program reports must be posted to the program's SharePoint folder for documentation and review by the AVPAA. The AVPAA provides feedback to each program chair.

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

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

The annual [Institutional Assessment Report](#) is produced by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs by compiling the data and outcomes reported in each major's [program report](#) and the [GE assessment report](#). By compiling data from all programs into one document, trends in how well students are meeting institutional objectives and how well the mission is being fulfilled are identified.

As described in 4.A.1, the College maintains a regular cycle of program review. The annual program reports and GE assessment reports outlined above are [required components of the program review](#) process. All data collected during the years between program reviews must be included, summarized, and assessed as part of the program review document submitted to the Academic Affairs Committee for acceptance.

4.B.2

The faculty at Sterling College use the information gained from assessment processes to improve student learning.

The course and program reports include space for faculty to recommend improvements to their courses and programs based on the data included. Additionally, program review provides opportunity for large scale curriculum changes to better meet desired student learning outcomes. While this list is not comprehensive of all data-driven changes made since the 2016 visit, or even 2020 visit, several examples of the effectiveness of this process are detailed here:

- The Math department [proposed](#), and faculty governance [approved](#), a new course, [MA139](#)

[Introduction to Statistical Reasoning](#), and removed prerequisites from MA108 Contemporary Math, based on students' scores and instructor experiences.

- The Biology department [proposed](#), and was [approved](#), changes to the biology department based on findings of their 2017-2018 [program review](#).
- The Business department utilized a [2017-2018 program review](#) to reflect on data and outcomes and [made curricular improvements](#), as [approved](#) by faculty governance. The department is nearing completion of its [most recent program review](#) and [has submitted](#) its 2023-2024 program review and resulting proposed curriculum changes to the Academic Affairs Committee for review at its January 2024 meeting.
- Faculty leadership of the Honors Program program [proposed revision](#) to curricular and completion requirements, as [approved](#) by [faculty governance](#).

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

4.B.3

The College has made great strides in improving the processes and methodologies used to assess student learning, and have substantially increased the participation of faculty and other staff members. In the College's 2019 argument, the College self-identified that it had room for improvement in this area. A [proposal](#) for improvements to existing assessment processes was made to the Faculty Council in the spring of 2020.

One point of clarification to the 2019-2020 team report is that the assessment proposal was created for submission to the Faculty Council, not Faculty Welfare. The three proposals included in the document, faculty governance decisions, and progress for each area are provided:

- **Proposal One: Identify committee(s) responsible for reviewing annual general education and institutional assessment reports.**
 - [Result](#): Faculty Council determined that the General Education Committee should be resurrected for review of the General Education assessment process and results. It was also determined that department chairs would be the appropriate group for which institutional assessment reports be shared and reviewed.
 - [Progress](#): Beginning in the fall semester of 2021, a new GE Chair was appointed. One of the first initiatives was to resurrect the [GE Committee](#) and with the committee's help, begin a review of the current assessment processes. The GE Chair [meets with academic departments](#) and faculty to [review the GE assessment report](#) and discuss progress on meeting objectives. The AVPAA reports [institutional learning outcome data](#) to department chairs.
- **Proposal Two: Identify method of providing formal feedback to academic programs following completion of assessment reports.**
 - [Result](#): It was determined that the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA) be the person/office responsible for ensuring that assessment reports are completed as scheduled. This office is also to be the one providing feedback on reports to program chairs.
 - [Progress](#): Beginning summer 2020 and continuing to the present, the AVPAA has provided accountability for the regular completion of program reports and has [provided feedback and consultation](#) regarding their [completion](#). Additionally, the AVPAA reviews institutional assessment outcomes with department chairs.

- **Proposal Three: Identify a faculty committee responsible for reviewing and “accepting” program reviews.**
 - **Result:** It was determined that the Academic Affairs Committee be responsible for reviewing and accepting completed academic program reviews.
 - **Progress:** Beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year, the Academic Affairs Committee [reviews and accepts](#) completed [Academic Program Reviews](#).

The 2019-2020 team highlighted that the embedded interim report should include *"evidence that the new processes ensure that individual faculty and any appropriate faculty committees receive feedback from the Office of Academic Affairs or another relevant committee about their program reports, as well as about student success in the General Education program."*

The implementation of these three proposals ensures that faculty are receiving feedback about program reports and student success in the GE program. Additionally, by reviving the GE committee, involving faculty governance in the assessment process, and strengthening department chairs' knowledge and understanding of both the process and outcomes, the College has substantially increased faculty participation in assessing student learning.

An additional concern from the 2019-2020 team was an observation that program review did not include multiple years of program assessment data. It is the College's position that this was an oversight by the 2020 team, and an oversight on the part of our fact-checking team. The evidence provided in the 2020 argument clearly outlines that multiple years of program assessment data are considered in the program review process.

- **Evidence provided in the 2020 argument:**
 - [2016 Program Review Template](#)
 - *Item #2 on the template requires programs to provide a summary of the assessment data collected since the previous program review and to provide each of those program reports (reflecting the years since the last program review) as appendices.*
 - [2018 Biology Program Review](#)
 - *Pages 3-6 provide summaries of data collected from 2010-2018. Program reports submitted as separate attachments.*
 - [2018 Business Program Review](#)
 - *Summary of assessment data is provided on page 2. Program reports submitted as separate attachments.*
- **Additional evidence for this report:**
 - [2022 Program Review Template](#)
 - *The program review template was updated in February 2022 to reflect the addition of an item requiring the outline of program and curricular changes to be made because of program review. Item #2 remains a summary of assessment data since the last review. .*
 - [2020 Mathematics Program Review](#)
 - *Summary assessment data are reflected on pages 1-4 for academic years 2013-2014 through 2019-2020. Program reports submitted as separate attachments.*
 - [2022 Health Science Program Review](#)
 - *Summary assessment data for academic years 2014-2015 through 2020-2021 are reflected on pages 1-2 with annual program reports submitted as Appendix A.*

