MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

SELF-STUDY REPORT 2026

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2026 SELF-STUDY REPORT

A Legacy of Reinvention and Resilience

Founded in 1908 as a teacher's college, Montclair State University has, over the course of more than a century, evolved into a dynamic public high research activity university (R2) serving over 23,000 students across a wide spectrum of undergraduate and graduate programs. It is also an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), the largest by total enrollment outside New York City, north of Florida and east of Chicago, and has a majority-minority student body comprised of many first-generation, underserved and commuter students whose graduation outcomes exceed experts' expectations by eighteen percentage points (#U.S. News & World Report 2022-2023 Best Colleges Guidebook). Montclair's drive to provide access and excellence to a 21st-century student demographic is extended through its new partnership with Bloomfield College, the state's only four-year Predominantly Black Institution, and is reflected in its new 2023 U.S. News and World Report ranking of 7th in the nation for enhancing social mobility.

From its earliest years, Montclair has been defined by its ability to adapt to changing social, economic, and educational landscapes. The University's story is one of continual reinvention in response to both long-term trends and urgent disruptions, enabling it to thrive as a catalyst for academic excellence, social mobility, and community engagement. Montclair's periods of rapid growth—including its transformation into a doctoral research institution in 2016 and the significant expansion of its academic programs and physical infrastructure in the early 2000s—positioned it as a leader in public higher education in New Jersey. More recently, Montclair's capacity for adaptive leadership was tested and proven during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Through innovative hybrid learning models, increased attention to student belonging and student support services, and strategic planning, the University sustained academic continuity and emerged stronger with robust enrollments and student services, with a renewed commitment to equity and access.

The Merger with Bloomfield College

A defining moment in Montclair's recent history came in 2023 with the merger of Bloomfield College into Montclair State University. Facing closure, Bloomfield—an historic minority-serving institution—found new life and sustainability through this groundbreaking integration. The university's Complex Substantive Change application to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education for the merger began in 2021 (#CSC). Bloomfield College and Montclair State University worked collaboratively through Phases I and II of integration below, and the Commission action of June 21, 2023, recognized the important work completed and the commitment by both institutions to make this a successful merger. The action approved the merger, and the transaction was completed on June 30, 2023, moving the two institutions into Phase III on the road to full integration.

A key component of this transition phase, which started July 1, 2023, and continued until June 30, 2024, was the launch of implementation plans across all functional areas between Montclair State University and Bloomfield College and steps towards alignment of systems and processes in preparation for this self-study. The goal of all this work was to make the integration as streamlined and seamless as possible with minimum disruption to Bloomfield College students' educational experience. The University has since been diligently working towards full integration and has been carefully documenting the progress across all key operational areas (#Reports of Progress).

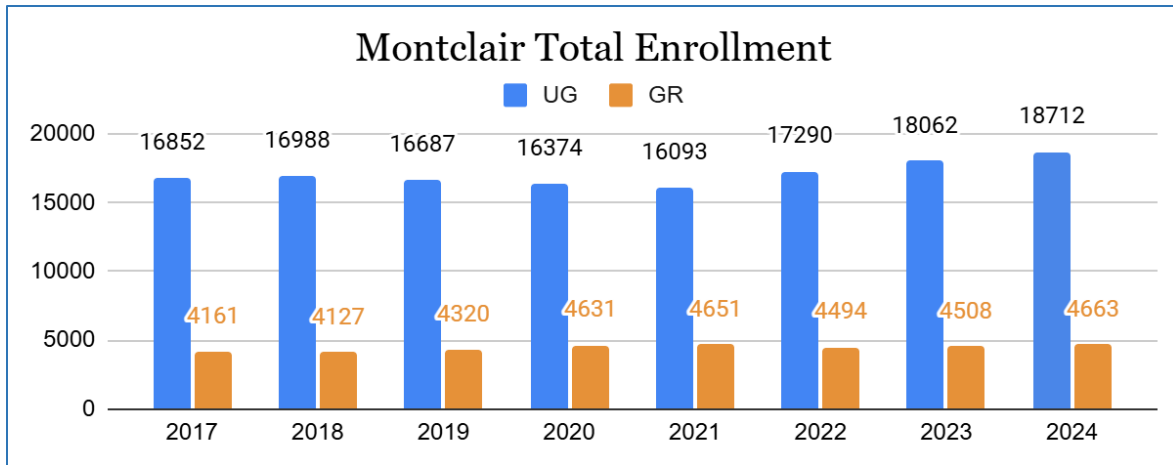| THE ROAD TO INTEGRATION 2021-2024			
Phase I: Preliminary Agreement September 2021-May 2022	**Phase II: Implementation Planning** May 2022-June 2023	**Phase III: Merger-Sub Operations Transition** July 2023-June 2024	**Phase IV: Integration** July 2024 onward
Preliminary financial review & agreement	Develop detailed implementation plans for all functional areas of the University	Launch implementation plans across all functional areas of the University based on priority status	Continue implementation through all functional areas and evaluation through consultation and assessment
Secure state funding for the proposed Definitive Agreement	Secure approvals from federal, state, and accrediting agencies (MSCHE) for the merger	Begin alignment of processes and systems for next MSCHE accreditation cycle	Complete Self-Study and Team Visit for MSCHE Accreditation in 2026

