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Program: M.S. in Athletic Training (first review) (51.0913)
Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

The profession of athletic training is recognized by the American Medical Association, Health Resources Services Administration, and the Department of Health and Human services as a health care profession. Athletic trainers are educated on the core competencies of patient-centered care, interprofessional practice, quality improvement, healthcare informatics, and professionalism. Trained in prevention, examination, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of emergent, acute or chronic injuries and medical conditions, athletic trainers are highly qualified and multi-skilled professional who render health care services under the direction of a physician.

The entry-level, professional program for athletic training at Northern Illinois University was originally offered as a Bachelor of Science degree that was accredited by the Commission of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). The Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT) degree was conceptualized and developed during the 2015-2016 academic year in response to the CAATE moving to require that all accredited professional programs preparing athletic trainers must be offered at the masters level.

The Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT) degree accepted its first cohort of students during the summer of 2021. This was a later-than-anticipated start for the MSAT program due to various factors, including the need to teach out the undergraduate program, accreditation delays, and COVID-19. The MSAT program is a two-year, 57-credit clinical Masters program divided into two phases: the practical phase and the professional phase. The practical phase of the program consists of three semesters (Summer 1, Fall 1, and Spring 1). All coursework during this phase is delivered face-to-face and incorporates a blend of classroom and clinical skill acquisition.

The professional phase focuses on clinical immersion and the development of hard skills, soft skills, and research skills. The didactic coursework during the second year of the program is delivered online to allow students to complete their immersive experience in a variety of settings and locations. The MSAT program received initial accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) on February 2023, and as such, upon completion of the program are eligible to sit for the Board of Certification (BOC) examination allowing them to earn the Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) credential. Similar to other allied health disciplines, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupation Outlook for Athletic Training forecasts a much faster than average job growth over the next ten years (14%).

Major findings and Recommendations:

The MSAT program accepted its third cohort of students during summer 2023. Enrollment over the last three years has increased. The first two cohorts of students had 7 students each, whereas 9
students were admitted into cohort three. The program's external accreditor (CAATE) mandates that we must report graduation rates, retention rates, and employment/placement rates; thus, the following site highlights the program outcomes, including BOC pass rate https://caate.net/Program-Information-and-Outcomes/735. One of the goals of the MSAT program is to recruit and retain a diverse group of students to facilitate a culturally inclusive learning environment. The program also must report demographic information to the CAATE as outlined in the program's annual report. As reported to the CAATE as part of the 2023 Annual Report, the AT Program at NIU had 14 students (3 Hispanic/Latinx, 1 Asian, 2 Black or African American, and 8 White).

On top of recruitment, retention is an important goal of the program and not only does the program strive to have a high retention rate, the program must also prepare all students to pass the BOC examination. Only 1 student failed to matriculate through the entire MSAT program at time of annual report. Embedded in the program are several modules, practice sessions, and practice tests to prepare students for the BOC exam. Scaffolded throughout the program are various assessments aimed at knowledge retention and test-taking endurance. Alongside practical skills and coursework, the program aims to have students proficient in evidence-based practice. This is achieved through coursework and research projects that are built around current evidence in healthcare as well as current faculty research, including concussion, biomechanics, and new patient populations. Currently, the MSAT program has had its current CAATE Annual Report accepted with no further action.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Since this is a new program, under its first review, actions taken since the last review of the MSAT are not applicable. However, given the CAATEs core-curriculum standards and our need to attract qualified students we have made the following changes:

- We have updated the clinical laboratory space for the program to provide the necessary, contemporary treatment tables and equipment to effectively engage in hands-on experiences;

- Given the focus on interprofessional education, we have collaborated with the College of Health and Human Sciences to engage in co-curricular mass casualty simulations and panel presentations. Further, we have continued to collaborate with CHHS faculty on teaching and scholarship opportunities.

With the granting of initial accreditation of 5 years and the CAATE Annual Report being accepted with no further action there is no need for actions to be taken as a result of this review. More importantly, there has only been one cohort of students graduate and sit for the BOC exam (87.5% first-time pass rate, 100% overall pass rate). The data from this cohort will be combined with the data from the next two cohorts to compile a three-year aggregate, which is a common timeline for data reporting for accreditation.
Actions taken as a result of this review:

Although there has only been one cohort matriculating through the entire MSAT program the following items have been prioritized to be focused on in the prior to the re-accreditation visit in 2027-2028:

Expand student research engagement, encouraging students to pursue original research projects and subsequent student grants that go above and beyond minimum curricular requirements.

Demonstrate systematic diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice efforts in program development, design, and delivery.

Assess students ability to practice cultural competency, foster cultural humility, and demonstrate respect in client/patient care.

Expand clinical sites in number, quality, and diversity.

Implement additional interprofessional and transdisciplinary events with common athletic training stakeholders.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

As mentioned previously, NIU's MSAT program was granted an initial 5-yr accreditation and the CAATE Annual Report was accepted with no further action required. More importantly, there has only been one cohort of students graduate and sit for the BOC exam (87.5% first-time pass rate, 100% overall pass rate).
Program: B.S. in Biomedical Engineering (first review) (14.0501)

Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

The BS. Degree in Biomedical Engineering is a new degree program at College of Engineering and Engineering Technology. This degree program prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary to excel in the dynamic field of biomedical engineering and bio science. The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook projects that there will be a 5% increase in the number of positions for biomedical engineers over the next decade, which is much faster than the average for all occupations. Recent alumni work at a range of companies including biomedical engineering and bio science.

Throughout the pandemic, the program transitioned all instruction to an online format, representing a significant programmatic shift. The faculty admirably responded to this challenge with positivity and constructive effort. They efficiently adapted complex course material into online formats within a short timeframe, thereby ensuring our students have the greatest opportunity for success.

Following the pandemic, as restrictions eased, the program successfully transitioned from online courses to in-person settings. This shift brought about several benefits, including increased engagement and interaction among students and faculty. The return to face-to-face instruction allowed for more dynamic classroom discussions, hands-on laboratory experiences, and collaborative projects, enhancing the overall learning experience for students. Additionally, the in-person setting fostered a sense of community and camaraderie among students, creating opportunities for networking, mentorship, and personal growth.

The seamless transition from online to in-person instruction underscores the adaptability and commitment of both faculty and students to academic excellence. It reflects the program's resilience in navigating challenges and its unwavering dedication to providing the highest quality education to its students.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Enrollment in the program has demonstrated stability, with an average of 85 students over the past three years. This achievement is noteworthy for a relatively new Bachelor of Science program. Additionally, the graduation rate has remained steady, averaging 9 students per year for the last three years, with 11 students successfully graduating in the academic year 2022-2023. These consistent figures reflect the program's commitment to academic excellence and student success.
Furthermore, the retention rate aligns with the standards set for B.S. degrees within the college. The program proudly caters to a diverse community of students, with enrollment and success rates notably increasing for African American, Hispanic, and female students. This upward trend is indicative of the program's efforts to foster inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that students from various backgrounds can thrive in their academic pursuits.

The scholarly output of our faculty members is remarkable, evident through their active engagement in grant activities and the number of publications, awards, and presentations. This scholarly productivity underscores the faculty's commitment to advancing knowledge within the field and contributing to the academic community.

A significant milestone for the program was the attainment of ABET accreditation in 2023. This accreditation reflects the program's adherence to high educational standards and its commitment to continuous improvement. It serves as a testament to the program's dedication to providing students with a quality education that meets the rigorous criteria set by ABET.

In summary, the program has demonstrated commendable stability in enrollment and graduation rates, inclusivity in serving a diverse student community, remarkable scholarly achievements among faculty, and the significant accomplishment of ABET accreditation in 2023. These factors collectively contribute to the program's success and ongoing commitment to excellence in education.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

This program was started in 2019, and hence there is no previous review. No changes have been made since last review.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

Throughout the accreditation process, one of our key initiatives revolves around faculty recruitment. We have taken significant steps in this regard, including the recent addition of a visiting faculty member to our team. Furthermore, we are actively engaged in the recruitment process for a new tenure-track faculty member who will join the BME Program in Fall 2024. Additionally, we have strategically designated faculty members from the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology (CEET) as joint appointments in the BME Program. This strategic approach ensures that we have an adequate number of faculty members to effectively fulfill various roles, including teaching, advising students, and participating in BME committees such as the curriculum committee.
Decision:
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:
The College fully supports the continuation of the BME BS program. Enrollments are steady and continue to grow.
Program: B.S. in Electrical Engineering (14.1001)
Date of last review: 4/30/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Electrical Engineering prepares students for careers related to the design, testing, and development of electrical devices, equipment, and systems. The program is essential offered in person, but has many options for online and hybrid classes.

The careers in electrical engineering can consist of a wide range of activities. These include power devices and systems, microelectronic devices, telecommunications, signal processing, and digital systems. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, strong growth is expected in these areas. Jobs in related fields are expected to grow between 5% and 7% over the next 10 years.

Over the past review period, one major change was that the biomedical emphasis was split off into a separate program. Also, the capstone design project has increased in credit hours to make the project more rigorous. Also, over that past period, faculty have dropped with the total tenure track faculty falling from 12 to 8. This has resulted in reduced research productivity and fewer course offerings. Some required courses are now offered just once a year which can lead to scheduling problems. There is also a reduction of electives available. Still the program has been able to maintain a high quality of education for its students.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Since the last review the program enrollments has dropped from 313 in 2019 to 197 currently based on fall enrollment figures. Prior to the separations of the Biomedical Emphasis into a separate program, about 20% of the students in BS in Electrical Engineering program were in the Biomedical Emphasis. The loss of these students, therefore, accounts for a good portion of the enrollment decline.

The program has a maintained a good racial diversity. Hispanic enrollment has increased from 18% to 25%, while African American enrollment has increased from 13% to 17%. Improvements can still be made to make the ethnic composition of underrepresented groups be more in alignment with the local population.

Gender diversity is a continuing problem in the program. Currently only about 10% of the student enrollment are female. Creating an interest in engineering at a young age may help in the long run.
Data on alumni are not readily available. Anecdotal information from conversations with alumni and employers suggest the program is educating its students well. More needs to be done to quantify this information.

The faculty have been remaining active in the profession through continuous research. In recent years funding has remained consistent. Of particular note is $1.5 million grant for an advanced electronics initiative. This will aid in the development of an innovative facility for microelectronics fabrication education. Although the funding has been consistent, initiatives need to be made to increase funding levels.

Assessment is an ongoing process that occurs every semester. Learning outcomes identified by the faculty are evaluated every semester through student surveys and assessment of materials submitted by the students. Results of these assessments are returned to the faculty to be used in continuous improvement.

The program was reviewed by ABET (Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology) in recent years. There was a site visit in fall 2022 that resulting in full accreditation being awarded for the next six year cycle.

Overall the program is maintaining its good standing. It is recommended to maintain its high standard of assessment. To grow the program, considerations should be made to targeted recruitment of underrepresented ethnic groups and women.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Based on comments from the last review, several changes have been made.

One recommendation was to continue development of online courses. Online course offerings are more readily available than when the previous review. For example, nearly all summer offerings are online courses.

Another recommendation was to show productivity in faculty-student collaboration. Many grants have included undergraduate research to enhance student-faculty collaboration in scholarly work. Also, promoting the accelerated BS/MS program has included more students in advanced studies.

There was a recommendation to differentiate NIU from other programs. The enhanced capstone project developed over the past few years is one of the items that showcase the activities of our students. Promoting the accelerated BS/MS degrees helps to further distinguish the program.
By supporting student organizations, the recommendation for encouraging student mentoring has been addressed. Organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) are promoted throughout the College.

Although some anecdotal information about the alumni is available, more action is needed on the recommendation for improved tracking of alumni. Further consideration on how to affectively obtain alumni information will need to occur.

Resource changes have been a factor in all of the above actions. With the reduction of faculty, there is less human resources available to implement these actions. Computer resources for online courses have been available in recent years. Yet other equipment is aging and needs updating. The additional funds for the advanced electronics initiative will be a good start toward improving the program.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

Considering the content of this review, several actions will be investigated. These actions can be aligned with both the short and long term goals of the college.

For the short term, the Department of Electrical Engineering has been working with the College to develop bridge programs to help underrepresented groups be better prepared for the program. These programs will enhance math skills in students considering an engineering career.

Longer term, an investigation needs to be done to balance the online and in person offerings. Consideration of various learning styles and international students requirements need to be balance with teaching loads to make the most effective learning experience.

There is currently a search underway for a faculty member to teach courses and develop a laboratory in the field of microelectronics. This in conjunction with the funding for the advanced electronics initiative will help develop the microelectronics area and help distinguish the program from others in the long term.

With these initiatives, the short term goals to increase enrollment will be supported. Also the longer term goal to increase diversity in the program will be reinforced.

**Decision:**
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The program has been maintaining strong enrollment and continues to develop student experiential learning. It has maintained an excellent academic program as attested by the ABET accreditation.
Program: M.S. in Electrical Engineering (14.1001)
Date of last review: 4/30/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Master of Science (M.S.) in Electrical Engineering prepares students for careers related to the design, testing, and development of electrical devices, equipment, and systems. The masters degree offers students a greater opportunity to work in research and development facilities. The program is essentially offered in person, but has many options for online and hybrid classes.

The careers in electrical engineering can consist of a wide range of activities. These include power devices and systems, microelectronic devices, telecommunications, signal processing, and digital systems. With a masters degree students would typically specialize in one of these topics. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, strong growth is expected in these areas. Jobs in related fields are expected to grow between 5% and 7% over the next 10 years.

Over the past review period, there have been some significant changes in the program. A course only option was added to allow more non-traditional student to complete the degree. Also, the BS/MS degree program was expanded to the Accelerated BS/MS program which made improved the possibilities of a student to receive the dual degree. A related development is the introduction of the Ph. D. in Electrical Engineering. This gives an opportunity for students to continue their advanced studies and thereby attracting high quality students.

Over that past period, faculty have dropped with the total tenure track faculty falling from 12 to 8. This has resulted in reduced research productivity and fewer course offerings particularly at the 600 level. Still the program has been able to maintain a high quality of education for its students.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Reviewing enrollments over the past several year, enrollment is currently up. In 2019 there were 39 students enroll in the program while in 2003 there were 50. However, approximately 30 of these students can be attributed to contract courses sponsored by Navistar. More work is needed to recruit students from outside of the contract course.

The program has been showing more ethnic diversity over the past several years. In 2019 there no reported African Americans or Hispanics in the program. In fall 2023 the enrollment of ethnic minorities have increased such that the program now consists of 5.8 % African Americans and 11.5 % Hispanics. Although this is a significant development, more recruitment needs to done in these underrepresented groups to bring them in alignment with the local population.
Gender diversity is a continuing problem in the program. The percentage of females enrolled dropped from 25.6% in 2019 to 17.3% in 2023. While it is unclear why there was a drop in female enrollment, more focused recruiting methods need to be developed to bring women into the program.

Data on alumni are not readily available. Anecdotal information from conversations with alumni and employers suggest the program is educating its students well. More needs to be done to quantify this information.

The faculty have been remaining active in the profession through continuous research. In recent years funding has remained consistent. Of particular note is $1.5 million grant for an advanced electronics initiative. This will aid in the development of an innovative facility for microelectronics fabrication education. Although the funding has been consistent, initiatives need to be made to increase funding levels.

Program assessment is based on analysis of the students capstone work. A direct assessment is done by the students graduate committee rating various aspects of the students work. Indirect assessment is done by the student evaluation of the program. Recent data has been collected pending analysis.

Based on the above findings, the program is operating has shown reasonable growth. As much of the growth is derived from the contract course, it is recommended that such arrangements be pursued in the future. The program should be able to capitalize on the advanced electronics initiative grant to help build the program in terms of microelectronics.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Recommendations from the previous review related to better tracking of alumni, developing online courses, and improving the programs growth. Although more can be done with tracking alumni, many online courses have been developed and avenues for program growth have been found.

The teaching of contract courses have improved enrollment and helped develop online courses. These courses were offered online for a company's employees. The extra students have boosted enrollment considerably. Also, the online material developed can be used for future semesters and not be limited to just the contract courses.

Enhancing the BS/MS program into the Accelerated BS/MS program has also helped improve enrollment in the MS program. By allowing students to take graduate courses earlier in the BS program, more students have enrolled in the MS program. This has created a significant improvement in enrollment.
Another development toward improving the enrollment is the introduction of the course work only option. For working professionals interested in advanced degrees, developing a thesis or advanced project is often difficult to accomplish. Although it has only been recently implemented, the coursework option is expected to attract many of the potential students.