The 2019-2020 visiting team requested evidence of substantial participation of faculty in the development of GE assessment, data collection, and use of the data to improve student learning. The College has focused on this area since immediately following the last visit. The process began with the launch of the GE Program Review during the 2020-2021 academic year. An [Ad Hoc GE Program Review Committee](#) was formed to begin the [scheduled program review](#), under the leadership of the then Academic Affairs Committee chair. Work continued through the [fall of 2020](#), despite adjustments made to faculty's teaching responsibilities in the height of the pandemic. The faculty had planned to start with a large representation of faculty during the information collecting and data analyzing phases of the review, and then scale back to the [GE committee](#) for completion of the review. Shortly thereafter, the sitting GE Chair resigned, which paused progress for the interviewing and appointment of a [new GE Chair](#), beginning duties in the Fall 2021 semester.

Work on the program review [has continued](#), despite the departure of some GE Committee members in each of the [last two academic years](#). The GE Chair has led the GE Committee through the [program review process](#), and [plans to complete](#) it during the [2023-2024](#) academic year. The [data collection and review of relevant data](#) has been completed; the next step is compiling it and [making decisions](#) about changes needed to the GE curriculum. As assessment and assessment tools have been discussed, the GE Committee has elected to hold off on adopting any new tools, given potential changes to the existing GE curriculum. However, they have expressed support for the tools currently used. When ETS sold out the E-Proficiency Profile to Territorium, the Committee and Chair advised the AVPAA to make the switch to Territorium.

Additionally, the AVPAA [brought a discussion](#) about revising and formalizing within the Academic Catalog the [writing intensive standards](#). Despite discussion, [revision](#), editing, and more discussion, the [Academic Affairs Committee advised](#) that the GE Program Review be completed before approving and adopting any changed.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

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

Argument

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

4.C.1

The College set the following fall-to-fall retention goals for academic years 2019-2025:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
FF	66%	67%	68%	68%	69%	69%	70%
Overall	72%	73%	74%	74%	75%	75%	75%

The Academic Success and Retention Committee (ASRC) reviews retention, persistence, and completion as it becomes available and works each spring to review and define upcoming goals, for the next three years.

The College uses the "Overall" metric as our measure of persistence and the terms retention and persistence are used interchangeably. As outlined below in 4.C.2 and 4, FF retention took a dip during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 cycles and the College anticipated low completion rates (reflected in graduation rate table below) for those cohorts as a result. However, the Academic Success and Retention Committee has focused on stabilizing the FF retention rates in order to increase graduation rates in the long run, and has been successful in raising FF retention rates back above 60%.

4.C.2 and 4

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

Below is the IPEDS data for Sterling's graduation rate for first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion (6 years). Cohorts are named by the fall in which students began at the College.

Graduation Rate:

2005 cohort	2006 cohort	2007 cohort	2008 cohort	2009 cohort	2010 cohort	2011 cohort	2012 cohort	2013 cohort	2014 cohort	2015 cohort
48%	34%	42%	39%	42%	45%	39%	53%	53%	48%	42.9%

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

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

Class	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
FF	66%	65%	63%	64%	58%	50%	66%	60%	64%	67%
FR	62%	63%	68%	68%	62%	82%	62%	68%	61%	67%
SO	77%	80%	90%	76%	82%	77%	83%	82%	78%	70%
JR	84%	72%	85%	89%	92%	79%	65%	77%	87%	74%
SR	68%	58%	48%	73%	63%	64%	42%	40%	73%	87%
Overall	74%	70%	75%	75%	74%	66%	69%	69%	74%	70%

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

In addition to traditional measures of retention, persistence and completion, the College collects other related data. Beginning Fall 2020, the ASRC launched the [Retention Module](#), specifically in assessing risk level among first year students. Jenzabar worked with the Office of Student Success to implement [institution-specific](#) data to build the modeling. The data provided is used to identify

students' level of retention risk, and is a data point factored into the Student Success Tracker. New for [Fall 2023](#), is the administration of the [SSI survey](#).

4.C.3.

In addition to the data discussed in 4.C.2 and 4.C.4, Sterling College considers other data, as needed, to make improvements.

In addition to the Administration's consideration of data collected, the ASRC monitors data constantly to identify students in need of support or intervention, and to identify opportunities to improve factors affecting the retention, persistence, and completion of students. The ASRC members are the Vice President for Student Life, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Athletic Director, the Executive Director for the Arts, the Director for Career Services and First Year Programs, the Director for Academic Success, the Registrar, Director of Counseling, and the Student Life Administrative Assistant.

[Daily and weekly attendance reports](#), as well as a [full session report](#), are automatically generated from the College's Learning Management System and emailed to most members of the ASRC. In addition to being discussed at SSRC meetings, this list is reviewed by recipients and students are contacted about class absences.

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

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

During the school year, the ASRC meets weekly and reviews various topics depending on what is important/relevant at different times of the semester. Review topics include: class attendance, grades, chapel attendance, outstanding financial balance, and next semester enrollment status. The Director of Academic Success prepares a report weekly to present to the Committee. Follow-up actions are assigned to committee members, Resident Directors, Advisors, Foundations instructors, coaches, and other involvement leaders (Debate, Choir, Theatre, etc.) and are recorded in the [minutes](#). This team approach allows the ASRC to best select appropriate interventions based on students' needs.