Integration Teams and Progress

Since the merger, Montclair established a University Integration Committee (UIC) that is comprised of lead representatives from the academic and administrative units who attend regularly scheduled meetings and provide bi-weekly updates to the Integration Project Master Plan (#Membership of the UIC). The Integration Project Master Plan is carefully maintained and provides progress reports with the following sections: Key Accomplishments, Four-Week Look Ahead, and Risks, Issues, Decisions Needed, and Next Steps or Actions on Risk/Issues. The merger was a complex process and integration work will undoubtedly continue in this post-transaction teach-out phase through this accreditation cycle and beyond (for recent progress milestones since the last SIR that was submitted to MSCHE on August 15, 2023, see #s). Now operating as Bloomfield College of Montclair State University, the partnership reflects Montclair's enduring values: a deep commitment to student success, inclusive excellence, and educational equity.

Montclair By the Numbers: Mapping the Growth

Since the last accreditation cycle in 2017, Montclair has experienced significant growth and transformation, driven by its commitment to academic excellence, student success, and community engagement. This self-study is grounded in that context, providing a timely opportunity to evaluate how the university has responded to its evolving landscape—and how it is positioned to sustain and build on that momentum for a thriving future.

Enrollment Growth & Student Demographics

Over the last decade, Montclair has experienced growth in undergraduate student enrollment and has held relatively steady with graduate enrollment. Total enrollment in Fall 2017 was 21,013 and total enrollment in Fall 2024 was 23,375.

Montclair Total Enrollment

UG: 2017: 16852, 2018: 16988, 2019: 16687, 2020: 16374, 2021: 16093, 2022: 17290, 2023: 18062, 2024: 18712

GR: 2017: 4161, 2018: 4127, 2019: 4320, 2020: 4631, 2021: 4651, 2022: 4494, 2023: 4508, 2024: 4663

The growth can be attributed to various factors, including expanding program offerings and targeted recruitment efforts, enhanced marketing efforts, the modification of the scholarship model, and a growing reputation for academic excellence. Undergraduate enrollment has seen a steady increase despite the pandemic, with a particularly notable rise in the number of first-year students joining the community. Additionally, graduate programs continue to attract students seeking advanced degrees and specialized training in various fields. This increase in enrollment reflects the university's commitment to providing high-quality education and opportunities for intellectual and personal growth to students from diverse backgrounds.

Undergraduate enrollment has increased particularly among first-generation, Pell-eligible, and historically underrepresented students, reinforcing the university's role as a leading engine of social mobility in the region.

Fall 2020-2025	Montclair State University						Bloomfield College of Montclair State University					
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
# of 1st Year Students		4109	3959	3879	3,432	3079			182	235	277	
First Gen		40%	27%	27%	27%	28%			51%	52%	45%	
Pell Eligible		41%	37%	34%	34%	32%			77%	75%	72%	

Academic Program Expansion & Innovation

In response to evolving workforce and societal needs, Montclair has expanded its academic portfolio with 28 new undergraduate and graduate degrees and 29 new certificate programs since 2017, including cutting-edge offerings in health, data science, and the creative industries. Together with Montclair's recognized stronghold in such disciplines as education, business, the arts, and sciences, the university demonstrates unwavering commitment to anticipating and serving the labor needs of the state of New Jersey and beyond.