The funding from the advanced electronics initiative are also aided in the development of the program. These funds are being used to update equipment in the Microelectronics Research and Development Laboratory (MRDL). There improvements in the MRDL will improve the microelectronics education program components of the program.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

There are several changes underway that are the result of reviewing the program over the past few years. These include both short and long term goals.

As a short term goal, the use of contract courses is one method that is planned to be continued. This would help maintain the enrollment levels through the next cohort cycle.

Another short term initiative, is the continued promotion of the Accelerated BS/MS program. This has been shown very effective in maintaining quality local students in the program.

More long term, there is a plan to hire a new faculty with expertise in the microelectronics. This new faculty will be able to leverage the funding from the advanced electronics initiative and develop new coursework in the field.

Also there is an initiative to solicit international student through partner organizations. This will help maintain a set of students over the long term.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The program continues to produce high quality graduates. Efforts are underway to improve enrollment and make offering more accessible to potential students.
Program: Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering (14.1001)

Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Electrical Engineering prepares students for careers related to the design, testing, and development of electrical devices, equipment, and systems. As the degree allows students to explore topics in more depth than the Bachelors or Masters, it opens opportunities for graduates to work in industries, national labs and higher education institutions as researchers, scientists or professors. The program is essentially offered in person but has many options for online and hybrid classes.

Careers in electrical engineering can consist of a wide range of activities. These include power devices and systems, microelectronic devices, telecommunications, signal processing, and digital systems. With a Ph.D. degree students would typically specialized research in one of these topics. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, strong growth is expected in these areas. Jobs in related fields are expected to grow between 5% and 7% over the next 10 years. Specific research jobs related to electrical engineering are expected to grow about 7%. Engineering instructors at the postsecondary level are expected to grow at a 9% level. Based on these observations, the demand for Ph.Ds. in electrical engineering is significantly higher than average.

The Ph.D. degree is a program over the past reporting period. Related to this program the Accelerated BS/MS option would help lead students into the PH. D. Additional offerings of online and hybrid offerings would allow more students to initiate the degree.

Over that past period, faculty have dropped with the total tenure track faculty falling from 12 to 8. This has resulted in reduced research productivity and fewer course offerings, particularly at the 600 level. While the program has been able to maintain students, more faculty are needed for the program to grow.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Being a new program at NIU, the PH. D. in Electrical Engineering had only two students in fall 2023. The program, however, has shown to be a conduit for underrepresented groups to achieve an advanced degree. Half the students identified as being female. Also half the students identified as being African-American.
The program has not had any graduates, and therefore there are no alumni. Anecdotal information from conversations with alumni and employers from related programs in the Department of Electrical Engineering suggests the department is educating its students well. More needs to be done to quantify this information.

The faculty have been remaining active in the profession through continuous research. In recent years funding has remained consistent. Of particular note is $1.5 million grant for an advanced electronics initiative. This will aid in the development of an innovative facility for microelectronics fabrication education. Although the funding has been consistent, initiatives need to be made to increase funding levels.

The current plan for assessing the program to be based on the dissertation, similar to the Masters degree assessment of the capstone work. A direct assessment is done by the students graduate committee rating various aspects of the students work. Indirect assessment is done by the student evaluation of the program. No data is currently available for this assessment.

Based on the above findings, the Ph. D. in Electrical Engineering Program is starting off well. Its growth will leverage off the existing MS program without being burdensome on the existing program. The Ph. D. program should be able to capitalize on the advanced electronics initiative grant to help build the program in terms of microelectronics.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

As this is the first review, there have been no actions since the last review.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

There are several changes underway that are the result of reviewing the program over the past few years. These include both short and long term goals.

A short-term initiative is the continued promotion of the Accelerated BS/MS program. This has been shown to be very effective in maintaining quality local students in the MS program. Those students provide high quality candidates for the Ph. D. program.

Also, there is an initiative to solicit international students to the MS program through partner organizations. This will help maintain a quality pool of candidates for the Ph. D. program.
More long term, there is a plan to hire a new faculty with expertise in the microelectronics. This new faculty will be able to leverage the funding from the advanced electronics initiative and develop new coursework in the field.

**Decision:**
Degree program is in good standing

**Explanation for decision:**
Although the enrollment is low, the program has potential to expand the department's research program and offer opportunities not currently available to many students. The program uses minimal resources outside of the other programs in the department and shows potential for many opportunities.
Program: B.S. in Engineering Technology (15.0000)
Date of last review: 9/1/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Engineering Technology program prepares students with a knowledge of engineering, mathematics, and technical management to apply technical concepts in industrial settings. Students in the B.S. program have an opportunity to complete an emphasis in one of five areas: Electrical Engineering Technology, Manufacturing Engineering Technology, Industrial Management and Technology, Energy and Environmental Engineering Technology, and Applied Manufacturing Technology. All of the emphases except for the last one are on-campus programs that emphasize hands-on, application-oriented skills in addition to theoretical knowledge. The last emphasis is limited to transfer students who enter the program with an Associates of Applied Science degree with a major in a recognized technical area. Selecting this emphasis allows individuals who already hold some training in the field of engineering technology to complete their B.S. program in a completely online format. B.S. in Engineering Technology prepares students to become engineers, technologists, and technicians with hands-on skills and applied knowledge. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the jobs for our B.S. graduates are expected to grow by 0.5% to 3.2% in the next 10 years. Over the review period, the number of faculty in the department has reduced by about 35% from 14 to 9; full-time instructors from 3 to 2; and department staff members from 3 to 1. The courses taught by the retired faculty and the full-time instructor were covered by adjunct instructors to support students in the B.S. program.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Enrollments in the B.S. in Engineering Technology has decreased from 287 students in Fall 2019 to 193 students in Fall 2022 but increased to 197 in fall 2023. Diversity in the programs students has increased over the review period, with the proportion of female students tripled from 5% in fall 2019 to 16% in fall 2023; Black/African American doubled from 14% to 26%; and Hispanic/Latino students increased by 50% from 20% to 30%. Alumni have reported an average of 80 percent employment within 3 months of graduation from the program. Faculty were significantly engaged in both local industry-sponsored research projects as well as research projects funded by state and federal agencies, encompassing fields such as engineering education, operational efficiency, and sustainability. Although the number of faculty reduced from 11 to 9 since 2019, the awarded grants increased from $75K in 2019 to about $900K in 2023. Assessment of student learning outcomes within the program is exemplary and faculty use assessment data regularly to make data-informed decisions. In the mid-status reviews of the B.S. program by the University Assessment Panel, we met all review criteria, with two third of the criteria to a “great extent (G).” The Engineering Technology programs have been successfully accredited to 2026 by ATMAE (Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering) and/or to 2029
by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). The Energy and Environmental Engineering program was newly accredited by ABET, retroactively from 2020. We are hoping to hire a one faculty member in the area of advanced manufacturing to address the shortage of faculty in the Manufacturing Engineering Technology program. Faculty members have excellent reputations for their teaching with several awards including one Presidential Teaching Professor.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Faculty in the B.S. in Engineering Technology have made curricular changes since the last program review based on assessment and alumni feedback data. We offered one junior-level general education course to better serve student needs. In addition to investing $30K annually for lab improvements in the last two years, we invested $50K in new lab equipment to teach current metrology technology and skills. Other changes since the last review include the recent reaccreditation of the programs by ABET and ATMAE. One program, Energy and Environmental Engineering program, was newly accredited by ABET.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

As a result of this review, the program faculty are making a number of changes including changing name of emphasis to better represent the needs in the society and the graduates, hiring a new faculty to teach advanced manufacturing beginning in Fall 2024, and considering enhancement of the Automation Laboratory to teach current technology and skills in advanced manufacturing. These changes will support the colleges short-term priorities of increasing enrollments through enhanced programs and long-term priorities of promoting diverse experiential learning, supporting innovative research, and reinforcing collaboration with industry and the community.

**Decision:**

Degree program is in good standing

**Explanation for decision:**

The Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology program experienced a declined enrollment like other programs in the university but the enrollment started to increase in 2023. The program has a mature assessment system and uses data from the system for programmatic improvements. The programs were successfully reaccredited by ABET and ATMAE with one program newly accredited by ABET.
Program: M.S. in Industrial Management and Technology (15.1501)
Date of last review: 9/2/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Master of Science (M.S.) in Industrial Management and Technology program prepares students to be effective leaders in industry with skills in managing systems, problems and people. The program is offered fully online to provide broad access to students but students can also take a wide variety of in-person courses. The program is available to students with a baccalaureate degree in engineering, technology, or industrial education. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the jobs for our M.S. graduates are expected to grow by 3.2% in the next 10 years. Over the review period, one faculty member who taught required courses in the M.S. program retired. The courses taught by the retired faculty were covered by adjunct instructors to support students in the M.S. program.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Enrollments in the M.S. in Industrial Management and Technology has decreased from 19 students in Fall 2019 to 5 students in Fall 2022 but increased to 7 in fall 2023. Diversity in the programs students has increased over the review period, with the proportion of female students quadrupled from 11% in fall 2019 to 43% in fall 2023 and Hispanic/Latino students increased from 0% to 29%. About 90% of the students are working professionals pursuing this degree as part-time students. Faculty were significantly engaged in both local industry-sponsored projects as well as research projects funded by state and federal agencies, encompassing fields such as engineering education, operational efficiency, and sustainability. Although the number of faculty reduced from 11 to 9 since 2019, the awarded grants increased from $75K in 2019 to about $900K in 2023. In the mid-status reviews of the M.S. program by the University Assessment Panel, we met all review criteria, with 90 percent of the criteria to a great extent (G). The program is offered fully online to provide broad access to students, but we are also emphasizing that we offer a wide variety of in-person courses to attract more international students.

Actions taken since the last review:

Program faculty have worked on several curricular initiatives, based on robust assessment data and reporting since the last review. These include adding Graduate Certificates in Environmental Health and Safety based upon needs in industry and offering directed study courses for graduate students who are interested in research. We repaired the plastic processing machines to enhance industry-sponsored research projects.

Actions taken as a result of this review:
As a result of this review, faculty in the M.S. in Industrial Management program are embarking on several changes. For example, in an effort to increase graduate enrollment, the department is upgrading website to publicize in-person option for the M.S. in Industrial Management and Technology program to attract research-focused graduate students, is working with the Graduate School to improve recruitment of foreign students for the M.S. program, and exploring a holistic admission for the M.S. program. These changes will support the college's short-term priorities of increasing enrollments through enhanced programs and long-term priorities of supporting innovative research.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The Master of Science in Industrial Management and Technology program experienced a declined enrollment like other programs in the university but the enrollment started to increase in 2023. The program has a mature assessment system and uses data from the system for programmatic improvements.
Program: B.S. in Industrial and Systems Engineering (14.3501)
Date of last review: 2/15/2018

Major changes in the program:

Students earning a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISYE) develop skills in improving processes and production of goods and services by identifying avenues toward greater efficiency and innovative means to increase productivity within systems. Industrial engineers find ways to eliminate wastefulness in production processes. They devise efficient systems that integrate workers, materials, information, and energy to make a product or provide a service, which are involved in such functions as designing a complete production facility or a single workplace, setting operator performance standards, planning manufacturing processes, planning and controlling production, designing quality control systems, analyzing system reliability, simulating system performance, and planning and evaluating large-scale projects. Industrial and systems engineers are employed in a broad variety of organizations, including manufacturing industries, utilities, transportation, health care systems, financial institutions, and all levels of government agencies. The B.S. in ISYE program provides three areas for emphasis: Health Systems Engineering, Manufacturing Systems, and Engineering Management. The instructional modality of the B.S. in ISYE program is mainly face-to-face, along with several online courses that are offered in synchronous or asynchronous mode. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the job outlook for industrial engineers will grow at 12% (faster than average) during the time period from 2022-2032. The Bureau also reports that the median annual wage for industrial engineers with B.S. degrees was $96,350 in 2022.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Faculty in the B.S. in ISYE program have been honored with several teaching awards including one Presidential Teaching Professor, one Excellence in Online Teaching Award, and one IIESE Operational Excellence Division Teaching Award. The B.S. program contributes to the General Education program by offering three courses related to the Nature and Technology Knowledge Domain. The B.S. in ISYE program utilizes a mature system of assessment and has been praised by external accreditors. According to the 2022-2023 Annual Assessment Update Feedback on the assessment of student learning outcomes, the ISYE program received the following comments: "There is a clear and intentional alignment of the learning outcomes to the data. The program has a robust assessment system in place." The ISYE program was under accreditation review in the 2022-2023 cycle and was fully accredited for the next six years (to September 30, 2029). Alumni outcomes from AY2019 to AY2021 in terms of employment status were 100% (either employed full-time or enrolled in a continuing education program). Enrollment in the B.S. program has decreased from 210 FTEs in FY2019 to 142 FTEs in FY2023. Credit hour production at the undergraduate level has decreased from 3,150 credit hours in FY2019 to 2,133 credit hours in FY2023. Three years of COVID played a significant role for the decrease of enrollment. Industrial
and Systems Engineering is less known to high school and community school students, comparing
to the other engineering programs. The department is working on improving ISYE demonstration
tools for open house events and visits to community colleges.

Actions taken since the last review:

Since the last review, the B.S. in ISYE program faculty have implemented several curricular
changes based on assessment data to better serve the needs of our students. Among these are new
courses in digital manufacturing, data analytics, optimization, and human sensibility. Almost all
of our senior design projects are fully funded by companies ensuring that students have the
opportunity to practice theory taught in class on real-life projects from the sponsors. Students work
on their senior design projects in a manufacturing company, a hospital or where they can exhibit
both engineering and management skills. Between Fall 2017 and Fall 2023, over 150 students
participated in these projects to complete 60 projects that helped the department to generate over
$400K in revenue.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

Two actions (short-term and long-term) will be taken as a result of this review. In the short-term,
the department will focus more on improving ISYE demonstration tools for open house events
with high school and community college students. In the long-term, more efforts will be made to
offer additional 2+2 agreements with community colleges and possibly with international
universities moving forward. These two actions (short-term and long-term) are aligned with the
colleges priority of student recruitment.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The Bachelor of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering program prepares students to
participate in a fast-growing field. The program has a mature assessment system and uses data
from the system for program improvements. The program continues to offer senior design projects
that are fully funded by companies ensuring that students have the opportunity to practice theory
taught in class on real-life projects from the sponsors.
Program: M.S. in Industrial and Systems Engineering (14.3501)
Date of last review: 3/15/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Master of Science (M.S.) in Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISYE) program prepares students to function at an advanced level in industrial and systems engineering settings including offices, health care settings, and manufacturing companies. The M.S. in ISYE program, with its Specialization in Engineering Management, allows students opportunities to follow one of two tracks, Engineering and Decision Analysis or Global Logistics. Regardless of the track chosen, students in the program gain the knowledge, skills, and tools to become proficient in the application of advanced industrial and systems engineering concepts and techniques to design, analyze and improve manufacturing, as well as service systems and become capable of conducting in-depth, independent research/projects and reporting the results of that research in both written reports and formal presentations. Students in the M.S. program work closely on research with faculty and have the option of completing a thesis or a Masters project or paper to fulfill the M.S. program requirements. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the job outlook for engineering managers will grow at 4% (as fast as average) during the time period from 2022-2032. The Bureau also reports that the median annual wage for engineering managers was $159,920 in 2022.

Major findings and Recommendations:

The enrollment in the M.S. in ISYE program has remained relatively stable over the review period at approximately 153 FTEs in FY2019 and 155 FTEs in FY2023. Credit hour production at the graduate level are 1,832 credit hours in FY2019 and 1,864 credit hours in FY2023. According to NIU-APS data, the student headcounts in the M.S. in ISYE program are 121 in AY2021, 128 in AY2022, and 117 in AY 2023. The program has a mature assessment system in place. According to the 2022-2023 Annual Assessment Update Feedback on the assessment of student learning outcomes, the ISYE program received the following comments: There is a clear and intentional alignment of the learning outcomes to the data. Although the targets are met, the faculty intend to modify its course to address SLO A since student performance was lowest in this area. The program has a robust assessment system in place. Alumni of the program appear satisfied with 70 to 100 percent of alumni responding to surveys over the review period indicating they are satisfied with their M.S. in ISYE degree. Faculty in the program are productive in research, bringing in over $3 million in grants and contracts over the review period. Faculty in the program received two NSF grants that are currently ongoing.