Students who have had [alerts](#) submitted are added to the list of students discussed and follow-up plans developed for. Much of this information appears on a report maintained by the Executive Director for Student Success and Career Services. The [Student Success Tracker](#) (referred to as The Tracker by committee members) uses several data points to calculate a risk level for each student:

cumulative GPA, unexcused absences, lowest grade percentage, number of alerts submitted, and chapel attendance. Midterm grade point average is also factored in once available. The report organizes students by risk level, with those at highest risk at the top and lowest risk at the bottom. Early in each semester, the tracker helps the committee identify students in need of intervention or assistance, and the [Decision Tree](#) serves as a guide in offering students assistance. As the semester progresses and high risk students have been supported, the committee turns their attention to students ranking in the middle third who may need a little extra support in the pursuit of success.

At the appropriate time in the school year, additional factors are added to the [Student Tracking Report](#). This tracker is maintained by the Administrative Assistant for Student Life who monitors students' failure to complete identified tasks as an alert or early indicator of an intent to not return the following semester. Staff then reach out and have conversations with students in order to identify barriers that may impede their return and offer solutions to eliminate or ease those concerns.

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

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

The ASRC observed that much of their discussion related to FF retention rates focused on reasons why students chose not to return to the College. In attempt to identify why students chose to return, committee members each held brief meetings with several second years students to inquire about their reasons for returning. [Feedback was compiled](#) and [reviewed as a group](#).

A new tool implemented in the Fall 2023 semester is the SSI survey, administered by the Office of Student Life. Because the survey results became available just before the end of the semester, the [ASRC](#) and key College personnel have begun to dissect and analyze the data with the next step to be formulating plans for improvement based upon the outcomes of the results.

The College recognizes that the strategies and methods with which students are recruited and enrolled has an impact on retention, persistence, and completion. To better coordinate and collaborate ideas related to student success and student recruitment, the [Recruiting Team](#), made up of

representatives from enrollment services, athletics, fine arts, and academics, was created during the 2021-2022 academic year. The team [reviews data](#) related to [recruiting](#) and enrollment, in addition to retention, persistence, and graduation of enrolled students.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

Strengths:

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

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

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

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

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

The College maintains a cycle of regular program review, and can confidently say this as those programs who were first in the initially established cycle are again going through review. As program faculty continue to see positive outcomes and impacts from the assessment and review cycles, support for the process and faculty buy-in will continue to increase. During the current academic year, programs who initially completed program review following the establishment of a 6-year cycle are again going through the review process.

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

The assessment plan is working in regards to data collection and analysis and the College uses this information in change, budgeting, and planning decisions.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

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

5.A.1

Board of Trustees

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

The entire Board meets in person, as possible, two times annually, once in the fall and once in the spring. In addition, they have an additional meeting during the winter via a conference call, or other Board approved avenue as outlined by the board bylaws, article XIII. Trustees are organized into [three standing committees](#): the Executive Committee, Financial Impact Committee and Student Impact Committee. To ensure that the board is properly informed of the needs of Sterling College, the financial and student impact committees include board members and members of the presidential

cabinet. [Board bylaw](#) changes require notification to the board members at least 10 days in advance of the board meeting. To foster clear, accurate and timely communication, the president and the board chair meet bi-weekly throughout the academic year, though subject to change if schedules conflict. Board Members are provided access to regularly updated [institutional metrics](#) via [Sharepoint](#).

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

Institutional Constituencies

Internal constituencies participate in shared governance at all levels of the institutional organization. Each department is represented on the [Presidential Cabinet](#) and faculty and staff participate in shared governance within [faculty governance](#) and the [Staff Welfare Committee](#), respectively. Students are represented by the [Student Government Association](#).

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

The president meets with the Cabinet regularly, as determined by the needs of the institution.

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

Many other [committees on campus](#) consist of various faculty, staff, and administration. Examples of which include the Admissions committee that [reviews applications](#) from students who do not fully meet admission requirements, the Academic Success and Retention committee that tracks at risk students in an effort to improve retention, and the recently resurrected [Staff Welfare committee](#). The [Staff Welfare committee was created](#) to provide a voice for staff regarding benefits, salaries, other compensation, as well as new ideas and concerns. The College assembles ad hoc committees and task forces as needs arise.

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

Various [student organizations](#) exist to enrich and influence the lives of our students academically, socially, and spiritually to accomplish the overall mission of the college. Organizations such as the Campus Activities Board, Student Leadership Association, Student Athlete Leadership Team (SALT) and Theatre at Sterling College serve to broaden the experience of our students, teach servant leadership skills and provide an avenue for student's voices to be heard as a primary constituent.

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

Alumni have an opportunity to give back to the College through service on the [Alumni Council](#).

Auxiliary & Informal Structures

Communication between cabinet members, faculty and staff is further encouraged by auxiliary events such as campus coffees where all employees are invited to meet outside of the president's office for fellowship and coffee. Each year, there is an all [employee Christmas gathering](#).

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

The [Campus Events](#), a weekly internal communication of all campus activities, is emailed to all employees and students.

The [Campus Safety Committee](#) (CSC) meets regularly throughout the school year to review safety and security issues that could disrupt missional objectives of the College. Decisions made by this team are communicated to faculty, staff and students. Members of this team represent a varied cross section of departments on campus in addition to local law enforcement. In 2019, the CSC team led the college in its very first active shooter drill. Emergency Preparedness training and education has been ongoing since that time, and the CSC is currently [planning](#) for an active shooter training.

5.A.2

Student feedback is highly regarded at Sterling College. [A textbook survey](#) was sent out to students to gather data before we switched from a brick and mortar bookstore to a virtual bookstore, [MBS Direct](#).