Academic Year	Selection of New Degree Programs
2020	M.S. in Data Science B.A. in Geographic, Environmental, and Urban Studies Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology B.A. in Hospitality, Sports, Events, and Tourism B.S. in Applied Mathematics and Statistics M.A. in Higher Education B.A. in Liberal Studies
2021	B.A. in Sports Communication B.A. in Film and Television B.A. in Advertising B.A. in Asian Languages and Cultures B.A. in Policy Studies
2022	B.A. in Urban Humanities B.A. in Recording Arts B.F.A. in Animation and Visual Effects M.S. in Digital Marketing Analytics M.S. in Human Resources Analytics
2023	B.S. in Business Analytics B.A. in Applied Studies (at BCMSU) M.E. in Teaching for Equity and Justice B.A. in Biology
2024	M.A. in Strategic Communication and Media B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies M.A. in Justice Leadership & Innovation

The university is expanding its certificate programs in order to offer flexible, targeted learning pathways that meet the needs of both traditional and non-traditional learners. New offerings include:

Academic Year	Selection of New Certificate Programs
2020	Virtual Learning for Students with Disabilities Certificate Program (G) K-12 Computer Science Teaching Certificate Program (G)
2021	Sustainable Food Practices Certificate Program (G) Advanced Quantitative Methods in Psychology Certificate Program (G) Entrepreneurship Certificate (UG) Innovation Design certificate (UG) Game Development Certificate (UG)
2022	Customer Experience and User Experience Research Certificate Program (G) Real Estate Development Certificate Program (G) Climate Science Certificate (UG) Global Human Trafficking Certificate (UG) Sustainable Food Practices Certificate (UG)
2023	Harm Reduction Approaches to Substance Use Certificate Program (G) General Education Studies Certificate (UG) International Diploma in Journalism and Digital Media (UG) Spanish Language Journalism (UG)
2024	Neuroinclusive Practice and Leadership (UG) Spanish for Health Professionals (G) Supply Chain Management (G) Social Impact (UG)

"Montclair Unbound" is a new strategic initiative aimed at better serving current and prospective students with more flexible offerings of new fully online programs. Consistent with Montclair's mission of

creating access, social mobility, and career advancement, Montclair Unbound's portfolio already includes 16 graduate degree programs and 6 undergraduate degree programs. Montclair Unbound will serve undergraduate and graduate students, as well as alumni and lifelong learners. Some existing programs are developed with alternative delivery modalities, such as the fully online B.S. in Business Administration program (designed for students with an A.A. or A.S. degree) or the MS in Business Analytics. Others are developed as online/low residency programs, such as the MFA in Dance or the MA in Justice Leadership and Innovation. There are also numerous new program offerings that have been launched exclusively online, such as the M.A. in Strategic Communication and Media (#Program Pre-proposal and #Proposal). New academic program development is now undertaken with great care based on clear data points, including targeted reports from Gray's Decision Intelligence, that indicate potential for program growth and detailed financial, performance, and outcome metrics. Specifically, new online programs in psychology and business are designed to offer flexible pathways that meet the needs of adult learners while supporting timely and successful degree completion.

To strengthen its academic offerings, enhance coherence and career readiness, and stay responsive to labor trends and disciplinary developments, Montclair has also restructured its colleges and schools. In 2022, the former College of Education and Human Services became the College for Education and Engaged Learning, and disciplines from multiple colleges were brought together to form the new College for Community Health. Starting in FY2025, the School of Communication and Media became the stand-alone College of Communication and Media, reflecting a decade of enrollment growth and rising societal relevance. Additional schools were also established, including the School of Nursing in 2018 and the School of Computing within the College of Science and Mathematics in 2023.

College/School	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bloomfield College	1862	1685	1629	1533	1300	1153	911	799
College of the Arts	2668	2741	2932	3039	3129	3449	3782	3922
College of Communication and Media								TBD
College for Community Health							2449	2319
College for Education & Engaged Learning							1680	1680
College of Education and Human Services	4352	4358	4366	4418	4305	4159	78	20
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	5116	5053	5132	5175	4935	5153	4920	5023
College of Science & Mathematics	2903	2852	2705	2694	2823	3030	3445	3917
Feliciano School of Business	3412	3584	3472	3536	3491	3879	4272	4739
School of Nursing	129	169	230	327	352	332	329	310
University College		2064	1831	1640	1509	1317	1190	1010

Research and Scholarly and Creative Activities

The University's research profile has risen sharply, with a substantial increase in external grant funding and the work of existing and new interdisciplinary research initiatives. In FY17, Montclair earned approximately $12.5M in external awards and reported research expenditures of $13.5M. By the close of FY25, the institutional research profile has shifted considerably.