Actions taken since the last review:
Utilizing assessment data and program review feedback, faculty in the M.S. in ISYE program have implemented a number of curricular changes since the last program review including new courses in ISYE principles/applications, digital manufacturing, data analytics, optimization, human sensibility. ISYE faculty strongly believe in Bridging Theory with Practice by facilitating experiential learning opportunities for our students. Faculty and students are actively engaged with local manufacturers, hospitals, and distributors on solving real-life problems through Engineer-in-Residence (EIR) projects. NIU's core values are re-emphasized when students work with faculty on solving real-life problems through EIR projects. These are experiential learning opportunities where students must demonstrate curiosity, creativity, and integrity. Students who are on EIR projects receive real-world experience and provide implementable solutions to companies. Exit Survey responses show students receiving jobs and/or internship because of EIR experience. One faculty became the associate dean for undergraduate academic affairs. The ISYE department has taken the needed actions to manage and minimize the impact on the course planning/offering in the program. Other faculty members in the same expertise areas helped cover the courses taught by this faculty.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

Two actions (short-term and long-term) will be taken as a result of this review. In the short-term, the department will continue the momentum of our EIR program by working with local manufacturing and service industries to bring in experiential learning opportunities for our students. MOUs were established with international universities in the past to promote our program. In the long-term, more efforts will be made to offer dual degree programs and 1+1 programs with international universities in countries such as Chile, Colombia, India and other international universities. These two actions (short-term and long-term) are aligned with the colleges priority of graduate student recruitment.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The Master of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering program prepares students for high-paying careers that are in demand. The enrollment is high and has remained relatively stable. The program has a mature assessment system and uses data from the system for program improvements. Faculty and students are actively engaged with local manufacturers, hospitals, and
distributors on solving real-life problems through Engineer-in-Residence (EIR) projects that provide our students with experiential learning opportunities and real-world experience.
Program: Ph.D. in Industrial and Systems Engineering (14.3501)
Date of last review: 3/15/2018

Major changes in the program:

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISYE) program prepares students for professional careers at academic institutions, national research labs, federal and state agencies, and private and public corporations. Students enrolled in the program will develop the ability to identify and pursue important research questions pertaining to the field of ISYE. Students will also acquire the quantitative, qualitative, and methodological research skills needed to advance research findings that contribute to the development of the economy, society, and industry, either locally or globally. The overall goal of the program is to train and develop advanced practitioners, researchers and teaching scholars in ISYE. Our PhD program is new (started in Fall 2020). The first 2 PhD students were admitted in Fall 2021 who were fully funded by faculty's research grants. The program currently has 5 PhD students; among them 3 PhD students will take the qualifying exam in May 2024.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Our PhD program was started in Fall 2020. We do not have Tableau data yet to show the enrollment and student outcomes for our PhD program. The program has an assessment system in place that includes a list of methods to assess the learning objectives/outcomes. The assessment data and program review feedback (when available) will help the program faculty to improve the curriculum in the future. Faculty in the program are productive in research, bringing in over $3 million in grants and contracts over the review period. Faculty in the program received two NSF grants that are currently ongoing. ISYE faculty strongly believe in Bridging Theory with Practice by facilitating experiential learning opportunities for our students. Faculty and students are actively engaged with local manufacturing and service industries on solving real-life problems through Engineer-in-Residence (EIR) projects. Our PhD program requires student to take Industry Residency (3 credit hours) after successfully completing the candidacy examination. ISYE programs strength in EIR projects will help facilitate Industry Residency for our PhD students. The program currently has 5 PhD students. Most of them are funded by EIR projects or NSF grants. Our PhD program outlook under current funding model (i.e., EIR projects and federal/state grants) is promising.

Actions taken since the last review:

One faculty became the associate dean for undergraduate academic affairs. The ISYE department has taken the needed actions to manage and minimize the impact on the course planning/offering in the program. Other faculty members in the same expertise areas helped cover the courses taught by this faculty.
Actions taken as a result of this review:

Two actions (short-term and long-term) will be taken as a result of this review. In the short-term, the program faculty will utilize the assessment data and program review feedback to improve the PhD curriculum by following our PhD assessment system. In the long-term, the department will continue seeking funding through EIR projects and federal/state grants to support PhD students. These two actions (short-term and long-term) are aligned with the colleges priority of growth of our PhD programs and research outcomes.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Industrial and Systems Engineering program prepares students for professional careers at academic institutions, national research labs, federal and state agencies, and private and public corporations that are in demand. The program has an assessment system and will use assessment data for program improvements. The program is new and has 5 PhD students currently. Most of them are funded by EIR projects or NSF grants. Our PhD program outlook under current funding model (i.e., EIR projects and federal/state grants) is promising.
Program: B.S. in Mechanical Engineering (14.1901)
Date of last review: 1/15/2018

Major changes in the program:

RECENT HISTORY AND INSTRUCTIONAL MODALITY

Since the previous program review, the Department of Mechanical Engineering has gained new leadership. Tariq Shamim became the department chair in July 2019. After his arrival, the responsibility for conducting and reporting assessment became less centralized in the department chair. The move placed the responsibility to shape the assessment process in the hands of faculty through a committee/subcommittee structure.

Like the rest of the campus, mechanical engineering instruction went completely online during the Covid pandemic. Since then, all undergraduate courses in Mechanical Engineering have returned to face-to-face instruction.

STUDENT PREPARATION

The Mechanical Engineering B.S. Degree Program provides learning experiences, preparing students to become successful engineers. The analytical problem solving skills at the heart of the curriculum provides a strong foundation for a minority of students who seek other career paths such as law, business/entrepreneurship, education. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) adopted by the degree program match those of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET):

1. An ability to identify, formulate, and solve complex engineering problems.
2. An ability to apply engineering design to produce solutions that meet specified needs.
3. An ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences.
4. An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities.
5. An ability to function effectively on a team.
6. An ability to develop and conduct appropriate experimentation.
7. An ability to acquire and apply new knowledge as needed.

PREDICTIONS OF JOB GROWTH

Quoting the Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment of mechanical engineers is projected to grow 10 percent from 2022 to 2032, much faster than the average for all occupations.
Major findings and Recommendations:

TRENDS IN ENROLLMENT, DEGREES CONFERRED

From Fall 2019 to Fall 2023, enrollment in the B.S. program has dropped 16 percent. In the same time, undergraduate enrollment at the university has dropped close to 7 percent. From Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, however, enrollment has increased slightly. Early data on incoming freshman accepting their admissions offers for Fall 2024 gives hope that there might be a slight growth in enrollment next academic year.

Number of B.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering conferred from FY 2018 to FY 2023 has also dropped significantly: 31.6%. During the same time period undergraduate degree from the university as a whole has dropped 25.1%.

Then number of new students entering NIU who indicate that they wish to study mechanical engineering has also dropped. In 2019 and 2020, the number of entering students was approximately 184. In 2021 through 2023, the number was approximately 150.

During this interval from 2019 to 2023, the percentage of entering Hispanic students increased steadily from 19% to 31%. Similarly, the percentage of black or African American students steadily increased from 10% to 19% of the pool. Interestingly, the number of women entering the program has remained steady at about 11%.

Hispanic students make up approximately 17% of the graduating class, while black or African American students make up about 4% of the graduates. These two underrepresented groups leave the mechanical engineering program in disproportionate numbers. For women, the proportion entering the B.S. program is approximately the same as the proportion successfully completing it.

ALUMNI OUTCOMES

According to the Alumni Outcomes â€“ First Destination Survey, Mechanical Engineering alumni with a B.S. degree report the following employment statistics: 87.5% are employed full-time; 10.9% are enrolled in a program of continuing education; and 1.6% are seeking employment.

For the last two times (AY 2015-16, AY 2016-17) that students rated their preparedness for their current job, 100% of BSME respondents indicated that they were prepared. Furthermore, in these surveys, 95% of alumni indicated satisfaction with their time to degree; and 100% indicated overall satisfaction with the degree.

STATUS OF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Every semester, a handful of courses are selected to provide assessment data for one or more of the Student Learning Outcomes for the degree program. Faculty evaluate students work and assign
a rating of “Excellent,” “Proficient,” “Developing,” or “Minimal.” One of the primary statistics coming out of this process is the percentage of students demonstrating “Excellent” or “Proficient” work. The programs target is for 70% of students to reach the “Excellent” or “Proficient” level.

Actual numbers fluctuate depending on the instructor performing the assessment and the assignments used to assess student work. However, for outcomes 2 through 7, course assessments tend to frequently meet or exceed the 70% threshold. For outcome 1, “The ability to identify, formulate, and solve complex engineering problems,” assessments typically indicate performance below the 70% target.

Some of the most valuable information from the departmental assessment process comes from disciplinary subcommittees (Mechanics & Control, Fluid-Thermal, and Design) where groups of faculty who teach in a given area meet to discuss assessment data and shared experiences of teaching specific sequences of courses that highly depend on each other. Recommendations that come out of the subcommittees get filtered through the departmental Assessment Committee before sharing with the entire faculty at twice-annual curricular treats.

STATUS OF THE MOST RECENT ACCREDITATION REVIEW

The Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering Program was evaluated by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) in the fall of 2022. The official evaluation stated that there were “no concerns” about the program. To the outsider, this evaluation might sound timid. However, this is the highest rating that ABET gives. ABET has granted the department a six-year renewal of its accreditation.

Actions taken since the last review:

IMPROVEMENTS AND CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MODALITIES

The most significant change to the B.S. curriculum over the past evaluation period, has been a complete re-structuring of the capstone Senior Design experience, beginning in Fall 2019. At that time, Senior Design became an experience that occurred over a full academic year, giving students more opportunities to write, to plan their projects, and to execute their designs. Furthermore, the design experience was organized so that students can form design teams across disciplinary boundaries: students from four different engineering programs were all part of the same class.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Mechanical Engineering were separated from their senior counterparts in other engineering programs due to lack of coordination among departments in response changes in personnel. The department hopes that the interdisciplinary component will be restored going forward.
During this evaluation period, the department also made changes to how ethics was integrated into the curriculum. Most significantly, we have introduced ethical case studies into a junior level core engineering course. The change was spurred by a program-level review of how students acquiring the fourth Student Learning Outcome. In addition to the case studies, there are two new checkpoints in the curriculum where students are required to complete the university's academic integrity tutorials and receive a certificate.

CHANGES RELATED TO ACCREDITATION

ABET, the accreditation body, requires engineering programs to periodically re-examine and revise its Program Educational Outcomes (PEOs). In this effort, the department worked with four different groups of stakeholders: current students, faculty, alumni, and the department's industrial advisory board. Over a period of two semesters, the department conducted multiple rounds of collecting input, soliciting feedback, and finally receiving approval of the new outcomes.

The new PEOs: Within three to five years after earning a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering from NIU, a graduate should be able to:

1. Develop a holistic and practical understanding of what is required to create a viable engineered product, project, or service.
2. Expand expertise in using engineering tools and techniques, beyond the foundational skills learned as an undergraduate, as needed to become a productive practicing engineer.
3. Communicate vital technical information about engineered products to non-engineers.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN THE DEGREE PROGRAMS CURRICULUM OR MODALITIES

One of the priorities moving forward is related to the high attrition rates discussed previously, particularly among Hispanic and black/African American students. One of the primary reasons that students interested in engineering do not persist is because they do not have strong mathematical and analytical skills. To address this hurdle, we have created a new modeling and problem-solving course, UEET 120 which will be offered for the first time in Fall 2024. It is based on a successful course at Wright State University which exhibited significant gains in student success. Incoming Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics Engineering students with relatively
low math placement scores and advise that they take the new course connects problem solving skills to authentic engineering problems.

In parallel with this effort we will closely monitor students progress and milestones as they take the first three mechanical engineering courses in the curriculum: MEE 270, MEE 210, and MEE 211. The latter two courses are where students get their first exposure to the engineering problem solving process which carries throughout the curriculum. It will hopefully better lay a foundation acquiring the Student Learning Outcome #1, which has been chronically difficult.

There are opportunities for streamlining the mechanical engineering curriculum. MEE 380/381 can be consolidated so that students repeating one of the courses does not have to wait an entire year. Several courses that have not been offered for many years will be removed from the catalog. There might be ways to partner with the Department of Engineering Technology to teach students manufacturing. An ad-hoc committee has been established to explore other efficiencies.

To enhance students' experiential learning, the department is creating a new course. This course will offer academic credits for internship experiences, integrating them into the academic curriculum. By doing so, students can apply their classroom knowledge in real-world settings. This will deepen their understanding of their field and enrich their educational journey.

CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE DEGREE PROGRAM INCLUDING FACULTY/STAFF, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, ETC.

The Department of Mechanical Engineering is in the process of hiring a new assistant professor. The new faculty member with strengthen the thermal-fluid science expertise in the program, as well as support new educational opportunities in artificial intelligence and/or sustainability.

The department is planning to extend its efforts in upgrading the lab computers and the integration of specialized software.

The department is continuing its efforts in seeking external funding to support curricular activities, labs and students. There has been recent success by the department faculty in getting funding from the US department of energy through its Reaching a New Energy Sciences Workshop (RENEW) initiative. This funding supports internship, training programs, and mentorship opportunities.

SPECIFIC SHORT AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS OPERATIONS THAT ARE PLANNED AND HOW THESE ALIGN WITH THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES OF THE COLLEGE.

With retirements and departures of faculty over the past several years, the department and degree program is in need of at least one faculty member with expertise in manufacturing. There was an official faculty search in progress when COVID struck in 2020. At that time, the search was chilled. It has not been thawed yet.
The department is exploring other opportunities to enhance the BS degree program. These include:

* Integration of immersive virtual reality into our curriculum, which can be effective pedagogical tools for our students with diverse academic background. The successful implementation of this will improve student successes and graduation rates, particularly for underrepresented groups.

* Establishing 2+2 programs with community colleges in the region.

* Exploring the duplication of our successful NIU@RVC program with other community colleges.

* Establishing 2+2 programs with international university. We are currently working with Alexandria University in Egypt.

**Decision:**

Degree program is in good standing

**Explanation for decision:**

The program is graduating students that are highly sought after. The department has plans to continuously improve the program.
Program: M.S. in Mechanical Engineering (14.1901)
Date of last review: 1/15/2018

Major changes in the program:

RECENT HISTORY AND INSTRUCTIONAL MODALITY

Since the previous program review, the Department of Mechanical Engineering has gained new leadership. Tariq Shamim became the department chair in July 2019. After his arrival, the responsibility for conducting and reporting assessment became less centralized in the department chair. The move placed the responsibility to shape the assessment process in the hands of faculty through a committee/subcommittee structure.

Like the rest of the campus, mechanical engineering instruction went completely online during the Covid pandemic. Since then, all courses in Mechanical Engineering have returned to face-to-face instruction.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Graduates in the M.S. program are expected to attain the following objectives by the time and within a few years of graduation: 1. Become successful professionals; 2. Contribute to their professional fields and assume leadership roles in industry or research organizations; 3. Assume professional responsibilities and exhibit effective communication skills; 4. Collaborate with faculty and conduct research and scholarly activities at the forefront of the field.

Graduates should attain the following outcomes by the time of graduation:

1. Apply advanced analytical computational techniques to engineering problems.
2. Design a system, component, or process to meet desired objectives in one of the specialty areas.
3. Identify, formulate, and solve complex engineering problems.
4. Conduct research in one of the specialty areas.
5. Communicate effectively
6. Demonstrate professional and ethical responsibility.
7. Use modern engineering experimental and computational tools at a level appropriate for advanced analysis and design.

PREDICTIONS OF JOB GROWTH
Quoting the Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment of mechanical engineers is projected to grow 10 percent from 2022 to 2032, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Major findings and Recommendations:

TRENDS IN ENROLLMENT, DEGREES CONFERRED

In Fall 2018 through Fall 2020, enrollment in the M.S. program fluctuated between 65 and 68. In Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 enrollment was to 23 and 26 respectively. It is a rather dramatic decline. One reason for the drop is the end of the Navistar cohort program in which the Lisle-based company paid for twenty engineers at a time to earn their M.S. degrees in mechanical engineering. The decline also occurred at a time when teaching assistantships were cut back significantly, making it more difficult, financially, for students to pursue their graduate degree. Also there has been a reduction in international graduate students due to competition from other countries and the political situation in this country making the U.S. a less desirable destination.

Accompanying the drop in M.S. student enrollment there has been an overall drop in M.S. degrees conferred in Mechanical Engineering.