Furthermore, efforts have been underway to decrease [textbook and course materials costs](#) for students, with [progress ongoing](#). An [internet survey](#) was sent out to students to determine the preference between faster internet and access to cable in the dorms.

The College [recently adopted](#) the SSI from RNL (in place of its internal campus climate survey) to collect data from students about their experiences at SC. Administration is looking forward to dissecting [the data](#) collected and implementing a path forward in using student feedback to elicit improvement on campus.

The Office of Student Life surveys both [parents](#) and new [students](#) about their experiences with move-in days and orientation in order to make improvements for upcoming years.

Academic Administration uses data to guide training and professional development related to the Academic Integrity Policy. The emergence of AI has impacted the [number of integrity violations](#) and led to a [focus on appropriate use of AI](#) among students and faculty.

Data is used to reach Presidential and Cabinet decisions in the best interest of the College. Some examples:

- Membership organizations like the [IACE](#), [CCCU](#), and [NAICU](#) provide reports, tools, and research that inform decisions;
- The [KICA](#) provides reports and comparative data for member institutions;
- The [NAIA](#) and KCAC Return on Athletics reports provide analytics that guide decisions;
- [SHRM](#) guides human resource policies and employee holiday schedules;
- Data about tuition, room, and board is referenced for 20+ competitor schools when discussion changes to the College's;
- Comparative data from the KICA and IMA guide health insurance and benefit programs;
- Husch Blackwell serves as legal council for HR, Title IX, and Department of Labor issues;
- the College utilized EAB to explore new program feasibility;
- Sector reports from the MB Foundation guide College investment strategies; and
- the President gathers regularly with other KICA presidents to discuss challenges in higher education in addition to engaging with local, regional, and national elected officials in Topeka and Washington, D.C.

5.A.3

The College's administration ensures that faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes, as appropriate. Existing faculty governance structures provide faculty an effective structure for involvement. Examples are plentiful, but a few include a [revision of the academic integrity policy](#) to allow for inclusion of artificial intelligence systems (AI). Faculty Council requested the [Academic Affairs Committee](#) investigate changing the lowering the required number of credits required to earn a bachelor's degree from the College. An ad hoc group explored opportunities to [improve policies related to graduation requirements](#) during the 2022-2023 academic year with proposal to the Academic Affairs Committee in fall 2023.

The Office of the Registrar [presents adjustments](#) to policy as research guides, and is [approved by faculty governance](#). Staff are involved in setting academic requirements and policy, as necessary. One such example is in the annual revision and review of the Academic Catalog during which appropriate institutional departments are asked to edit their respective sections. [Departments](#) and [staff leaders](#) across campus provide insight and adjustment to appropriate content within the [Academic Catalog](#).

Another example is the ex officio committee [membership](#) of several non-academic personnel on academic committees.

The Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning [seeks input](#) from faculty about programming.

The Student Government Association is free to bring items of concern to academic administration, the faculty, and have a direct avenue to the Faculty Council via the [Student Services Committee](#). The current SGA cabinet [requested a meeting](#) with academic administration following their installation in spring 2023. The VPAA invited SGA members, under guidance of their faculty sponsor, to share concerns with faculty at their [August 2023](#) retreat, and concluded the fall semester with an invitation to [share progress](#) noted on concerns previously raised.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

Sterling College's resource base supports its current educational offerings and plans for the future. With careful management of all resources, Sterling College delivers high quality programs for a fraction of the resources of other institutions, as evidenced with one of the [lowest tuition rates](#) in the region and among competitors. The College's greatest resource is its people, so recruiting, hiring, training and developing quality personnel will continue to be a top priority.

5.B.1

Sterling considers its employees its most valuable resource. A breakdown of employees by type of service is provided to [IPEDS](#) each fall semester. The College employs a sufficient number of qualified and trained staff to support operations.

For the current academic year, [50% of full-time faculty hold terminal degrees](#). In order to hold any teaching position, full- or part-time, faculty must hold a graduate degree from an accredited institution and meet established criteria for highly qualified faculty. Faculty qualifications are described in greater depth in 3.C and 4.A.

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

[Evaluations](#) are performed for all employees. [Faculty evaluation criteria](#) are outlined in section 2.7 of the Faculty Handbook. [Professional development](#) (2.11) for faculty, including pay incentives to earn terminal degrees, is encouraged. In 2018, the Staff Welfare Committee was formed to provide staff members with representation and a voice to administration. This group aims to improve and address professional development, comradery and work concerns of all staff. It went on hiatus through the pandemic and was [recently revived](#).

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

Development takes place at many levels throughout the College to respond to changes in learning,

student safety and employee safety. [All employees](#) complete [Title IX training](#) to ensure all are informed about and know how to respond to concerns falling within Title IX.

Members of the Campus Safety Committee (CSC) received FEMA training on the Incident Command System through the Department of Homeland Security. In May of 2019, the College began [active shooter training](#), led by local law enforcement for all employees. The CSC [continues to plan](#) ongoing trainings and recently completed a project with local emergency services to establish [physical addresses](#) for every building on campus and post emergency action plans in classrooms and other strategic locations. The CSC organizes [employee training sessions](#) to support [emergency response](#). These types of training and preparation are vital to the safety of our students and staff in the event of a major incident.

In addition to employee-wide training, departments provide ongoing training for their employees as appropriate for each area. For example, Resident Directors participate in ongoing training that is kicked off annually with focused [RD Training](#). Employees are able to take advantage of training and development opportunities provided by our organizational partners. One such example is student life staff's participation in the [KICA Student Success Summit](#). Other examples are training offered for [housekeeping staff](#) by Janitorial Supply and [pool maintenance certifications](#) for those responsible for pool care and maintenance.