Montclair earned approximately $21.6M and $23.9M in new external awards in FY23 and FY24, respectively, and reported research expenditures of approximately $38.2M and $43.9M, respectively, on the FY22 and FY23 NSF Higher Education Research and Development survey (#NSF HERD: , https://ncses.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2023) which reflects internal investments as well as external funding. External grants to Montclair fund basic and applied research, developmental research, community-partnered research, conferences, workshops, research equipment, student experiential learning, and instruction and training activities.

All academic structures are also supported by a growing number of centers and institutes that serve as hubs for collaboration across disciplines, and with communities, and advance student learning and skill development (see #evidence inventory table). These units are integral components of the education, research, outreach, and innovation mission of the university (#Annual Reports from the Center for Cooperative Media and the Center for Research and Evaluation in Education and Human Services).

Student Success and Outcomes

Retention and graduation rates have steadily improved, fueled by expanded student support services and a growing emphasis on student belonging.

	Cohort	1st Term	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	6th Year	7th Year
Montclair State University Retention Rates*									
2017	3004	91.4%	79.5%	71.6%	66.7%	20.6%	6.0%	2.4%	1.4%
2018	3168	90.2%	80.1%	71.6%	65.8%	21.1%	5.7%	2.1%	
2019	3082	91.7%	82.8%	72.2%	67.0%	19.2%	5.3%		
2020	3125	93.5%	78.8%	69.9%	64.9%	17.5%			
2021	3464	90.7%	80.6%	70.6%	64.0%				
2022	3942	91.9%	79.7%	69.5%					
2023	4019	91.9%	77.8%						
2024	4176	92.10%							

*Corresponding data for Bloomfield College is available in #.

	Cohort	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	6th Year	7th Year	8th Year
Montclair State University Graduation Rates*									
2017	3004		0.0%	1.8%	45.8%	60.6%	64.0%	65.2%	
2018	3168		0.1%	2.7%	46.0%	61.1%	64.0%		
2019	3082		0.1%	3.1%	49.3%	62.7%			
2020	3125		0.3%	3.2%	48.6%				
2021	3464		0.3%	3.9%					
2022	3942		0.5%						
2023	4019								
2024	4176								

*Corresponding data for Bloomfield College is available in #.

Expanded and targeted student support services have been central to advancing outcomes such as retention, graduation, and a stronger sense of belonging. During and after the pandemic, Montclair significantly broadened its resources in academic support, mentoring, counseling, and disability services to address the evolving needs of students. The shift to remote and hybrid learning underscored challenges in access to technology, internet connectivity, and flexible learning accommodations, making expanded services essential to student persistence. Equally important, the pandemic highlighted the critical role of mental health in student success. Elevated stress, anxiety, and isolation prompted new investments, including the June 2023 launch of a partnership with Uwill to provide virtual mental health and teletherapy counseling services. By strengthening both academic and personal supports, the University has enhanced students' capacity to thrive, demonstrating its commitment to advancing student success, improving retention and graduation rates, and fostering a community where all students feel supported and connected.

Many other initiatives were launched and continue now. The Academic Success Coaching program initiated in Fall 2022 introduced caring professionals to build strong individual relationships with an identified cohort of 460 students that could benefit from one-to-one coaching in the habits and behaviors that will enable them to reach their academic potential and reap greater rewards from the Montclair experience. This was an opportunity for the university to create a new program that utilized full-time coaches (funded by the university) and adjuncts (funded by Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds, HEERF) to test a new program, which subsequently was funded with committed institutional funds to support both full time and part time coaches (#HEERF Proposal & Reports). The program targets first-year students and each semester on-boards a new cohort as it off-ramps another cohort that has advanced. Currently there are 1,430 students in the program. Ongoing assessment is guiding the efforts to scale up the program at this time focusing attention on interventions that impact persistence, such as personalized advising, expanded career counseling, and proactive follow-ups from the early alert system.

The newly formed Office of Student Belonging (OSB) offers programming, advocacy and support services, and additional resources to ensure that all students feel welcome and empowered to succeed and have the resources they need for academic and personal well-being. Among many initiatives, OSB has launched a First-Generation initiative with engagement programming for first-generation college students and their family members throughout their academic journey. Also, the University Fellows Program, now in its sixth year, offers peer mentoring for first-year students embedded in all sections of the university's New Student Seminar. In 2022-2023, 105 students served as University Fellows. This initiative is part of a larger $2.2 million Title III grant that moved into Year 4 in 2022-2023. Evaluative findings indicate that its main components - Student Success Centers, the New Student Seminar and professional development around the SSIPP model - have been implemented successfully (#Docs for Grant & Reports). Students reported high levels of satisfaction with Student Success Center services, as well as the support provided by the New Student Seminar and University Fellows. Preliminary results suggest that project activities have contributed to students' sense of belonging, increased access to and satisfaction with student support services, and strengthened financial education. The extent to which these activities may have removed barriers to graduation and increased persistence will be further examined by the end of the five-year grant (2025).