Over the past several years, the accelerated B.S./M.S. program has produced approximately degrees conferred each fiscal year. In years which did not have a surge in Navistar graduates, the accelerated B.S./M.S. students accounted for 15 to 25 percent of the total M.S. degrees conferred.

ALUMNI OUTCOMES

According to the Alumni Outcomes First Destination Survey, Mechanical Engineering alumni with an M.S. degree report the following employment statistics: 100% are employed full-time; 0% are enrolled in a program of continuing education; and 0% are seeking employment.

For the last two times (AY 2015-16, AY 2016-17) that students rated their preparedness for their current job, 95% of MSME respondents indicated that they were prepared. Furthermore, in these surveys, 95% of alumni indicated satisfaction with their time to degree; and 89% indicated overall satisfaction with the degree.

STATUS OF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PRACTICES PER MID-STATUS REVIEWS AND ANNUAL UPDATE REPORTS

At the time of the mid-status report, almost all assessment data measuring student learning outcomes came from evaluations of students theses and projects. Results showed that all survey items directly related to student outcomes exceeded the 80% threshold.

Since the mid-status report, the department has been collecting course-level assessment data from two classes per semester. Faculty teaching the 600-level graduate courses typically chose examples
of student work that demonstrated two or three of the learning outcomes. In all cases since the mid-status review, more that the target level of 80% of students demonstrated proficiency or better.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS OPERATIONS, PLANNING, GROWTH, AND/OR SUSTAINABILITY

The department competes with other mechanical engineering programs across the region and across the world for qualified graduate students who can enhance research productivity. To be competitive, the department must find ways to increase funding opportunities to support graduate students. This includes increasing federal funding, establishing new recruitment efforts for self-funded international MS students, recruiting students who are working full time in nearby industries and can be supported by their employers. Joint programs with international institutions may also provide a mechanism for increasing enrollment.

Actions taken since the last review:

IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES TO THE DEGREE PROGRAMS CURRICULUM BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAST PROGRAM REVIEW

In the 2021-2022 graduate catalog, graduate certificates were removed from the program. The certificate programs were not attracting students. These changes reflect recommendations of the Program Prioritization process.

The department has made additions to course offerings, but not based on recommendations of last program review.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN THE DEGREE PROGRAMS CURRICULUM

The department is exploring ways to streamline the M.S. curriculum. In particular, students are currently required to take two courses within one of four different sub-domains of mechanical engineering. The problem is that the size of the faculty makes it difficult to cover the variety of graduate courses to make such a requirement practical. There are three options the department is considering to ease the scheduling limitations.

The department is exploring ways to add formal ethics training to graduate students experiences. This will focus on research ethics, including data integrity, proper attribution, and other topics.
In the mid-status review, the University Assessment Panel agreed with our observation that the program learning outcomes need improvement. There were redundancies and aspects that were unclear. This process has begun. The process needs to be completed and approved by the department faculty.

Recognizing that machine learning is increasingly being integrated into various industries, including manufacturing, automotive, and aerospace, the department is developing a new graduate course in this area. This course will help the students to stay abreast of current industry trends and prepare them for future career opportunities.

CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE DEGREE PROGRAM, INCLUDING FACULTY/STAFF, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, ETC.

The Department of Mechanical Engineering is in the process of hiring a new assistant professor. The new faculty member will strengthen the thermal-fluid science expertise in the program, and initiate new research directions in artificial intelligence and/or sustainability.

Other planned changes include the following:

- Upgrade lab computers, including specialized software.
- Establish a departmental seminar series/colloquium.
- Hold regular town hall meetings to get feedback and address students concerns.
- Increase the assistantship and other funding opportunities for graduate students which can assist in the increase of enrollment of MS and PhD students. There are recent successes by faculty in getting federal funding including NSF CAREER award.
- In collaboration with the graduate school dean, establish new recruitment efforts for self-funded international MS students.
- Recruit students who are working full time in nearby industries and can be supported by their employers.
- Establish joint programs with international institutions.

SPECIFIC SHORT AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS OPERATIONS

With retirements and departures of faculty over the past several years, the department and degree program is in need of at least one faculty member with expertise in manufacturing. There was an official faculty search in progress when COVID struck in 2020. At that time, the search was â€œchilled.â€ It has not been thawed yet.
Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The program is graduating students that are highly sought after. The department has plans to continuously improve the program.
Program: Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering (first review) (14.1901)
Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

RECENT HISTORY AND INSTRUCTIONAL MODALITY

The Ph.D. program in Mechanical Engineering is new. It first appeared in the 2019-2020 catalog. In that time, the department established learning outcomes, degree requirements, and policies and procedures for the qualifying exam, candidacy exam, and dissertation defense.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Graduates of the Ph.D. program in Mechanical Engineering will be able to demonstrate the following outcomes:

1. Advanced knowledge: Master advanced concepts, methods, and technologies in a core mechanical engineering thrust area.

2. Analysis. Apply in depth qualitative analysis to relevant mechanical engineering questions, issues, and problems.

3. Research. Conduct independent research that results in an original contribution to knowledge that meets all the standards for responsible conduct of research.

4. Ethics. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of ethical standards in executing research.

5. Communication. Communicate research to both technical and general audiences in an effective manner through oral and written formats.

PREDICTIONS OF JOB GROWTH

Quoting the Bureau of Labor Statistics: “Employment of mechanical engineers is projected to grow 10 percent from 2022 to 2032, much faster than the average for all occupations.”

Major findings and Recommendations:

TRENDS IN ENROLLMENT, DEGREES CONFERRED

At this time, no students have yet completed their Ph.D. in mechanical engineering.

There are five students currently in the Ph.D. program. One student has completed the candidacy exam and is working on his dissertation. The other four will take their qualifying exams in Fall 2024.
ALUMNI OUTCOMES

The Ph.D. program does not have any alumni yet.

CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE POTENTIAL OF FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Faculty in the Department of Mechanical Engineering are actively engaged in scholarship. In the 2023 calendar year, the 12 faculty members published 8 journal articles and three conference papers. In that year, their research was supported by 16 grants from external sources, including 3 grants from the National Science Foundation, 3 grants from the U.S. Department of Energy, 1 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2 grants from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and others from industry, including General Motors. Recently, one faculty member received the prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER Award (not included in the count above).

STATUS OF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

The outcomes listed above are primarily assessed through three checkpoints in students progress through the Ph.D. program:

1. Qualifying Exam in which students, after their first year in the program, are assigned to review a research paper. Students are given two weeks to read the paper and write a brief report answering the ad-hoc committees questions. Then students are to make a presentation on the paper, answering committee members questions.

2. Candidacy Exam in which students write a research proposal for their intended Ph.D. In addition to the written document, students are required to make a presentation, and answer questions from the committee and others in attendance.


Currently, only one student has completed the Qualifying Exam and the Candidacy Exam. Surveys of the ad-hoc committee evaluating the Qualifying Exam, and the dissertation committee evaluating the Candidacy Exam indicated that all outcomes were satisfied.

There was one student who did not pass the Qualifying Exam. This student did not continue in the Ph.D. Program, partly for health reasons.

The four other students in the program have not taken their Qualifying Exam yet. These students have been taking graduate courses, primarily. Results of course-based graduate assessment is mentioned briefly in the MSME program report.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS OPERATIONS, PLANNING, GROWTH, AND/OR SUSTAINABILITY

The department competes with other mechanical engineering programs across the region and across the world for qualified graduate students who can enhance research productivity. To be competitive, the department must find ways to increase funding opportunities to support graduate students. This includes increasing federal funding, establishing new recruitment efforts for self-funded international Ph.D. students, recruiting students who are working full time in nearby industries and can be supported by their employers. Joint programs with international institutions may also provide a mechanism for increasing enrollment.

Actions taken since the last review:

There has been no previous review.

The Ph.D. program in Mechanical Engineering is new. It first appeared in the 2019-2020 Graduate Catalog. In that time, the department established learning outcomes, degree requirements, and policies and procedures for the qualifying exam, candidacy exam, and dissertation defense.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN THE DEGREE PROGRAMS CURRICULUM

The department is exploring ways to add formal ethics training to graduate students experiences. This will focus on research ethics, including data integrity, proper attribution, and other topics.

Recognizing that machine learning is increasingly being integrated into various industries, including manufacturing, automotive, and aerospace, the department is developing a new graduate course in this area. This course will help the students to stay abreast of current industry trends and prepare them for future career opportunities.

The department will establish of a pre-candidacy research course (MEE 797) which offers PhD students the opportunity to earn research credits before advancing to the candidacy stage. The course will serve as a valuable option, especially for international students who have completed their coursework but are required to enroll in 9 credits to fulfill immigration regulations.
CHANGES THAT ARE PLANNED IN RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE DEGREE PROGRAM, INCLUDING FACULTY/STAFF, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, ETC.

The Department of Mechanical Engineering is in the process of hiring a new assistant professor. The new faculty member will strengthen the thermal-fluid science expertise in the program, and initiate new research directions in artificial intelligence and/or sustainability.

Other planned changes include the following:

- Upgrade lab computers and make specialized software available.
- Establish a departmental seminar series/colloquium.
- Hold regular town hall meetings to get feedback and address students concerns.
- Develop a workshop which will provide information about the qualifying exam.
- Increase the assistantship and other funding opportunities for graduate students which can assist in the increase of enrollment of MS and PhD students. There are recent successes by faculty in getting federal funding including NSF CAREER award.
- In collaboration with the graduate school dean, establish new recruitment efforts for self-funded international students.
- Recruit students who are working full time in nearby industries and can be supported by their employers.
- Establish joint programs with international institutions.

SPECIFIC SHORT AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMS

OPERATIONS

With retirements and departures of faculty over the past several years, the department and degree program is in need of at least one faculty member with expertise in manufacturing. There was an official faculty search in progress when COVID struck in 2020. At that time, the search was sidelined. It has not been thawed yet.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing
Explanation for decision:

This is a program that is just getting started. All the elements for success are in place.
Program: B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering (14.4201)
Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

Our program (MCTR) B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering has attained a full 6-year ABET Accreditation for the period May 1, 2023 through September 30, 2029. In the past year we made a curriculum change by adding MEE 383 Engineering Analysis as a required course, and made MEE 380 Computing for Mechanical Design (or MEE 381) to be in our recommended technical electives list in the updated curriculum so students will learn fundamental engineering analysis meeting the pre-req. for taking other MEE required courses such as MEE 321 Vibrations, MEE 322 System Dynamics and Control I. This curriculum change will enhance students' learning the fundamental knowledge to better prepare them for follow up courses in robotics and control design area in the B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering curriculum.

The instructional modality is in-person such as MCTR 210, 320, 421, 481, 482, and hybrid modality for some courses such as MCTR 420, 422, 440.

The degree program prepares students to integrate mechanical, electrical, computer science, and control engineering principles. Graduates are equipped to design, build, and maintain intelligent systems, such as robotics, automated manufacturing, and smart devices, fostering a multidisciplinary skill set for careers in automation, control systems, and emerging technologies.

The full ABET accreditation of our mechatronics engineering B.S. program made us one of only four ABET accredited B.S. in mechatronics engineering programs in the entire United States. This guarantees our students to earn their degrees in a unique technical engineering area rarely available in the United States, but at a nationally recognized college-level engineering school. The graduates of our program will also be highly sought for from industry as well as relevant advanced degree programs from renown engineering institutions.

Major findings and Recommendations:

For ABET Math/Sciences 30-credits requirement, an action for upgrading the initial mechatronics engineering curriculum by adding CHEM 210/212 as a required 4-credit hours course to the initial version of MCTR curriculum had been effective in Fall 2022 MCTR curriculum. The updated MCTR curriculum was published in NIU Undergraduate Catalog (Northern Illinois University - Acalog ACMSâ„¢ (niu.edu)) in 2022-23 academic year. As a result, it is required that all students from Fall, 2022 and on with the mechatronics engineering major entering their senior year in academic year 2022-23 for potential graduation in Spring, 2023 (essentially our second set of MCTR graduates) should be required to have had CHEM 210/212 General Chemistry and General
Chemistry Laboratory or equivalences following the updated BS in Mechatronics Engineering Degree Curriculum which became effective Fall, 2022. Therefore, this action ensures that all current and future B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering graduates satisfy ABETs minimum 30 credit hours requirements for mathematics and basic sciences for the BS Engineering Curriculum listed in Criterion 5. Moreover, the minimum 30 credit hours in mathematics and basic sciences had been set into NIUs Registration and Records Offices final audit on graduates academic requirements progress reports in early spring of the graduating year by using the list of Mechatronics Engineering degree programs Mathematics/Basic Sciences requirements.

Our faculty in the mechatronics engineering program engage in interdisciplinary research that spans mechanical engineering, electronics, computer science, and control systems. Their research may focus on applied engineering areas including but are not limited to developing intelligent collaborative robotic systems, autonomous vehicles design, and smart tools and devices. Our scholarship involves publishing in top-rated journals such as Sensors, Computer-Integrated Manufacturing and Robotics, Robotics, Assembly Automation, etc. Scholarship activities also include presenting at major IEEE conferences, and securing grants or industry sponsorships to fund innovative projects. Creativity is evident in designing novel mechatronic solutions, while artistry might manifest in the aesthetic aspects of product design or the integration of artistic elements into human-machine interfaces. Overall, faculty contributions in research, scholarship, creativity, and artistry enrich the mechatronics engineering program in both our undergraduate program and the accelerated B.S. in Mechatronics/MS in ME, EE and ISYE programs.

Mid-status reviews by the University Assessment Panel and annual assessment update reports in our mechatronics engineering program involved comprehensive assessment processes to evaluate various aspects. Faculty performance, student outcomes, and program goals are typically scrutinized in the mid-status review. This includes reviewing research output, publication records, and external collaborations of faculty members. Student achievements, such as project outcomes and academic performance, are assessed to ensure program effectiveness. Additionally, mid-status reviews often gauge the alignment of the curriculum with mechatronics industry needs and technological advancements in electromechanical fields. Feedback from students and industry partners has been considered to refine the program's offerings. These assessments in turn contribute to continuous improvement, allowing the mechatronics engineering program to stay current and maintain high standards in mechatronics engineering education administered by our college and university. Regular mid-status reviews are crucial for adapting to evolving trends, fostering innovation, and ensuring our MCTR program's sustained success in preparing graduates for the dynamic evolution of mechatronics engineering.

To enhance our Mechatronics Engineering program, we will consider incorporating industry-relevant projects mostly in applied engineering areas, fostering collaboration with companies for internships, co-op programs, implementing a robust mentorship system, and staying current with technological advancements surrounding mechatronics engineering field, to ensure students receive up-to-date skills empowered by AI, machine learning, humanoid robotics, etc.
Additionally, we owe to establish connections with alumni and industry professionals to create a supportive network for our students' career development. Moreover, regularly review and update the curriculum to align with electromechanical industry demands, ensuring the MCTR program's long-term relevance and sustainability.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

When we began our Bachelor of Science in Mechatronics Engineering (MCTR) Program in Fall, 2019, the initial 2019-20 curriculum did not include CHEM 210/212 General Chemistry/Lab (4 credits) as a required course resulting in a shortage of 4 credit hours of college-level mathematics and basic sciences courses. However, although our first cohort of students who graduated in 2021-22 academic year followed the initial curriculum, all of this first set of graduates were transfer students from community colleges or from other majors such as mechanical and/or electrical engineering programs. In addition, an action for upgrading the initial mechatronics engineering curriculum by adding CHEM 210/212 as a required 4-credit hours course to the initial version of MCTR curriculum had been taken in Spring 2022 which became effective in our Fall 2022 MCTR curriculum. The updated MCTR curriculum was published in NIU Undergraduate Catalog (Northern Illinois University - Acalog ACMSâ„¢ (niu.edu)) in 2022-23 academic year.

An addition of fundamental science courses CHEM 210/212 as a required 4-credit hours course has been made to the MCTR curriculum which prepared students better in building sound sciences foundation for applied engineering education. This action also upgraded the MCTR program to fully satisfy ABET accreditation requirements.