Several improvements in human resources have been made over the past ten years to support our faculty and staff. An inclusive [employee handbook](#), detailing policies related to both faculty and staff, was created and updated. The creation of a [staff welfare committee](#) has served our non-faculty employees by providing information and professional development opportunities. While this committee disbanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, it previously brought policy proposals that were adopted by the Cabinet and incorporated into the employee handbook. One of the key contributions of this committee was the development and implementation of an [employee satisfaction survey](#) with results and recommendations reported to the Cabinet during the summer of 2019. Staff are excited about the [return of this committee](#).

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

Area	Title	Year added
Arts	Executive Director of the Arts	2021
Athletics	Vice President for Athletics	2019
Athletics	Strength and Conditioning Coach	2021
Student Life	Director of Counseling	2023
Student Life	Disability Coordinator and Success Coach	2021

Physical Infrastructure

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

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

The College [broke ground](#) on the Gleason Center expansion in May 2019 and completed the 32,000 square foot addition with a [dedication ceremony](#) in October 2020. No firm timeline on the building of Zaid-West Hall has been determined. However, space needs and [programs for the sciences](#) and [art and communications programs](#) have been evaluated in anticipation of upcoming campus additions.

Technology Infrastructure

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

Since 2016, Sterling College has implemented several major [technology initiatives](#) that greatly benefit our staff, faculty and students. The improvements are organized in four major categories: Student Services, Educational Services, Infrastructure and Security. Imagine IT partnered with the College to achieve compliance with new [GLBA requirements](#) and [upgrade servers](#).

5.B.2

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

Examples of mission-focused activities supported through budgeting include:

- Addition of a Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning (ongoing since Fall 2017)
- Organizing and promoting “LOVE Sterling”, a city-wide service project (annual)
- Participation in the Kansas Governor’s Prayer Breakfast (annual - on hiatus during pandemic)
- Supporting a “Host Family” program that connects students to local families (ongoing)

Sterling College’s strategic plan, which is discussed in detail in section 5C, expands on the mission, provides direction for resource allocation and a timetable for goals. Of the eight areas outlined in the [2020-2023 strategic plan](#), the following “big ideas” have been accomplished.

1. Strengthen the Academic Profile

This was accomplished most notably through continued support of the integration of faith and learning, including maintaining the position Director for the Integration of Faith and Learning. Interterm was eliminated and improvements made to curricular offerings in the Honors Program and selection of Honors Faculty.

2. Foster a Vibrant Spiritual Community

Sterling College strengthened its mission spiritually through changes and enhancements to the chapel experience which includes student-led chapel services.

3. Grow Enrollment Strategically

Benchmarks met include a virtual campus visit, updated campus tour video, virtual jump start days and the addition of new named scholarships.

4. Manage Regulatory and Compliance Commitments

This was accomplished through the creation of a college-wide compliance calendar and continued partnerships with existing strategic coalitions.

5. Develop Sustainable Giving

This was most notably accomplished through the SterlingNOW campaign – the largest capital campaign (\$25 million) in the history of the College. The expansion of the Gleason Physical Education Center was completed in the Fall of 2020.

6. Support Outstanding Faculty and Staff

The College has strengthened its human resource services by filling the Director of Human Resources position that was vacant at the time of the last HLC review. Staff salaries and the retirement match program have been restored to pre-pandemic levels.

7. Equip Students for Excellence

This goal was primarily met through the creation of a First Year Program, addition of a full time strength and conditioning coach, and improvements within the student life experience.

8. Improve Facilities, Technology & Infrastructure

The College has made great improvements in safety, security, and technology. These improvements are outlined in section 5.B.1.

5.B.3 Fiscal Resources

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

The College has a predictable and efficient process for monitoring expenses. The CFO works closely with the President to develop and manage the budget each year. The College has internal financial controls in place to monitor expenditures accurately and efficiently. Department heads and vice

presidents are required to monitor and approve all purchase requests through a requisition system and all credit card purchases through an approval system. This process provides accountability for spending so that the College's educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas.

The CFO monitors cash flow daily and provides monthly reports to Cabinet.

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

Sterling College relies on three main sources of revenue – tuition, federal financial aid and private fundraising. The most significant part of the overall operating budget is tuition and fees. As demonstrated below, tuition and fees represent an average of 61.31% of the budget over the last five years.

Fiscal Year	Gross Institutional Budget	Gross Revenue from Tuition	% of Gross Budget
FY 23	\$23,290,966.00	\$14,106,290.00	60.57%
FY 22	\$22,082,078.00	\$13,988,880.00	63.35%
FY 21	\$21,467,463.00	\$12,930,966.00	60.24%
FY 20	\$21,661,026.00	\$12,800,185.00	59.09%
FY 19	\$21,520,297	\$13,624,454	63.31%
FY 18	\$22,028,655	\$13,737,226	62.36%
FY 17	\$20,295,180	\$12,492,549	61.55%
FY 16	\$20,934,934	\$13,471,109	64.35%
FY 15	\$20,039,811	\$13,209,567	65.91%
FY14	\$19,702,141	\$12,410,122	62.98%

To deliver academic programs more effectively, Sterling College launched its most recent capital campaign in 2015. The SterlingNOW \$25 million campaign officially ended December 31, 2021. Due to Covid, the campaign was extended by one year. Even though the campaign ended, outstanding pledges continue to come in. As of January 11, 2023 the gift totals and outstanding pledges are: Total cash received is \$19,270,727 with \$11,255,029 in outstanding pledges.