In addition, the university has implemented in the last two years a "Sense of Belonging" survey (led by Christopher Donoghue, faculty in Sociology). The purpose of the project, using a competing demands framework (e.g. family, financial) is to gather information on student feelings of belonging in college, work and volunteer activities, resilience and other non-cognitive attitudes, academic goals, microaggressions, civic participation and intercultural views. Findings from the project are widely shared on campus and will continue to spark deep conversations and guide evidence-based interventions that help the university better address student needs (#Reports & findings from last two years). Over 10,000 responses have been garnered over the three years.

The university's prime location facilitates career preparedness, and this is evident in the rapid growth of students who continue to pursue internships and study abroad experiences after the disruptions of the pandemic (introduce #s of interns, #s of study abroad, # research, # clinical practice).

Students Participating in Experiential Learning Opportunities at Montclair								
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Internship	1523	1775	1612	1574	1546	1458	1618	1644
Study Abroad	106	96	60	N/A	35	90	100	143
Research	518	506	544	297	970	1170	1260	1445

Faculty Excellence and Growth

The university has made significant investments in the growth of full-time and tenure-track faculty and recognizing evolving needs for academic excellence in different disciplines has introduced new types of faculty lines, non-tenure track teaching faculty (NTTPs). Concurrently, the Division of Academic Affairs implemented a more specific course on *Faculty Hiring Best Practices* to support faculty involved in recruitment and search processes. The goals are to yield more robust applicant pools, successful searches, and stronger retention of exceptional faculty. These developments, coupled with an emphasis in faculty development and substantial investments in faculty research, teaching, and interdisciplinary collaboration, have resulted in high retention rates.

Investment in Faculty	Fall 2017	Fall 2024
	N	N
Full -Time		
Tenured Faculty	420	436
Tenure-Track Faculty	118	119
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	11	31
Instructional and Clinical Specialists	87	6
Teaching Faculty	0	113
Total Full-Time	**636**	**705**
Total Part-Time	**1219**	**1416**
Total Instructional Staff	**1855**	**2121**

Supporting faculty research and harnessing faculty expertise to tackle emerging challenges within higher education and our communities has become a vital part of the Montclair State University culture. Launched in 2023, the Faculty Fellowship Program for Higher Education Academic Leadership (HEAL) provides opportunities for faculty to identify and study an important problem or challenge facing higher education and propose a scalable and impactful intervention that ultimately supports the success of students, faculty, staff, or the university (#Call for Proposals; #Submission Guidelines). The program aims to develop faculty leaders and thoughtful innovation in higher education. Recent projects include Disrupting Institutionalized Neuronormativity through the Development of an Institute for Neurodivergent Innovation & Leadership (#Alicia A. Broderick, Teaching and Learning), Enhancing Student Belonging & Resilience in Higher Education: A Competing Demands Framework (#Christopher Donoghue, Sociology), and NextGen EduVerse: Innovating Higher Education with Customizable Immersive Media and Game-Based Learning Tools (#Livia Alexander, Art and Design).
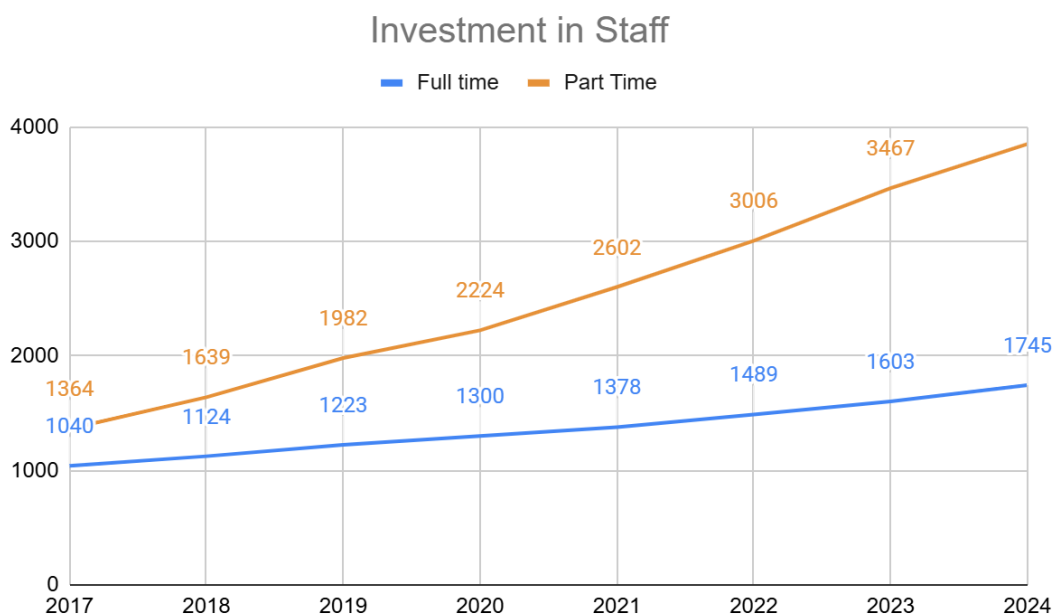
Administrative & Staff Restructurings and Growth