The MCTR program extended a new two-year contract for a full-time visiting professor Dr. Peter Lin to be continued in providing the program with teaching, advising, as well as applied research work performed in the program. What's more, the dean designated Ms. Sarah Cortinas to be temporary administrative assistant to assist the MCTR programs admin needs. In addition, The program received a brand new lawn tractor donation for Dr. Peter Lins senior design teams to investigate and develop auto-driven control system for the tractor. Furthermore, a 400-sqft lab space (EB 309) has been designated for mechatronics engineering lab space pending equipment setups and layout design for students and research.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

The 2022-23 NIU Undergraduate Catalog with mechatronics engineering BS degree courses
requirements can be found in the following link: Program: Mechatronics Engineering (B.S.) - Northern Illinois University. Referring to the MCTR degree path shown below, all the required college-level mathematics and basic sciences courses are highlighted in yellow. They are Math 229 (4), Math 230 (4), Math 232 (4), Math 336 (3), Stat 300 (3), Phys 253 (4), Phys 273 (4), Chem 210 (3), Chem 212 (1), for a total of 30 credit hours. This ensures that the ABET minimum 30 credit hours requirements in Criterion 5

- Curriculum is satisfied by all mechatronics engineering graduates. An NIU 2022-23 Undergraduate Catalog with Mechatronics Engineering courses requirements listed in the page is also shown below for convenience of visualization and verification. For some of MCTR courses in the curriculum such as 210 and 320, due to the original lecture-based design in the curriculum, students did not get solid learning experience with sufficient lab work. This area needs improvement in the coming years to spare at least one fifth of semester time to integrate hands-on work requirements into the course work and delivery and update these courses with some built-in lab projects. Curriculum update with MEE 320 in place of MEE 321 was a good move, allowing students to take a more relevant course MEE 320 to the MCTR program, but avoid the need to take MEE 383 which became pre-req of MEE 321.

The MCTR program extended a new two-year contract for a full-time visiting professor Dr. Peter Lin to be continued in providing the program with teaching, advising, as well as applied research work performed in the program. In addition, The program received a brand new lawn tractor donation for Dr. Peter Lins senior design teams to investigate and develop auto-driven control system for the tractor. Furthermore, a 400-sqft lab space (EB 309) has been designated for mechatronics engineering lab space pending equipment setups and layout design for students and research.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The MCTR program has addressed students learning outcomes with direct measures by using in class course assessments based on students' assignments, exams, projects, presentations, and project competitions). As to indirect measures, end of class surveys regarding specific SLOs listed in the syllabi have been conducted to address the selected student learning outcomes.
Program: M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling (first review) (51.2310)

Date of last review: ??

Major changes in the program:

The M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling prepares students to assist individuals with disabilities to meet their employment and independent living goals. The program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) with coursework in counseling, disability, vocational rehabilitation, and clinicals. Rehabilitation counselors work in a wide range of sectors of the national economy including government offices, non-profit agencies, corporations, hospitals, schools, universities, and private practice. The job outlook for 2022-2032 is projected to increase by 2% which is also the average for all occupations (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2022). Currently only 175 rehabilitation counselors work in the Illinois state government (2020-2024 State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan “Modified, 2022). The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) projects the need for 205 additional public sector rehabilitation counselors within the next four years. Furthermore, IWIB confirms that Illinois higher education institutions are graduating an insufficient number of students to fill this vacancy. NIU is one of three CACREP-accredited programs in the state who offer the specialty in rehabilitation counseling.

The program began in 1974 and was a 48-semester hour deafness rehabilitation major prior to becoming a specialization of the masters degree in communicative disorders until 2016 when rehabilitation counseling became its own major. The program expanded in fall 2023 to a 60-semester hour program to meet accreditation requirements. In 2018, the program moved to the new School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions. The new school is challenged to secure steady chair leadership with three chairs within five years. Highly qualified faculty internal to the School serve as interim Chair and Associate Chair and administration is taking action to secure an acting Chair and subsequent permanent Chair. The program experienced 66% of faculty members (4 of 6) leaving the institution within a short period of time beginning late 2018. The departure of three tenure-track assistant professors and a clinical coordinator had a negative but temporary impact on students. Fortunately, two new hires and the reassignment of a program director to faculty in the program have enhanced faculty diversity in race, ethnicity, and ability and this configuration of five faculty members remains in place today. However, the dedicated 12-month clinical coordinator was not replaced, and the responsibilities were reassigned to the 10-month program coordinator, preventing students from efficiently completing the program (e.g., no clinicals during summer term).

Major findings and Recommendations:
Enrollment has declined from a high of 25 students (2018-2019) to 15 students (2022-2023) but rebounded slightly to 18 students currently enrolled in the program. A similar 5-year trend is found for degrees conferred with a high of 10 graduates (2019) to only 3 graduates (2023). However, a bright spot is that applications to the program have tripled during the last three years from 7 applicants (2021-2022) to 21 applicants (2023-2024). Enrollment has remained steady in the Accelerated B.S. in Rehabilitation and Disability Services to M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling program with 3 students (2022-2023). Faculty implement a comprehensive recruitment plan to attract a diverse set of applicants with an emphasis on meeting prospective applicants in one-on-one environments. Recruitment activities include distribution of program information to area social service agencies as well as to current students and NIU offices such as the Disability Resource Center, Military and Veterans Services, Division of International Affairs, and Undergraduate Admissions. Program faculty guest-speak in undergraduate classes, attend career services events, collaborate with Graduate School personnel on inquiries, and update marketing materials annually. High percentages of program students identify as non-White (M = 40%) and with disability (M = 25%). Lower percentages of students are also diverse with ethnicity (M = 10% Hispanic), gender (M = 5% male), and U.S. military veteran (M = 5%). Trends for diversity have risen for disability; remained steady for non-White, Hispanic, and U.S. military veteran; and fallen for gender/males. Comparisons with the rehabilitation counseling program at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) are as follows: 28% of NEIU students are Non-White (40% at NIU), 61% are Hispanic (10% at NIU), and 28% are male (5% at NIU). Program graduates consistently report strong agreement that the program prepared them for employment across all student learning outcomes. Alumni are employed (89%) and working in public (39%), for-profit (28%), and not-for-profit sectors (22%). More than two-thirds (70%) of alumni are certified rehabilitation counselors.

Feedback from the University Assessment Panel (UAP) and annual assessment update reports reflect opportunities to strengthen program evaluation. The UAP offered suggestions to revise the SLOs and enhance reports. Annual assessment data reflect the need to modify assessment strategies for better efficiency with methods. CACREP concluded the reaccreditation site visit during the fall 2022 by noting strengths such as support for faculty and students, collaboration with the counseling program in the College of Education, student engagement, professional development opportunities for students, assessment processes, and favorable perceptions of the program by various stakeholders. CACREP extended program accreditation to March 31, 2031, but with a mandate to reaffirm accreditation with a progress report on a single standard: the program has not demonstrated meeting the standard of continuous and systematic efforts to recruit, employ, and retain diverse faculty.

Actions taken since the last review:
Academic Planning Council feedback on the 2014 program review included recommendations to (a) continue to recruit minority students and faculty, (b) develop strategies on faculty retention, and (c) develop strategies to improve the participation rate for the alumni survey. The subsequent implementation of a written recruitment plan has resulted in a more diverse student body. Likewise, faculty developed a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion of Academic Faculty set of policies and resources guiding search committees on the recruitment, employment, and retention of diverse faculty. Program faculty strengthened efforts to track and engage alumni including offering communications with career-related opportunities. Alumni participation has grown 1000% between the 2014 (2 participants) and 2023 (20 participants) survey periods.

Other program changes were made based on feedback from NIU and CACREP. The programs mission and vision statements were revised to align with the assessment process. The SLOs were revised for (a) enhanced clarity to stakeholders, (b) divergence from the associated undergraduate program SLOs, and (c) alignment with the revised Blooms Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. The assessment plan was updated from the perspective of the new 60-semester hour curriculum; and, with the removal of methods not directly measuring student performance.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

Program faculty continually work to develop community awareness of the rehabilitation counseling discipline including the needs of persons with disabilities and how rehabilitation counselors assist these individuals toward quality of life within integrated environments. First, recruitment efforts will be extended to persons with disabilities and those from underrepresented populations with the application of a Rhoten A. Smith Assistantship. Faculty will identify eligible NIU undergraduate students, including males and other underrepresented groups, for discussions on how the graduate program could positively impact their readiness for employment.

Second, faculty continue to advocate for adequate facilities and personnel by voicing our concerns on the following issues in reports such as this, during School and College meetings, and within certain committees. Specifically, a counseling lab or physical location where students can practice counseling with instructor feedback is needed. Students should have the ability to implement the counseling process in vivo within spaces assuring confidentiality and with audio/video equipment for feedback and guidance. Extensive efforts are taken to protect all stakeholders during the current process of student recording on their personal devices; however, the counseling lab is a superior facility for learning to develop and master therapeutic counseling. The School Chair offered to use grant funds to purchase a recording device but did not follow through with the purchase. However, the current Interim Chair has given approval for purchase and is working to identify counseling space. Relatedly, faculty continue to advocate for a dedicated 12-month clinical coordinator. Students should enroll in clinical courses when ready and not need to wait months when practicum
or internship is scheduled. Third, faculty plan to leverage the 50th anniversary of the program in 2024 with specific marketing materials, outreach activities such as a student ambassador program, and a scholarly research presentation/social for alumni, all previous and current faculty, students, and the NIU community. Fourth, faculty, in collaboration with the School, will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy toward ensuring a diverse learning environment.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The program’s accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was reaffirmed in Fall 2023 based on rigorous curricular, policy, procedures, and related standards. The program fits the mission of the College and university by producing professional counselors who promote the wellbeing of people with disabilities. In addition, the program has demonstrated a need for more rehabilitation counselors in the state labor market by including specific data from Illinois shortages. Faculty strive for continuous program improvement, including implementing strategies to recruit and retain a diverse group of both students and faculty, advocating for adequate facilities, and improving the assessment process.
Program: B.S. in Rehabilitation Disability Services (first review) (51.2310)
Date of last review: First review

Major changes in the program:

The B.S. in Rehabilitation and Disability Services prepares students as human service paraprofessionals who assist people with disabilities to achieve their goals at various employment and independent living agencies. Students are trained in medical aspects of disability, basic counseling skills, assistive technology, job placement and accommodations, and are exposed to an array of rehabilitation services available to persons with disabilities. Work settings of graduates include community rehabilitation programs, public school systems, rehabilitation hospitals, social service agencies, and vocational rehabilitation agencies. Graduates hold a variety of paraprofessional job titles such as behavior analyst, disability resource specialist, job developer, rehabilitation specialist, and social services specialist. The curriculum also provides a pathway to advanced degree programs such as occupational therapy and rehabilitation counseling. The 2022-2032 job outlook for social and human service assistants is projected to increase by 9% which is faster than the average for all occupations (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2022).

The program was an emphasis of the bachelors degree in health sciences until 2018 when rehabilitation and disability services became its own major and moved to the new School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions. The new school is challenged to secure steady chair leadership with three chairs serving within five years. While highly qualified faculty internal to the School serve as interim Chair and Associate Chair, administration is taking action to secure an acting Chair and subsequent permanent Chair. The program experienced 66% (4/6) turnover of faculty since 2018. The departure of three tenure-track assistant professors and a clinical coordinator had a negative but temporary impact on students. Fortunately, two new hires, the appointment of a program director to faculty in the program, and reassignment of the former school chair to program faculty have enhanced faculty diversity and this configuration of six faculty members remains in place today. However, the dedicated 12-month clinical coordinator was not replaced, and the responsibilities were reassigned to the 10-month program coordinator. As a result, the optional internship course is rarely offered, preventing students from acquiring clinical experiences that could enhance their employability.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Enrollment declined from a high of 174 students (2018-2019) to 43 students (2022-2023). Program alumni survey respondents (n = 22) are employed (64%) with more than half of them securing work by six months (41%) to one year (18%) after graduation. A high percentage of employed alumni (82%) are satisfied with their jobs and more than half of these jobs (56%) are related to the degree program. Over half of surveyed alumni (56%) agree that the program prepared
them well for employment. Graduates credit clinical experiences (38%) and internship (38%) as contributing factors to their professional development. All graduates (100%) agree that the program prepared them to pursue additional education. Overall, 71% of graduates report satisfaction with the educational experiences they had in the degree program.

Feedback from the University Assessment Panel (UAP) and annual assessment update reports reflect opportunities to strengthen program evaluation. The UAP offered suggestions to revise the SLOs and facilitate student understanding of critical thinking. Annual assessment data also reflects the need to strengthen critical thinking. For example, only 31% of alumni agree that the program prepared them to demonstrate this outcome. Although current students (75%) feel prepared for this outcome, almost half of the advisory council (45%) are not satisfied that students are learning to think critically.

Actions taken since the last review:
(Not applicable, given first review since programs start)

Actions taken as a result of this review:

Program faculty are planning several initiatives to address the student learning outcome on critical thinking. First, the NIU General Education assessment rubric on critical thinking will be modified and used exclusively across all relevant program courses. Second, the rationale for course assignments will be shared with students. Third, efforts will be made to better connect course assignments to their real-world applications. Fourth, attention will be given to making some course assignments an iterative process where students incorporate instructor feedback using critical thinking. The SLOs will be revised to (a) enhance clarity of expected outcomes, (b) diverge from the associated graduate program SLOs, and (c) align with the revised Blooms Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. In addition, the assessment plan will be modified to accommodate the revised SLOs and new course topics that would better prepare graduates for employment.

Program faculty will continue to monitor the changing environment to determine the knowledge and skills necessary for students to be competitively employed. For example, a new required course on case management will be added to the curriculum based on empirical evidence that students are employable with these skills. Also, a currently required course on medical terminology will be made optional to reduce redundancy within the curriculum. Second, the faculty will continue to advocate for a clinical coordinator to offer students experiential learning opportunities more routinely with the clinical course REHB 497 - Internship in Rehabilitation and Disability Services. In the meantime, faculty will consider options to offer the course with shared instructional responsibilities. Third, faculty will monitor instructional workloads to ensure the
program continues to run efficiently given declining enrollments and increasing faculty members. For example, faculty can pursue activities that warrant course reductions such as program coordination and grant initiatives. Fourth, faculty will seek to enhance awareness of the program through campus and community activities such as media communications and visible disability and rehabilitation class assignments across campus.

Decision:
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:
The BS in Rehabilitation and Disability Services is a relatively new standalone degree program in the School of Interdisciplinary Health Professions. The program collects outcome data from multiple sources and uses that information to make program changes. For example, information from alumni surveys and feedback from the University Assessment Panel and advisory council revealed a shortfall in program outcomes related to student critical thinking. The program faculty are using a multi-pronged approach to address this issue, including using relevant rubrics on critical thinking and adjusting course assignments to be better connected to real-world applications and allow the incorporation of critical thinking skills. Program faculty are also revising current Student Learning Outcomes to both clarify expectations and ensure separation from the associated graduate program SLOs. The program has good student employment outcomes and produces graduates who fill labor market demand, aligning with the vision of the College and university.
Program: B.A./B.S. in Economics (45.0601)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

The goal of the Economics program is to develop students critical thinking skills, analytical abilities, and social awareness to equip them to be productive members of society and to enable them to find jobs that they find rewarding and that have a positive impact on society. Our program prepares students for many types of careers. Examples of job titles of our recent graduates include regional economist, account executive, financial representative, procurement analyst, marketing representative, commercial lines underwriter, vice president of a capital firm, tax administrator, attorney, business owner, CPG data professional, supply chain manager, financial company representative, and economist at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In addition, our program graduates have pursued further education as MBA candidates, J.D. candidates, and doctoral students. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, the median pay for economists is $113,940 per year, with the projection that the number of jobs will grow by 6% (faster than average) between 2022-2032. In addition, the median pay for personal financial advisors is $95,390 per year, with the projection that jobs will grow by 13% (much faster than average) between 2022-2032, and the median pay for data scientists is $103,500 per year, with the projection that jobs will grow by 35% (much faster than average) between 2022-2023.

Since the last program review, our department has made several important changes. First, in the 2019-2020 academic year, we added the requirement that all undergraduate majors take a 1-credit course in data analysis using Excel (ECON 290) to equip them with the skills needed to effectively analyze data. We are now in the process of revising this course to a 3-credit course that would also include training in the Tableau and Power BI platforms, based on recommendations from alumni serving on our new Department of Economics Advisory Board. We also added recitation sections to our large lecture sections of Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 260) and Principles of Macroeconomics (ECON 261), with 25-30 students in each recitation section. These recitation sections are taught by graduate student Teaching Assistants (TAs). In adding smaller recitation sections our goal is to give students a more personal connection with the course and help them to better learn the material. We also expect that this change will improve student recruitment to the Economics majors and minor.