In many ways, this campaign served as a [master campus plan](#) for the College. The success of this campaign included:

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

- A \$10 million pledge from a single donor to build a 34,000 square-foot Science and Academic Center.

Through careful planning and intentional fundraising, the college has strengthened its [Department of Education financial ratio](#). The College's ratio for the past several fiscal years have been strong, but changes in accounting rules greatly impacted the College's [ratio for 2022-2023](#). This change took place several years ago, but auditors did not catch that the College would be impacted by the change until recently. In short, the College has a board member that is related to one of the donors that gave a pledge, and as such, the pledge then becomes an unsecured related party receivables and is required to be excluded from the financial strength ratios.

The Sterling Fund and all unrestricted giving, which directly supports the annual budget, has seen growth each of the past four years: FY'20 = \$731,825, FY'21 = \$880,618, FY'22 = \$928,738, and FY'23 = \$1,850,085. The FY'23 total includes two estates. The Office of Advancement documents 132 separate wills, estate or other planned gifts naming the College as beneficiary with a projected gift revenue pipeline of \$11,574,000.

In late 2023, Sterling College partnered with [WealthQuotient](#). This partnership is designed to help guide SC towards and connect with more high wealth donor prospects.

Sterling College provides [financial aid](#) to eligible students through state, federal and institutional programs while also providing work study opportunities to qualifying students. During the 2022-23 academic year, the average financial aid package for full time students was \$27,033. Undergraduate [Pell recipients](#) for fall 22 represented 38.7% of the student body with over \$1.198 million awarded for the entire year. [Kansas Comprehensive Grant](#) significantly impacted our Kansas residents with 123 students receiving an average of \$5,241 in state funding for the academic year.

Sterling College strives to continue to make education affordable for families seeking a private education for their students. Offering institutional scholarships is one way we partner with families to make a private education obtainable. The [overall discount rate](#) was 57.17% for fall 2023.

5.B.4

Fiscal Allocation

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

To underscore its commitment to academics, Sterling College contractually provides incremental salary increases to faculty based on a [faculty salary schedule](#), built on service, rank and education. The College views this policy as an endorsement of its commitment to the learning process for our students and support of its primary mission.

Recently, administration approved a [2% wage increase](#) for all employees.

Resource allocation begins in October with planning, participation, input and representation at many levels including, but not limited to the areas of academic administration, student life, financial aid and enrollment services. The initial process is [ratified by the Board of Trustees at their fall meeting](#) and then budget managers are involved in the process of building a resource allocation plan that first meets the primary mission of the College which is the teaching and learning processes. As a former

CFO, the president of Sterling College plays a vital role in resource allocation processes and holds cabinet members accountable to managing the budgets under their purview.

Planning and budgeting priorities also align with and support Sterling College's mission to be a Christ-centered institution of higher education. The College spends just over 30% of its budget on [instruction and academic support](#) along with [25% of its budget serving students](#) in their social and spiritual pursuits.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

5.C.1

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

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

Both the [2020-2023](#) and [2023-2026](#) strategic plans reflect the College's bedrock commitment to its mission "to develop creative and thoughtful leaders who understand a maturing Christian faith". One of the key areas addressed in this plan is to "[Foster a Vibrant Spiritual Community](#)". This area emphasized the mission from a spiritual perspective through goals intended to bolster our commitments to Scripture, prayer, servant leadership, church relations and training our students biblically.

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

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

Creation of the current strategic plan has been a decade in the making. The eight themes, outlined above, and the title "Guard and Guide" were inspired by President Rich's 2013 inaugural address where he challenged the college community to hold "a high view of God and a high view of Scripture." Both God and God's Word are to be cherished and obeyed if the mission of the College is to be fulfilled. This intentional, Christ-centered perspective, permeates each area of the strategic plan and its objectives. For each of these areas, budget allocations were set and monitored annually, to ensure that resources are aligned with the ongoing mission of the College.

Sterling College recently concluded its [2020-2023 strategic plan](#) and in May 2023, the Board of Trustees completed its initial review of the [2023-2026 plan](#), with a special [virtual meeting in June 2023](#) to approve it.

While many objectives were met within the 2020-2023 strategic plan, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted the College's progress in achieving objectives outlined in the plan. As the expiration date for the 2020-2023 strategic plan drew near, the President and the Cabinet made the decision to reflect on [progress](#) made and "roll-over" the majority of the content within the 2020-2023 plan to the new 2023-2026 plan.

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

Each strategic goal is aligned with a budget code to tie the planned funds to the planned activity. Some key goals that have been reached include:

Goal	Budget 2020-2023	Status
Hire Director for Integration of Faith & Learning	\$9,000	Hired Fall 2017 and ongoing
Launch Master's Program	\$20,000	Launched summer 2018 and ongoing
Undergraduate Humanities Conference	\$3,000	Started in 2017, (on hiatus during pandemic) will be ongoing
Participate in Governor's Prayer Breakfast annually	\$6,000	Started March 2020 and ongoing (impacted by pandemic - remote in 2021 and 2022)
Sunset Interterm	No funds expended	January 2021
Changes to Chapel Schedule	No cost	Began Fall 2020
Joined National Christian College Athletic Association	\$5783	Fall 2021 and Ongoing
Hire full-time strength and conditioning coach	\$40,000 (with benefits)	Initially hired for Fall 2021
Add additional cameras across campus for security	\$35,000	Summer 2022
Technology Upgrades	\$1,645,500	Completed from Summer 2016-summer 2023
Partner with WealthQuotient	\$48,000	Partnership established in late 2023

Academic assessment has been critical to decision making and budget preparation. During [Program Review](#), budget implications of proposed changes must be included. The College also includes [non-academic assessments](#) in its cycle of evaluations. These assessments play a key role in budget allocation and changes to the strategic plan in expanding or even abandoning goals that were previously included.

This commitment to being nimble in processing both short and long-term objectives, has allowed the college to complete many key goals including the first phase of building connected to the \$25 million SterlingNOW campaign. This project involved hundreds of hours of meetings that led to decisions that created the greatest good for the most members of our campus community. A 32,000 square-foot addition, along with major renovations to the existing structure and approximately \$1 million of infrastructure upgrades [transformed the Gleason Center](#) from a tired, out-of-date building, into a state-of-the-art facility.

Sterling College employs monitoring and service systems for technology and physical plant. The physical plant utilizes [Asset Essentials](#) support ticket system to allow individuals to alert maintenance personnel of repair needs or potential emergencies.

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

Building	Project	Investment	Completed
Campus: Building Controls	Building Intelligence Program to upgrade lighting, water conservation, building controls	\$1.3 M	Fall 2016 and ongoing
Gleason Center	32,000 square foot expansion, total utility rebuild and renovation of current lobby, classrooms	\$6,100,000 (Expansion) \$670,000 (HVAC for existing facility)	Fall 2020
Baseball/Softball Facility	Completion of interior following opening of renovated Gleason Center	\$17,000	Summer 2022
Campus: Technology	Projects outlined here	\$1,645,500	Fall 2016 and ongoing
Campus: Technology	Upgrade Jenzabar software to Jenzabar One	Approx. \$260,000 to date	Fall 2022 and ongoing

5.C.3 Planning Process

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the College's progress in meeting the objectives within the strategic plan. The focus of both employees and finances shifted to address the newfound challenges that arose in meeting the needs of students, employees, and the institution. In response, the President's Cabinet spearheaded a [review, rollover, and updating of the 2020-2023 plan](#), to form the [2023-2026](#) strategic plan. This new plan serves as a continuation, or extension, of the 2020-2023

plan and as such, the College deviated from its regular cycle of creating a strategic plan.

The following paragraphs detail the process used in creating the 2020-2023 plan, which has now rolled into the 2023-2026 plan.

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

- An assessment of Guard and Guide conducted by the Cabinet and Board of Trustees (completed August 2019)
- Review of the eight strategic areas to add/edit any of these (August 2019)
- Six strategic planning luncheons were held across September, October, November and December 2019 and were [attended](#) by a wide variety of employees (completed December 2019)
- The ideas that emerged were prioritized to complete the 2020-2023 Guard and Guide Strategic Plan

The following groups were included in the development of the 2020-2023 strategic plan:

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

5.C.4 Planning on the Basis of Capacity and Fluctuations

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

In addition to staff input, technology and data gathering continue to be a vital aspect of planning at Sterling. Budgeting based on current enrollment throughout the year is a vital statistic to track. The President, CFO, and Cabinet monitor spending and expenses, revenue generation, and make spending plans accordingly. Each student represents approximately \$10,000 in income over a fiscal year and [budget adjustments](#) are made to [reflect student enrollment](#). In response to COVID, reallocations of funds were made to support the students and staff of the College. A 10% salary reduction for staff was put into place from March 2020-March 2021.

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

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

5.C.5 Anticipating Evolving Factors

The national political discussion of “gainful employment”, a discussion that has not included private institutions, has prompted the administration to discuss the challenges of being a College known for graduating "teachers and preacher", neither of which make impressive salaries in today's economy. It is discouraging to the College that a failure of this report could disqualify programs, but most significantly [the students](#) pursuing these careers, from eligibility of Title IV funds despite the public good that comes from careers in these areas of study.

Three million of the \$25 million SterlingNOW campaign is designated to endowment. In recent years the College received the [largest gift in its history](#), a \$7.7 million gift, of which \$6.7 million is designated to endowment. Additionally, at this year's annual President's Circle Dinner President Rich [announced](#) The Resolved 15:58 Project - Resourcing the Mission of Sterling College. This project is the President's personal [campaign](#) to raise \$35 million dollars in unrestricted endowment.

As the College's enrollment of minority students continues to grow, as reflected in the table below, broader conversations were begun about how to serve students with regard to academic, social, cultural and spiritual life. Starting with the [faculty](#) in early 2019, a diversity group formed to answer some of these questions. The [summary of recommendations](#) by what came to be known as the Joint Task Force on Diversity was provided to the President's Cabinet in August 2020. The College has focused on recruiting [international students](#), and continues to grow, through the Office of Student Success, has worked to support students.

The College has been able to complete vital [technology updates](#). Administration understands that technology advancements are always on the horizon and works to anticipate evolving factors. Looking ahead to the spring semester of 2024, the Director of IT plans to establish a strategic plan specifically for IT initiatives, in collaboration with our business partner at Imagine IT.

In anticipation of increased international enrollment, the College supported training additional DSOs to support the work of the designated PDSO. Additionally, the College is aware of the need to focus on multicultural engagement, ESL support, and allowance for increases to current recruiting discount policies.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Minority Students	25.5%	31%	31%	36%	38%	37%	34%	38%	33%	30%

An emerging factor that is critical to the College's future is that of water rights. Following drought years in 2011 and 2012, the state restricted water use in the western part of the state extending to just east of Sterling, Kansas. At the time, the College owned just 3.5 acre feet of water rights, an amount that would not sustain even a small part of the campus. Over the past four years, the College has worked closely with Groundwater Management District #5 to increase [permanent water rights](#) to the

amount of 33.5 acre feet. While this may seem inconsequential to higher education, these water rights allow the College to beautify and sustain its 40-acre landscape with water rights that are now permanent and sanctioned by the state. This move may be even more important in current drought situations compared to 2012.