Major findings and Recommendations:

There has been a decline in enrollment in the Economics major, total credit hours attempted, and in degrees conferred over the past five years. Several factors may contribute to this decline, including the disruption of the pandemic, which required switching to fully online classes. However, we believe that the change in modality, coupled with the increasing size of the principles
courses (ECON 260 and 261) over the past few years, has reduced personal interaction with the instructors. In the year before moving to the large lecture format, enrollment in the two principles courses was 2216. This enrollment dropped over 51% to 1072 in 2022-23. To foster more personal interaction with instructors, we started offering recitation sections for ECON 260 in the fall of 2022 and for ECON 261 in the spring of 2023 to increase support for the undergraduate students. While this is a new strategy, we expect that this may increase student interest in pursuing a major in Economics.

The department is committed to actively encouraging undergraduate student involvement in research. In the past five years, multiple undergraduate students have participated in the different undergraduate university-wide research programs with faculty in Economics, such as Research Rookies, University Honors Capstones and independent studies. To showcase research, every spring our department has an ECONference at which a professional economist gives a research presentation, and undergraduate and graduate students present their research. The undergraduate Economics Student Association (ESA), which meets weekly to discuss economic issues in an informal setting, is actively involved in planning the ECONference. This past year, we livestreamed the ECONference and sent links to alumni of our department. We intend to continue this practice of livestreaming future ECONferences to connect with our former students. In addition, we are planning to involve the ESA in bringing speakers to campus to talk about job opportunities for students with an Economics degree, as well as taking a trip to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and other financial institutions in Chicago.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Based on feedback we received in our last review, our department has made several important changes that diversify course offerings and curriculum tracks. We developed Sports Economics (ECON 315), which has proved to be one of our most popular undergraduate electives. In conjunction with the Departments of Sports Management, Statistics, and Computer Science, we initiated a Minor in Sports Analytics, for which ECON 315 is a required course. Other new courses we developed were Introduction to Environmental Economics (ECON 186), Economic Analysis with Excel (ECON 290), Financial Economics (ECON 340), Introduction to Public Sector Economics (ECON 350), Introduction to Quantitative Economics (ECON 391), Introduction to Financial Engineering (ECON 442), and Financial Derivatives (ECON 460X). Three of these courses are part of a new Emphasis in Financial Economics in which 18.5% of our current majors are enrolled.

Since the last review, we have substantially increased the number of online courses we offer. This change, which was primarily intended to offer working students the option of online courses, appears to be successful, as the DWF rate in the past two years has been lower among online courses (i.e. 17% vs. 21% for in person courses). We now offer sufficient elective courses for a
student to complete a minor in Economics entirely online, so we also expect to attract a larger number of students minoring in Economics. In addition, we developed a 4+1 program, in which undergraduate B.S. majors can start taking graduate courses in their senior year, enabling them to complete the B.S. and M.A. in Economics in five years. While the initial response to this program was good, none of the students who enrolled have finished the program. Either they were not able to sustain the necessary GPA or left to take jobs after their senior year. This is not necessarily a negative outcome for the students, as they capitalized on the advanced training in the program to secure very good placements, such as private investment firms and the Federal Reserve.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

Our feedback from senior majors who completed the Senior Exit Survey indicates that our majors are largely satisfied with the skills and career preparation that they receive as an Economics major. They appreciate the additional skills offered in the new courses introduced since the last program review. However, we believe that we can further enhance our majors experiences. One way to accomplish this is to increase participation in the Economics Student Association (ESA) through strategic support from the department through sponsoring activities of the ESA. One goal for the ESA is to engage department alumni in meeting with ESA members and discussing job opportunities for Economics majors. We have recorded interviews with alumni and faculty members about their experiences with the Economics major. The goal is to demonstrate the value of an Economics degree by showing the types of careers that Economics majors can pursue.

We will be strategically developing courses that appeal to a wider audience, such as behavioral economics, law and economics, and the economics of entertainment, would attract students majoring in business, political science, the arts, and psychology and are a way of attracting more majors. One example of this is through expanding the new 1-credit course in data analysis, ECON 290, to a 3-credit course. We predict that the 3 credit course may serve our majors well, and also attract more students to economics as the skills are generalizable to many fields, that depend upon skills needed to effectively analyze data.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing
Explanation for decision:

The BA/BS program in Economics provides excellent training to careers in a variety of fields and the demand is expected to grow. Although enrollment has declined in their degree program, the department has several strategies they are pursuing to enhance student recruitment and success.
Program: M.A. in Economics (45.0601)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

[It is important to keep in mind the M.A. in Economics is embedded within the Ph.D. in Economics program and, as a result, most graduates of the M.A. program are enrolled in our Ph.D. program as well or earn their M.A. after not earning candidacy.]

The M.A. program is designed to prepare students to create interesting economic questions, develop a hypothesis based on economic principles, find and process relevant data, craft and estimate the model needed to test that hypothesis, and finally, to convey results and, more importantly, implications from those results. The students who have graduated with the terminal M.A. degree over the past five years have typically found employment as market and data analysts in the public and private sectors with placements including large corporations, financial firms, and the U.S. Federal Government. Specific examples include Ford Motor Company, Aldi, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs in the areas of market and data analyst are expected to grow between six (6) and thirty-six (36) percentage points over the next ten years with the largest growth being in the data analytics sector. Our program prepares students for any job related to data analytics. Additionally, students that earn the M.A. degree en route to their Ph.D. in Economics find employment at local community colleges as adjunct or visiting faculty in post-secondary education, an area the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts to grow at a rate of about eight percent (8%) over the next ten years.

The most obvious challenge faced during the last five years has been the Covid-19 pandemic; however, several lessons were learned. Primarily we learned that online modality does not meet the needs of students at the graduate level. During the Covid-19 pandemic all classes were forced to be online and even in the cases delivered synchronously, the students performance in the class and on assessments outside of class indicate they were not gaining the necessary knowledge. The exception applies to our Economics 664 and 665 courses which are graduate listings of our undergraduate intermediate theory courses. By having an online modality of these courses, we were able to enroll a high school economics teacher seeking to meet the required credentials for delivering dual-credit courses at the high school level.

Major findings and Recommendations:

A total of thirty (30) students have joined the M.A. program either as a terminal student (13) or a member of our Ph.D. program (17) since the 2018-2019 academic year. Before the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the department admitted an average of seven (7) students per year to the M.A. program. This dropped substantially after the 2020-2021 academic year with an average of
only two (2) per year. Part of this decline is a consequence of lower application numbers (falling since 2016), largely due to lower enrollment international students who either do not qualify for our program or are unable to enroll without funding. Over the same period, we awarded 22 M.A. degrees with nine (9) of those being to Ph.D. students and the remaining thirteen (13) terminal degrees with ten (10) of those being to students who moved to the M.A. program from the Ph.D. program. The Economics M.A. program enrolls a diverse study body with the majority of the current students from countries outside the United States. This international diversity has enriched our graduate program by providing different perspectives and areas of research that our students investigate. Of the thirty (30) students who have joined the M.A. program, since the 2018-2019 academic year with two-third of the degrees awarded to non-White students, with growth occurring among the Black and Middle Eastern/Arab populations. Success of the international and underrepresented U.S. students is similar to White students in the MA program; however it is more likely that a White student will leave the program prior to completion to take a job.

While the M.A. program was designed to initiate the training of students for the Ph.D. program, we believe that the M.A. program has the potential to grow beyond its current role with minor investments. The Accelerated B.S./M.A. program is designed to help funnel quality undergraduates into the M.A. program and we hope to invest more in advertising this degree program across NIU. A second area of focus is to design flexible course plans that will allow students to fill in deficiencies needed for an M.A. or Ph.D. in economics. We are currently working with the Department of Mathematics to create a Ph.D. preparation program within our M.A. degree to help students at NIU and other regional universities who come to economics as an undergraduate major later in undergraduate studies and need additional math and theory preparation to improve their competitiveness for Ph.D. studies or for work in data analytics. Finally, as the popularity of dual-enrollment Economics high school courses increases, we would like to increase recruitment from area high school teachers to continue their education in Economics to gain the credentials needed to deliver dual-enrollment courses. We feel these areas of investment will not only increase overall enrollment in the terminal degree program, but also help diversify the students and increase the number of students taking classes within the department.

Actions taken since the last review:

In 2018 the M.A. and Ph.D. programs applied for and received a change in our CIPS code from 45-0601 to 45-0603 from the IBHE. This change means our program is now recognized as a STEM field by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and international graduates have longer CPT times available to them. That same year, the program also underwent a significant overhaul in the design of the first year of courses for both the M.A. and the Ph.D. program to address student success rates in the theory courses and exams. The change was designed to focus more on ensuring students have the necessary base math skills for their theory coursework (Economics 591).
addition, we added a course to introduce the software they will be using in their coursework and that employers in the data analytics fields place a premium (Economics 691).

A concentration and Certificate of Graduate Studies in Financial Economics was added to the curricular offerings in 2018. Unfortunately, related plans for a joint M.S. program with the Department of Finance did not come to fruition and we have struggled to attract students to the certificate/concentration with only one student graduating with the concentration. Additionally, we implemented an accelerated B.S./M.A. degree program allowing students from our B.S. in Economics program to begin graduate work during their senior year. While the initial enrollment in this program was good, none of the students who have started the program have finished. While some left the program due to academic standing, other students left to take jobs after their senior year, capitalizing on the experiences in program to secure very good placements (private investment firms and the Federal Reserve). We have also implemented a joint program with the Law School and are seeking additional joint degree programs with other departments and programs at NIU.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

The most important observation from this review is the need to improve our recruitment of students pursuing the M.A. in Economics as a terminal degree program for work force development in this region. We are currently developing a Ph.D. preparatory track with the Department of Mathematics that requires crafting cross-listed courses that would allow students to enroll in the necessary math courses to be competitive in the job and Ph.D. markets. The idea is based on a similar strategy employed at University of Texas â€“ Austin and is motivated by discussions with faculty from regional universities about high-quality students foregoing advanced studies because they do not have sufficient mathematic background. Additionally, it will allow us to welcome undergraduate students choosing the new minor tracks directed to applied math and statistics. We feel this is an ideal first step given the low resource demand paired with high potential gains financially and reputationally in the region. A second immediate need is increased advertisement for what our program can provide both across the NIU campus and beyond. A recent discussion with an M.A. terminal student indicated that their draw to NIU was the variety of courses we offer at the graduate level and the fact that we have flexibility in the curriculum that students can take. Furthermore, because our program is embedded in a Ph.D. program, if the student decided to continue further in their education, the courses for their M.A. degree would likely apply to a doctoral program and they would be well placed to succeed in the Ph.D. program.

In the longer term, we need to better work with other departments across campus to create degree programs that will allow students to gain the important analytical skills and intuition that we provide with the practical skills provided by other programs such as public administration,
environmental studies, and public health. We recognize that many of the real-world problems facing society today and, in the future, will require interdisciplinary knowledge and we strongly feel that we can provide the necessary analytical and theoretical skills; however, there is a need for a wider variety of applied specialists which could be gained with joint hires connected to programs such as public administration, environmental studies and the young Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability. These new positions would also be able to assist with the growth of applied economics courses and programs at the undergraduate level as well.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The MA program in Economics has remained stable and will expect that with planned changes, enrollment and revenue generation will grow in the next 5 years. It serves both as a training program for further education (i.e. doctoral) and a terminal degree for the private and public sectors.
Program: Ph.D. in Economics (45.0601)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

The Ph.D. in Economics is designed to prepare students to enter academics, private industry, or public sector jobs within the U.S. and internationally. The core of our program emphasizes asking interesting economic questions, knowing how to apply economic theory to those questions and then finding and processing the data needed to test the developed hypothesis followed by conveying the meaning and policy implications of those results. Additionally, we prepare our students to teach economics at the college level through their roles as teaching assistants within the department. The program is facilitated by research active faculty working to guide students as they produce their own original and innovative research. Over the past eight years we have awarded thirty (30) Ph.D.s with twenty-one (21) of those students finding work in academics and most of those in tenure track positions. The recent trend, however, has been students taking positions as visiting faculty for a couple years prior to gaining a tenure track position. We are also seeing more students enter the private sector with recent graduates joining firms such as Ingram Micro, J.P. Morgan, and Amazon. The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook predicts that jobs for economists, in general, will continue to grow by 6% over the next decade while jobs for data and market analysts, a common position for private sector economists, will grow between 19 and 36 percent. Consulting work for a variety of employment sectors is also emerging as a potential for Ph.D. graduates.

Recent changes augmenting our existing courses and partnership with the Department of Statistics position our department well to meet these market demands. Since our last review we have adjusted the sequencing of our core courses and changed how graduate assistants are utilized to improve the training our Ph.D. students receive. We moved from a two-semester introduction sequence to a three-semester sequence to allow for additional focus on the mathematic and statistical theory needed for the core theory classes and added a course introducing computer languages and skills to our students as those are emerging skills that will support success in the program and for future job markets. To help improve the instructional skills of our students, we have added recitations to our two undergraduate principles courses (ECON 260 and 261) which are led by graduate assistants. This allows the students to gain experience in front of a classroom and opportunities to improve communication skills over their time in the program in a low-stakes environment relative to a lead instructor position.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Since the start of the 2018-2019 academic year, a total of twenty-eight (28) new students started the Ph.D. program, averaging between four and five students per year. The number of applications
has increased from international students with most applying from countries. Over that same period seventeen (17) Ph.D. degrees were awarded, and all our graduates found employment. Twelve (12) of the degrees awarded have been to those who identify as male and five (5) to students who identify as female. While this is close to the national average among economics Ph.D. degree programs and is driven by the higher percentage of male applicants, we are working toward attracting more women to the program. Of our current twenty-one (21) students, nine (9) identify as female and our goal is increasing the number of women in the program over time. Our doctoral students are quite diverse, dominated by individuals from Middle Eastern and African countries such as Iran, Bangladesh, India, Ghana, and Nigeria.

The department has identified two key areas for the continued operation and growth of the Ph.D. program: a continued focus on versatile job-skills training and ensuring student welfare. Over the last eight years we have increased our focus on training our students in the econometric and computer skills necessary for a future where big data is found in almost every industry. We feel that we need to continue this with the addition of training in grant and research proposal writing and presentation to improve their ability to seek funding for their ideas from either their own firm, university, or outside sources. Additionally, we feel the need to increase our students training in soft skills through their experience assisting undergraduate classes, engagement with other opportunities on campus, and professional conferences. A second priority is to focus on the students personal well-being and growth. The isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of community among the graduate students and between the graduate students and faculty. Efforts so far include the revitalization of the Association of Graduate Economic Students (AGES), a student led group, and the inclusion of more chances for social interactions through gatherings like department luncheons or our annual ECONference. This also includes investment in producing online courses and materials to expand the reach of our program while also ensuring the needs of students are still being met with this modality. Finally, we are looking to create a user-friendly clearinghouse for students to find the information they need to progress and succeed in the program and share with one another important insights and information about adjusting to life as a graduate student at NIU.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

The first key change since the last review was the change in CIPS code to have the program classified as a STEM program by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. This provides our international students with additional OPT/CPT time after they complete their degree. We also changed our first-year sequence of classes from a two-semester to three-semester sequence. We then expanded our mathematical economics course (ECON 591) from a three-week intensive course (which is standard in economics Ph.D. programs), to a full semester. This has allowed the faculty to include training on model building and to ensure all students have a solid foundation in the necessary math theory to perform well in the economic theory courses. We also added a course
(ECON 691) for all our graduate students to train in the computer skills needed to perform and present research and data analysis. This course is team-taught by five faculty and offers an introduction to software tools and best practices for effective data analytics.

Some changes undertaken, however, have not been as successful to date. One goal from the last review was the expansion of our financial economics course offerings with an eventual move to providing courses to professionals in the greater Chicago area. While we have added faculty and course offerings in this area, expanding enrollment has proved challenging due to several external factors causing projects to stall or be cancelled. We also moved from having field specific seminar courses to guide students as they started their Ph.D. research paper, to a general course taken by all students (ECON 796) that is taught on a rotating basis by field specialists. While the consolidation of the students across fields into one course has offered some benefits, the loss of the field specific components has also caused issues as the students move through the research and writing process. Most recently, the move to on-line learning mandated by the Covid-19 pandemic response demonstrated that while the more flexible modality can be beneficial to some students and provide a successful platform for goals such as those related to Financial Economics programs, the overall struggle of graduate student in these courses indicated much more care and investment is needed in the course design and delivery.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

This review has clarified for the department what has worked and thus should be expanded, and new areas where focus is needed. Our focus on training our students with technical and transferable skills has been paying dividends by expanding job options for our graduates and we believe it will continue to do so in the evolving job market that will demand skills in data management, analysis, and presentation. By expanding our training to include skills through better instructional training and the engagement of students in more faculty research, we feel our students will be better equipped to work in teams and have a stronger research foundation. Additionally, by including training for both faculty and students in grant writing, including how to communicate the social contributions of our work, will allow our students, and faculty, to further distinguish themselves in an increasingly competitive job market.

Simultaneously we need to ensure that we are focused on the whole student by nurturing a better sense of community and belonging at NIU and in the larger economic profession. While we are returning to in-person seminars in cooperation with the Graduate School Colloquium program, we are looking to expand this to include more student interactions with the visiting scholar with one-on-one and group meetings before and after the seminars. We are also working to ensure a solid foundation for the Association of Graduate Economic Students to serve as a platform to expand the student voice in the program and a upon which to build a solid support network for the students.
though increased social and professional interactions. Adding more support for conference participation by students through alternative funding mechanisms such as the Huskies United campaign, will increase the students exposure to important professional networks.

Decision:
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:
The PhD program in Economics is an important doctoral program, partnering with other disciplines to provide highly trained workers that pursue careers internationally.
Program: B.A./B.S. in History (54.0101)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

The Bachelor of Arts/Science in History (BABS) program consists of 40 credits, comprising 12 lower-level credits, 21 upper-level elective credits, and two required courses: HIST 395 (Historical Methods) and HIST 495 (Senior Thesis). Within the 21 upper-level credits, students are required to complete at least three credits in premodern history and three credits in non-western history, ensuring a well-rounded academic experience. Since the last program review in 2015, 5 tenured faculty members from the department left the University, which has led to a reduction in the number of upper-level course offerings and total credit hours offered to students. The COVID-19 pandemic further impacted our course delivery, resulting in an increased offering of asynchronous and partially asynchronous online courses. The ongoing enrollment success of our asynchronous offerings has helped us offset lost student credit hours due to faculty separations.

Our BA/BS history degree equips students with a diverse skill set, preparing them for a wide range of career opportunities in various sectors, including business, politics, foreign service, administration, public service, libraries, museums, research, publishing, law, medicine, and teaching. The Bureau of Labor Statistics employment outlook for entry-level positions in many of these fields remains steady (https://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj). While many of these positions may not be directly tied to the discipline of history, the skills acquired as history majors—such as critical thinking, research, writing, debate, and effective communication—are highly transferable and valuable in various career paths. The job market for history graduates, both in teaching and non-teaching roles, is projected to grow. Recognizing the national need for improving teaching quality, the department emphasizes enhancing the quality of future history teachers. Over the past seven years, since the director of our teacher licensure program initiated an alumni-tracking system, our program has produced 96 graduates. Out of this group, 70 have secured traditional teaching positions, while eight have found alternative roles within educational institutions, such as serving as a dean's assistant or a coach or contributing to support programs.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Our BA/BS program has been bucking the enrollment trends for our discipline and institution. Our number of majors and student credit hours have remained stable during the period in review. During this same time, according to the American Historical Association, most colleges and universities saw declining numbers of history majors and students and overall enrollment and student credit hour production has declined at NIU. Our numbers have therefore been flat in a period of contraction. We believe part of success is attributable to our ongoing efforts to make our course and student interactions inclusive, equity-minded, and focused on real-world realities. A
2019 undergraduate diversity and equity survey indicated that we needed to communicate in more effective ways with our BA/BS students. In response, our Director of Undergraduate Studies launched a weekly, distributed to majors and minors every Monday during the fall and spring semesters, that features upcoming courses, critical deadlines, scholarship and internship opportunities, department and campus events, updates from career services, and job listings, among other announcements. Especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic affecting in-person learning, the newsletter has proven invaluable in maintaining student engagement.

Our department actively encourages collaboration between faculty and students in research initiatives. In HIST 395, students collaborate with their instructors and other relevant faculty members to formulate an article-length research proposal on a topic of their choice. Subsequently, in HIST 495, our research capstone course, students produce a 25-30-page original essay informed by primary document research and positioned within the secondary literature. This process involves several stages, including source identification, creating an annotated bibliography, outlining, and drafting both initial and final versions of the essay. We also encourage our students to present their research at events such as the annual CURE conference and participate in OSEEL programs like Research Rookies and the Student Engagement Fund (SEF). Around 3 to 10 students participate in these programs annually. We are hopeful that the end of the pandemic and better mentoring will help us to increase those numbers in coming years. Additionally, our public history program, led by Dr. Stanley Arnold, consistently secures research-based internships for students, providing them with valuable hands-on experiences in settings like museums, archives, local historical societies, legislative bodies, oral history projects, and nonprofit organizations.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Since the last program review in 2015, the department has made significant strides in addressing the limited availability of upper-level online courses. We have expanded our online course offerings. Prior to the pandemic, the history department offered ~29% of undergraduate courses online, which rose to almost 96% the year of the pandemic but has dropped to 37% over the past year. The online courses provide accommodation for our students facing difficulties in attending campus due to factors such as high gas prices, work and family commitments, and persistent personal disruptions. These courses have helped our majors complete their degrees without sacrificing the quality of their educations. Our faculty consistently update their online offerings in order to take advantage of pedagogical findings likely to increase the effectiveness of asynchronous courses.

Over the past seven years, changes in the field of history have prompted us to make subtle yet meaningful adjustments to our curriculum. In response to the growing interdisciplinary nature of the field, we have expanded our range of interdisciplinary and transnational course offerings. This expansion includes the introduction of courses on topics such as transatlantic slavery, the Spanish
Inquisition, the Cuban Revolution and its enduring impact, and LGBTQ+ history. We have also strengthened ongoing partnerships with various campus centers, including the Black Studies Center, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, and the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, enabling us to offer cross-listed courses on subjects like Latino oral histories, the history of Black athletes, and more. These courses attract majors and non-majors alike and usually fill quickly. Collectively, our new and revised courses underscore the global and interconnected nature of our world and emphasize the experiences and contributions of historically marginalized communities.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

Demographic enrollment data indicates that, while there has been a notable increase in the number of BIPOC majors in 2022 and 2023 from 28.4% to 36.6%, our major remains predominantly populated by white males. The number of female majors fell from 29.5% in 2018 to 24.22% in 2022, which is worrisome given the increase overall of females at NIU. To move forward, it is imperative that we place a strong emphasis on recruiting students who identify as women or non-male, Black, and Latinx students into our program. Our strategy for achieving this involves active engagement with the directors of the cultural centers on campus. We aim to devise effective methods for reaching their students, including delivering presentations about our major in introductory-level courses like BKST 200, WGSS 101, and LATS 101 that tend to increase student interest in history. Additionally, we plan to set up information tables at relevant events and organize department open houses specifically tailored to students who identify as female, non-male, and/or BIPOC.

Another key priority is increasing the involvement of our majors in research, creativity, and artistic endeavors. Thanks to a generous contribution from a department donor, the Undergraduate Committee is currently working on establishing two or three undergraduate research stipends. These stipends will provide opportunities for our majors to collaborate with faculty members on research projects. The goal is to match stipend recipients with faculty who are engaged in similar research areas and methodologies. We are also focused on boosting the participation of our majors in programs such as Research Rookies, CURE, and OSEEL.

**Decision:**

Degree program is in good standing
Explanation for decision:

The BA/BS program in History equips students with a diverse skill set, preparing them for a wide range of career opportunities in various sectors. The department has maintained a mixture of course delivery approaches—online and in person—which provides flexibility for their students and potential for meeting future needs of adult learners.
Program: M.A. in History (54.0101)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

The MA Program in History prepares students who wish to become or to further their careers as secondary and community-college educators; plan to apply the knowledge and skills taught in the program to a broad range of non-academic careers where historical training has proven valuable (e.g. curator, archivist, librarian, civil servant, foreign service, writer, broadcaster, educational administrator); or intend to continue their studies in a PhD program at NIU or elsewhere. The curriculum of the MA is designed to help its graduates develop command of a primary field and the historiography related to it; to read historical works with comprehension and evaluate historical arguments critically; to locate and evaluate historical sources; and to communicate effectively. A balanced curriculum helps students develop the critical reading and research skills central to the discipline with topical courses in a field, thematic reading and research seminars, and independent study with an instructor. Students are given ample opportunity, both inside and outside of the classroom, to debate a range of historical interpretations with their instructors and with each other and are encouraged to polish their research papers for a final "masters essay," presentation at conferences, or publication in professional journals.

While knowledge in the discipline of history is always evolving, no major shifts in the discipline have occurred in recent years that would fundamentally impact the program. Rather, the program has undergone an intricate revision to its curriculum to simplify requirements without significantly altering the character of the program. International students have become increasingly represented in the program and the department has undertaken efforts to enhance the diversity of its students. Since the last program review, the MA program has offered courses online with increasing frequency. This move accelerated with the Covid-19 pandemic, but we have since returned to offering most of our courses in-person.

Major findings and Recommendations:

The MA program in History serves a range of full-time and part-time students and efficiently assists the students in completing the degree on time and with significant acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities. The program promotes excellent research, and the outcome of this strength is evinced by the fact that MA students and graduates frequently present papers at regional and national conferences, such as those of the Newberry Library conferences, the American Historical Association, and the Association for Asian Studies among others. Graduate students engage the larger disciplinary community by hosting an annual scholarly conference that brings other graduate students from across the region and nation, offering considerable professional development opportunities to our students and other attendees. MA graduates regularly find employment related
to their training or go on to PhD work. Our students have, for example, gone on to doctoral programs at Emory University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Notre Dame, UIUC, Loyola University, and University of Iowa. Our MA graduates work for a wide variety of employers including high schools (often as teachers), local historical societies, museums, businesses, government agencies, and libraries.

Various data sets show that enrollment, degrees conferred, and retention have held steady since the last program review with enrollment increasing slightly over the past few years. Institutional data affirms that enrollment in the MA slowed but has had a modest recovery. The time to degree completion for new MA students has changed from 2012 to 2022 with more variability over time. The average rate of 2-year completion from 2017 to 2021 was 62% and the average 3-year completion rate 2017 to 2020 was 74%. Many of our MA students are enrolled part-time and thus take longer than the standard amount of time to finish the program than full-time students. From 2018 to 2022, data indicate that Fall-to-Spring reenrollment have maintained at a strong 90%.

Actions taken since the last review:

The previous program review identified several areas for improvement, including recruitment of diverse students from NIU and elsewhere, building departmental endowment resources, and strengthening the learning process and degree completion. We have made major strides on many of these fronts. Enrollment and diversity of the students in the program have increased because we have engaged in recruitment efforts to attract students from less represented backgrounds and provided mentoring to help support them while they are here. Our success has resulted from targeted recruitment measures, elimination of GRE requirements, and responsiveness and active engagement with prospective students, including international ones. We’ve also actively pursued funding opportunities to support their studies. According to enrollment data, the number of students in the MA program who give their ethnicity as non-white has increased steadily since the prior program review, growing from 1 in 2017 to 7 in 2022. The number of women in the program has remained consistent, potentially because of gender imbalances among undergraduate Northern Illinois University history majors, who are the main recruits into the MA program. Our efforts at diversity are also reflected in the program’s LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, students of a wide range of ages, and veterans.

The department streamlined MA coursework requirements as they related to geographical and temporal fields. Without reducing the substance of the needed array of courses, we made the requirements much easier for the students, staff, and faculty to understand. This has helped with degree completion by directing the students more readily toward what they need to do. We also began a new mentoring program that assured incoming MA students have contact with faculty in their field. The previous review also mentioned deeper integration with teachers. The department has undertaken several initiatives in this regard, including possible arrangements with specific
school districts and an alternative capstone project. These measures haven't fully come to fruition, though we have continued to attract working teachers to the program.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

This review generally shows the strength of the MA program. Given the recent changes to the MA curricular requirements, moving away from strict orientation to certain geographic and temporal fields, and the continued orientation of our seminars toward broad themes, the department will be monitoring the impact of these changes carefully. We will continue to explore how much of the program to make available online. While we anticipate continuing to offer a significant portion of the coursework online, we do not currently plan on making the degree entirely able to complete online. Both the desire to build cohorts that enhance the student experience and the need to meet the requirements for international students to take in-person courses discourages the development of any fully online option.

The challenges of decreased university resources being invested in the program will likely remain, but we hope to somewhat compensate for this with continued efforts to increase our endowment funds. We also might need to reconsider how to best ensure that students gain skills in the languages that they need given that the decline in language course offerings has made it harder to maintain the programs language requirement as it is currently constituted. Our efforts at diversity will continue to be a priority. We plan to devote more energy to increasing the number of women and non-male identifying students in the program, which may overlap with the goals of recruiting and retaining more regional educators.

**Decision:**

Degree program is in good standing

**Explanation for decision:**

The MA program in History supports both full-time and part-time students as a path to a doctoral program or further training for their career path. The program recruits a diverse group of students and the department has created new mentoring programs to accelerate the students learning processes sense of belonging within the department.
Program: Ph.D. in History (54.0101)
Date of last review: 3/1/2016

Major changes in the program:

The PhD Program in History is one of four offered at public institutions in the state of Illinois and one of the oldest PhD programs at NIU. It prepares students primarily for the academic job market and our doctoral graduates mainly hold academic positions, whether as tenure track faculty, instructors, researchers, and higher education administrators. Although, many graduates find employment in other areas, including administration, public service, foreign service, politics, business, libraries, museums, research, publishing, the law, and teaching. We have followed the disciplinary trend of bolstering efforts to train students for non-academic employment in careers that benefit from their doctoral training, such as governmental work, administrative positions in all sectors, and research and communication jobs in businesses.

The curriculum of the PhD program is designed to help graduate students gain deep knowledge of one primary and two secondary historical fields and develop professional research and writing skills to make their own original contribution to historical scholarship. In the first phase of the program, students take an array of thematic reading and research seminars, topical courses in their fields, and independent studies. They then prepare three substantial field essays and take a candidacy exam. The final and most significant aspect of the program is the dissertation, where they undertake extensive original research in primary and secondary sources and produce a book-length study. While the discipline of history is always evolving, no major shifts in it have occurred in recent years that would fundamentally impact the program. Since the last program review, the PhD program has offered courses online with increasing frequency. This move accelerated with the Covid-19 pandemic, but we have since returned to offering most of our courses in-person.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Program enrollment, degrees conferred, and retention rates have held steady since the last program review. Total enrollment in graduate history classes has been fairly stable since 2019 with a reduction prior to and into the pandemic, but then a return to pre-pandemic levels. From 2018 to 2022, data also indicate that Fall-to-Spring reenrollment has remained at about 95% and Fall-to-Fall enrollment at around 82%. On average, there are 20 to 25 active PhD students at any given time with 2 and 3PhD degrees awarded per year. The department has undertaken efforts to enhance the diversity of its students and as part of this effort, international students have become increasingly represented in the program.

Students in the PhD program produce their own scholarship and have been involved in faculty scholarship in a variety of ways. We foster student research through our History Graduate Student
Association. This student-led and faculty-advised group provides opportunities for career development through skills-based presentations, alumni interactions, and its annual conference, that brings other graduate students from across the region and nation, offering considerable professional development opportunities to our students and other attendees. PhD students also frequently present papers at regional and national conferences, including those of the American Historical Association, the Association for Asian Studies, and the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages among others. Since 2018, our PhD students have had at least 9 single-authored articles accepted for publication while in the program in several academic journals, such as Early American Studies, Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History, and the Northern Illinois University Law Review. As is standard in the discipline, these articles represent the students original research. History as a field tends to be less collaborative than many other disciplines. Nevertheless, students in the PhD program have stood out for involvement in the research and scholarship of departmental faculty. Specific summer opportunities have allowed students to contribute to professors scholarship via translations, archival research, digital humanities work, and analyzing primary source material to find information to enter into databases.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

The previous program review identified several areas for improvement, including recruitment of diverse students from NIU and elsewhere, building departmental endowment resources, improving alumni relations, and strengthening the learning process and degree completion. We have made major strides on several of these fronts. To strengthen learning and degree completion, the department has used advising and other measures to improve these outcomes. These measures include helping students find potential dissertation directors and committee members, encouraging them to start on their field essays for their candidacy exam earlier, and providing additional resources for their dissertation research.