Additional efforts to anticipate emerging factors include reaffirming articulation agreements with Kansas community colleges through the KICA [Global Transfer Agreement](#), maintaining [online undergraduate tuition](#) at a very affordable rate of \$145 per credit hour, and pursuing [articulation agreements](#) with other colleges and universities for graduate student entrance.

A helpful tool in evaluating the College's impact on the statewide economy are the results of a [study conducted by the KICA](#). These study results estimated the College's impact to be \$29 million dollars and 261 jobs.

The College made a strategic move in joining the [National Collegiate Christian Athletic Association](#) following its submission of a Title IX exemption. Given the threats facing collegiate athletics and the NAIA, the College wanted to align itself to continue offering opportunities for athletic competition, should participation in the NAIA come into conflict with the College's mission.

5.C.6

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

This data provides a year-by-year “at a glance” of performance in critical areas. When performance significantly drops in a particular area, that area is analyzed and resourced for improvement. For example, due to lower than desired retention data, Sterling created the [Office of Student Success](#) which is “committed to planning, processing and developing retention efforts to create academic growth, promote achievement, and encourage students to utilize their talents, skills and abilities to pursue meaningful careers and service to God and others.” The Office of Student Success created a [model for student success](#) that serves as guide and structure for the support provided to students. An additional effort includes the Academic Success and Retention Committee (ASRC) which meets [weekly](#) to review key indicators of student success and develop corrective measures at the individual student level as necessary. The committee developed a [Decision Tree](#) to guide student success staff in walking along students in need of support. The 2nd Year Student Project guided ASRC members through exploring the reasons why students choose to return to Sterling.

All [academic programs](#) and [non-academic](#) departments are required to go through regular program assessment. The academic assessment process involves collecting course data, summarizing it in [course reports](#), and then using the course reports, along with various other assessments and data points to create the annual [program report](#) to determine areas of success and areas of improvement. Sterling maintains a [schedule](#) for program review of academic programs. In summary, the program review [template](#) guides [program](#) faculty through a process of reviewing previous years' data collected and the results of annual program reports; soliciting input from internal and external stakeholders and resources; providing updates or changes to existing curriculum and program objectives; and examining and presenting budgetary impact for implementing changes based on this program review.

Both academic and non-academic program reports contain data from both the year(s) under review and the previous review, as well as sections to address areas of improvement from the previous

review. Academic programs are assessed through program reports annually, and through [program review every six years](#). Non-academic program reports are [completed](#) every [two years](#). The use of a [compliance calendar](#) that is integrated with our Microsoft Outlook calendars has assisted departments with the timely completion of various tasks, such as the [implementation](#) and [updating](#) of the Chemical Hygiene Plan.

To address retention challenges further, the Office of Student Success worked with a committee of faculty members and the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs to create an [advising handbook](#) that was approved by faculty governance in spring 2019. Training took place during a [faculty meeting](#) to ensure all faculty are informed on the process. This handbook is updated as needed, with the last revisions made in [2021](#), and training provided as new faculty are onboarded or changes made.

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

To improve collaboration on recruiting and enrollment strategies, a [Recruiting Team](#) was assembled to consider all factors in the recruitment of students including, but not limited to, discount rate, tuition, named scholarships, campus visits, communication among recruiters and the Enrollment Services Office, and much more.

Various surveys have been sent out to faculty and students to gather feedback and data regarding important decisions made at Sterling. In spring 2018, a [survey](#) went out to both faculty and students to gather data regarding transition from a brick-and-mortar bookstore to using the online retailer MBS Direct. A survey exploring dollars spent toward textbooks and perceptions of [Open Educational Resources](#) was administered to students. Historically, a yearly [survey](#) was sent to students to determine changes that the Vice President of Student Life should pursue. In fall 2023, the RNL [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI) was administered to further explore students' perceptions of their experiences. Student life requests student to complete an "Intent to Return" from near the conclusion of each semester. This helps administration anticipate the number of students planning to return the next semester.

In spring 2019, the Staff Welfare Committee distributed a [survey](#) to all employees to gather data to understand satisfaction levels of Sterling College employees in various areas such as salary compensation, quality of leadership and opportunities for advancement.

Recognizing the importance of high quality technology to assist in the overall operations at Sterling, many technological improvements have been made. A new data collection service, JRM, went live in October 2019 to provide the Enrollment Services staff with the necessary resources to track recruits. The College is currently undergoing a major transition in its student information system, shifting from an old clunky Jenzabar product to the much improved Jenzebar One.

Following a shift from IDEA course evaluations to Anthology/Campus Labs in 2020, poor response rates and frustrations with the software integration fueled an exploration of other options. The AVPAA presented options to the Faculty Welfare and Fiscal Affairs Committee, which agreed to adopt a new software for administration of course evaluations. The committee also [developed the evaluation tool](#) that was piloted for the summer 2 2023 session and [fully launched the fall of 2023](#). A

significant increase in [student response rate](#) was immediately observed with the implementation of the new integration and evaluation tool.

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

- Demonstrate sufficient content knowledge to be successful in his or her chosen profession or advanced academic endeavors.
- Exercise the intellectual, communicative and social skills reflective of creative and thoughtful servant leaderships.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the personal and civic skills necessary for a productive life of faith and service.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how biblical principles affect personal, professional and academic life.

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

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

The [current strategic plan](#) outlines eight major initiatives, each containing strategic goals, where data has been collected and analyzed from [achievements within the previous plan](#). The progress within these initiatives documents the institution's effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, while providing the framework for the 2023-2026 strategic plan and initiatives.

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

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

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

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

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

Sources

There are no sources.