The PhD program has long been committed to student diversity and to a greater extent over the past 8 years. We have engaged in recruitment efforts to attract students from less represented backgrounds and provided mentoring to help support them while they are here. We've also actively pursued funding opportunities to support their studies. The recent chairs of the department devoted their attention to alumni relations and donors, which has increased the resources available for graduate student research and conference travel, supporting PhD student success. According to institutional enrollment data, the number of students in the PhD program who give their ethnicity as non-white has stayed steady since 2015, representing approximately 25-30% of the active PhD students. The number of women in the program has declined slightly, with less than 50% of students in the program identifying as female, which has often but not always been the case. Our efforts at diversity are also reflected in the programs LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, students of a wide range of ages, and veterans. The success here has resulted from targeted
recruitment measures, eliminating the GRE requirements, and responsiveness and active engagement with prospective students, including international students.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

This review generally shows the strength of the PhD program. The department does not envision any major curricular reform in the near future, though it might review how to help shorten time to degree and how to best assure that new students, especially those concentrating on US history, are placed with potential dissertation advisors. We also continue to explore how much of the program to make available online. While we anticipate continuing to offer a significant portion of the coursework online, we do not plan on making the degree entirely possible to complete online. Both the desire to build cohorts that enhance the student graduate experience and the need to meet the requirements for international students to take in-person courses discourages the development of a fully online option.

The challenges of decreased university resources being invested in the program will likely remain. While we hope to somewhat compensate for this by continuing to increase our endowment funds to support student research, the decrease in faculty that we have already experienced and anticipated retirements in the near future pose a major challenge to the PhD program. This could become especially acute if some of the most active advisors of students in US history are not replaced. Resource constraints also mean that we might need to reconsider how to best ensure that students gain skills in the languages that they need given that the decline in offerings at NIU has made it harder to maintain the programs language requirement as currently constituted. Our efforts at diversity will continue to be a priority: we will devote more energy to increasing the number of women and non-male identifying students in the program.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The PhD program in History has a long history of producing exceptional students who move into academic career paths, as well as other fields such as public service, foreign service, libraries and business. The program provides depth of training that leads the students to produce original scholarship, contributing to the strong research portfolio of the history department.

Program: B.A. in Music (50.0901)
Date of last review: 3/15/2016
Major changes in the program:

The Bachelor of Arts degree in music was revised to focus more on access to the program, students with non-traditional paths and to create a more flexible liberal arts approach in contrast to the Bachelor of Music programs.

The BA program, like all liberal arts degrees, is not a pre-professional training. It allows student to study broadly through their choice of electives including coursework in recording, editing, composition, arranging, world music, etc. This allows students to prepare for potential work in the music industry in live sound, studio recording, creative media, etc. which are all growing fields.

The revisions were driven by curricular review and the collective desire to increase access to the School of Music for students with non-traditional backgrounds (e.g. other than band, choir or orchestra.)

Major findings and Recommendations:

The NASM Visitor's Report (2022) cites the following:

Overall Effectiveness – The revised purpose of this degree track is to provide “an option for music study for students that have backgrounds or aspirations that do not easily fit in the standard band, choir, or orchestra tracks.” It appears that the music unit has done considerable, purposeful, and laudable curricular revision to this track, and to great effectiveness. It appears to meet general guidelines of curricular structures for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music (see NASM Handbook 2021-22, Standards for Accreditation VII.B.-D.).

Actions taken since the last review:

This degree was recently revised with the goal of providing an option for music study for students that have backgrounds or aspirations that do not easily fit in the standard band, choir, or orchestra tracks. The strengths are in the flexibility for students to pursue broad studies and to mix recording arts, computer music, world music, songwriting, etc. to match their goals. It also addresses some of the issues of admissions bias that can disadvantage students from less affluent backgrounds.

As part of our efforts to address retention and admission issues, we created new courses in Fundamentals, Commercial Music, and Songwriting to establish pathways for students with non-traditional backgrounds and to provide a more musically diverse academic environment. We have also changed the admissions process to include an option to apply by portfolio and a performance track utilizing our robust offerings in World Music.

The recent addition of Kerri Chandler and Mark Snyder to the faculty adds new expertise in recording arts, production, and commercial music. They are tasked with building this curriculum to support students with broad interests.

Actions taken as a result of this review:
Since the many of courses are currently being rolled out, we are looking forward to assessing the effectiveness of the program and making changes as needed.

We have revised the first two Music Theory courses to combine Aural and Written Theory to better align with the other theory courses. Since these course will be offered for the first time next year and the Song Writing class is currently being offered for the first time, any actions are clearly premature at this date.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

From the NASM Visitor's Report - "It appears that the music unit has done considerable, purposeful, and laudable curricular revision to this track, and to great effectiveness."
Program: B.M. in Music (50.0903)
Date of last review: 3/15/2016

Major changes in the program:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Major findings and Recommendations:

NASM Visitor's Report:

For Music Education;

The Self-Study reports that the program was reauthorized last year by the Illinois State Board of Education “with Distinction” and that it enjoys a placement rate of nearly 100% directly following graduation.108 It is worth noting the music unit’s commitment to “constant revisions and re-distributions” that have enabled deeper exploration of technologies appropriate for music instruction in today’s schools and on content “on social emotional learning and trauma informed teaching.”109

For Steelpan;

It appears that the degree purpose and structure meet the general guidelines for an undergraduate performance degree in instrumental music. The Self-Study notes that the institution is “The only program of its kind in the world which offers bachelor and master's degrees in music with an emphasis on the steelpan.”

For Jazz;

It appears that the degree purpose and structure meet the general guidelines for an undergraduate degree in Jazz Studies. As further evidence, lists of notable faculty and alumni are provided.127

Actions taken since the last review:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

None
Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The findings of the NASM Visit was that the BM in Music degree continues to meet the standards for Accreditation and continues to be productive and successful. No major changes were recommended.
Program: M.M. in Music (50.0901)
Date of last review: 3/15/2016

Major changes in the program:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Major findings and Recommendations:

From the NASM Visitor's report:
Based on the Self-Study, transcript review, on-site class visitations and observations, review of a live performance, and dialogues with faculty and students, it appears that types and levels of student work are appropriate for the program.

Actions taken since the last review:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

None

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The NASM Review confirmed that the MM in Music continues to meet the Standards for Accreditation and continues to offer an appropriate experience for students.
Program: Performer's Certificate in Music (50.0903)
Date of last review: 3/15/2016

Major changes in the program:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Major findings and Recommendations:

From the NASM Visitor's report:

It appears that the certificate’s purpose for students to attain greater mastery of their chosen field is effective. However, because of the discrepancy in the number of credits required in ensemble it is unclear how specific content, methods, and perspectives used to consider the subject matter, techniques or issues regarding specific artistic engagement is met (see NASM Handbook 2021-22, Standards for Accreditation XIX.A.3.a.).

Actions taken since the last review:

No major changes at the curricular level. The core curriculum has been review for implicit bias and a number of changes have been made to the choice of music examples. Our main focus is currently on recruiting talented students for the program.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

The SOM Curriculum Committee and Graduate Committee have been working on a proposal to change/clarify the ensemble requirement for the Performer's Certificate to better align it with the MM degree. This hopefully will be in the 2024 Catalog, if not in 2025.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

From the NASM Visitor's report: "It appears that the certificate’s purpose for students to attain greater mastery of their chosen field is effective."
Center: Center for Burma Studies (90.0501A)
Date of last review: 10/21/2020

Major changes in the program:

The Committee finds that The Center for Burma Studies:

Is one of NIU's gems. It exemplifies the potential of a research unit for the university. While its primary role is research and scholarship, it also serves as an attraction and resource for faculty and researchers. Furthermore, the center offers opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students and continues to engage with the regional, national, and international communities.

Publishes the semi-annual Journal of Burma Studies, with Dr. Raymond serving as the journal's general editor.

Facilitates collaborations with various departments and centers within the NIU community, including Anthropology, Public Health, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, and ENVS, fostering synergies to support scholarly projects and engagement.

CBS has substantially augmented its artifact donations, thereby significantly expanding the collection, which, in turn, has opened doors to external funding opportunities.

The center's goals are well-defined and appropriately prioritized (attainable vs. aspirational).

While CBS does not confer undergraduate degrees, it does offer instructional opportunities, with Dr. Raymond actively contributing to providing students with experiences related to presenting artifacts to the public in settings such as exhibitions. Additionally, Dr. Raymond has collaborated with students to facilitate successful scholarship applications for trips to Burma. In addition, Dr. Raymond is an active researcher who regularly publishes important works and she speaks regularly in formal and informal academic and public settings.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Although the center is successful, there are several areas for consideration by the center and university administration that would help ensure its continued success:

Investigate collaborative opportunities with the Asian American Resource Center for the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, potentially unlocking access to grant opportunities through the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) and as a potential Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Additionally, consider collaborating with the
Pick Museum of Anthropology, a newly renovated space in the center of campus that can be used to highlight CBS collections and resources.

Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy/plan over the next 2-3 years for the Center and its collection, with the aim of expanding CBS's influence and enhancing its visibility. This plan should explore methods to raise the center's profile and engage with diverse ethnic groups.

Utilize the resources available within the University Communications office and marketing channels, such as WNIU, WFMT Chicago, Chicago Art Institute, and the University of Chicago museums, including the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, to elevate the collection and increase the center's visibility to a broader audience. Attracting outside researchers, faculty, and graduate students should also be a focus.

As the transition plan of the new centers director is implemented following Dr. Raymonds retirement, it is advisable to revisit the strategic plan and consider incorporating an advisory committee composed of field/discipline experts (including NIU faculty and external researchers), alumni, and students (e.g., undergraduate student and graduate student) to support the center's long-term growth. The director may also consider seeking insights from other center directors and Deans of CLAS and CVPA regarding the implementation of the advisory committee.

Discuss/review with administration on the status of the Museum Studies Certificate program.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Dr. Raymond offered the following response to comments and recommendations from the preceding assessment:

The Founders Memorial Library houses a Special Collections dedicated to the Burma collection.

Ongoing discussions are in place with the Center for Southeast Asia Studies to foster mutual resource support and collaboration.

**Actions taken as a result of this review:**

The actions taken as a result of this review by the center or institute will be assessed during the next review.
Decision:
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:
The review committee finds the Center has met or exceeded all goals and metrics and approves continued operation for the next four years when the next assessment will occur.
Major changes in the program:

The review committee finds the IESE is highly productive, collaborative, and efficient:

Since the last review, the IESE has demonstrated a remarkable record of scholarly productivity:

- Five research projects are currently being implemented within IESE with interdisciplinary faculty driving the research.
- Faculty are productive in terms of scholarship as demonstrated by mean citations, 930 (s.d. 1068); mean h-index, 13 (s.d. 7); and i10-index, mean of 17 (s.d. 14).
- Productivity has been sustained even through the pandemic, although there has been an understandable reduction in conference presentations.

The Institute strives to be a collaborative partner and promotes interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts for instruction and research/scholarship. The current leadership has made solid progress in branding the institute as a collaborative partner to other academic units, both within CLAS and across other colleges. The Institute has engaged with the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS).

There is active participation/promotion in engaged teaching efforts. The institute is interested in increasing ENVS 200 from a capacity of 75 to 120 students per course section. This is noteworthy given the increase in cost per credit hour over the last few years. Curriculum changes are in progress to develop a culture of transdisciplinarity to broaden the objectives in the curriculum; for example, ENVS200 (system thinking for sustainability using the 3Es) and ENVS495 (as a capstone to work in groups to support private sector projects). The projects include faculty and students working together to meet companies needs.

The Institute has been working to increase diversity by allocating fellowships, paid internships, and planned activities (e.g., connections with other departments through learning communities and raising funds for scholarships).

The review committee finds resources adequate for the institute in relation to other centers.

Major findings and Recommendations:
Although the Institute is successful, there are several areas for consideration by the Institute and university administration that would help ensure its continued success:

The Institute faculty are research/scholarship active; however, the translation, directly or indirectly, to the Institute's disciplinary and programmatic areas is not always clear. That appears to be the case with both unfunded research/scholarship as well as funded organized research. The IESE should strive to ensure value is added to the scholarship of the individual faculty.

The Institute should focus research on unique areas to distinguish from departmental missions. The review committee recommends that the IESE should explore foci on policy, environmental justice, and urban design. These topics naturally encompass current emphases and would bring something new to NIU while remaining a home for all affiliates and attracting students.

Continued support of the NICCS initiative is important.

The Institute should continue to seek external funding and encourage IESE faculty to identify organized research (grants) with IESE as an "associated unit" through Sponsored Programs Administration to increase indirect cost return funds for the Institute.

The Institute should benchmark the institute nationally to understand how similar institutes/centers work and what issues they are facing (e.g., tenure, funding, etc.). Benchmarking should include (1) comparable peers and (2) aspirational peers with a focus on curriculum, enrollment, external funding, and culture.

The Institute is at a pivot point due to the enrollment and financial/budget constraints at the university. Although not directly the purview of this committee, but to ensure a robust research effort, IESE should focus on enhancing enrollment, developing a robust undergraduate education, and understanding the attractiveness of the major to serve NIU students. Exploring the development of certificates for students to support the job market should be investigated with the College and the Graduate School.

**Actions taken since the last review:**

Director Skuzinski offered the following response to comments and recommendations from the preceding assessment:

Discussions with the college leadership has led to discussions around cluster hiring of one faculty member to support the work of IESE.
Actions taken as a result of this review:

The actions taken as a result of this review by the center or institute will be assessed during the next review.

Decision:

Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The review committee concludes IESE is productive, facilitates faculty scholarship, and has a strong and well-earned reputation. Accordingly, the committee recommends continuation of the Institute and looks forward to the response to the recommendations at the next review.
Center: Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault (90.4407)
Date of last review: 2/6/2019

Major changes in the program:

The review committee finds the CSFVSA is highly productive with impact regionally and nationally.

CSFVSA has demonstrated outstanding scholarly productivity. The national and international prominence is commendable.

CSFVSA funding from multiple regional and federal agencies that supports both research and service provides the center with the ability to support operations and personnel reliably and consistently.

The center associates and affiliates are well-respected subject matter experts in their respective research areas and fields. The center director provides an administrative foundation which those individuals can leverage.

CSFVSA has hired graduate students to provide training on different research activities helping to develop students research skills.

The increase of external funding from $2.8M (FY4-18) to $7.1M (FY19-22) is impressive. The increase of external awards has allowed the center to compensate for reduced internal support.

The center demonstrated a high level of collaboration and partnership with other units within NIU and other agencies. These collaborations have promoted interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts.

The center has made excellent progress meeting the five-year strategic plan and goals.

Major findings and Recommendations:

Although the center is successful, there are several areas for consideration by the center and university administration that would help ensure its continued success:

The strategic plan is entirely tactical and should be more aspirational. Hold a workshop to develop new ways to collaborate and new lines of research.

Collaborate with other units to develop and support students research that stems from the centers mission.
The centers success in securing external funding awards should be utilized to work collaboratively with faculty from other academic units to develop new research strands and access external funding. Connecting with directors from other centers similar to CSFVSA would be beneficial to the director to understand the process of the centers growth by including other faculty.

Form and establish an external advisory committee to bring together individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and expertise in relevant fields for the center; to provide an independent review of the center’s activities, policies, or projects; to facilitate networking opportunities and the establishment of strategic partnerships; and to provide insights into emerging developments and help identify opportunities for innovation, ensuring that the center remains competitive and adaptive.

Benchmark the center to similar research-focused centers to determine how peers centers function regarding collaboration, research, use of resources, strategic planning, etc., and financially (e.g., support of faculty and students).

Develop a more robust financial plan with budgeted revenues and expenses encompassing all sources of revenue.

Actions taken since the last review:

Dr. Crouch offered the following response to comments and recommendations from the preceding assessment:

The center provided a plan with a main focus on shorter-to-intermediate-term strategies.

The center increased the involvement of students at different levels (e.g., post-doctoral research associates, doctoral students, and master-level students) to advance their research training and the goals of the center.

The center increased external funding compared to the prior assessment.

Actions taken as a result of this review:

The actions taken as a result of this review by the center or institute will be assessed during the next review.

Decision:
Degree program is in good standing

Explanation for decision:

The review committee concludes CSFVSA is productive, facilitates faculty scholarship, and has a strong and well-earned reputation. Accordingly, the committee recommends continuation of the Center and looks forward to the response to the recommendations at the next review.