Aiming to right-size the supporting structure of the institution, significant reorganization and growth have also taken place in the administrative side of the people resources. In August 2021, President Jonathan Koppell joined Montclair as the 9th President of the university. Provost Junius Gonzales joined the university in March 2022 and after an incredibly transformative three-year term will be moving to a new position as Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for the California State University system in October 2025. The leadership transition has since expanded to include a restructure of the university's senior leadership positions, reporting structure, as well as the composition and role of reformulated Councils and Committees that will facilitate operational synergies, effective flow of information, and ultimately decision-making and strategic planning.

This operational transformation has integrated many new positions as evidenced by the new high-level organizational chart of Montclair (#). New positions include an Interim Chief Operating Officer and Senior VP, Assistant VP for Budget and Planning, Assistant Provost for Finance and Administration, Assistant Vice President for Procurement Services, Associate VP for Community Partnerships, Associate Provost for Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs, and an Associate Provost for Educational Equity and Opportunity Programs, EOF and

Academic Success, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Success and Academic Innovation and Vice Provost and Managing Director of Montclair Unbound - representing strategic priorities and critical commitments.

Collectively, the new leadership teams are driving an in-depth assessment of existing resources across all administrative and academic units at the university to assess gaps in human, technological, and physical infrastructure. This assessment will result in a revised budgetary strategy and a new budget model, one that scales responsively to existing and future needs, creates operational efficiencies, and builds a culture of intra and entrepreneurial activity that helps the university diversify income streams.

Growth in staff has also followed suit to maintain an appropriate support infrastructure.

Investment in Staff

— Full time   — Part Time

Year	Full time	Part Time
2017	1040	1364
2018	1124	1639
2019	1223	1982
2020	1300	2224
2021	1378	2602
2022	1489	3006
2023	1603	3467
2024	1745	

A key component of the new HR Learning and Talent Development branch is recognizing and cultivating talent among the managerial and administrative ranks of employees across the university. The PROPEL Project, launched in FY2024, provides funding, support and coaching to managers and administrators who would like to enhance their professional skills, contribute to their field, and demonstrate leadership within the University community. This program focuses on funding active participation in professional conferences, with an emphasis on coaching support to help employees maximize their conference participation for career and professional growth (#Objectives of PROPEL; #Application for a grant; #Approved applications). Recent applications that were funded include X, Y, and Z (#s successful applications).

Infrastructure and Campus Development

During this period, Montclair also invested heavily in its physical and technological infrastructure, completing several major construction projects and enhancing digital learning environments. Since 2017, the campus has witnessed the expansion/renovation of XXX academic buildings, new student housing,

research labs, performance and creative spaces. Additionally, the university has expanded sustainability initiatives (e.g. LEED certifications, carbon footprint reduction) and has invested heavily in technology upgrades, including digital infrastructure and classroom technology).

Since 2018, Montclair State University has made substantial investments in technology infrastructure to expand capacity, strengthen security, and enhance accessibility. Major network upgrades—including a modern IT Vault, expanded high-capacity fiber, and improved firewalls—increased bandwidth tenfold (from 10 Gbps to 100 Gbps) and boosted reliability and performance across campus. Additionally, the integration of fiber connectivity between campus event venues and the School of Communication has enabled high-quality, dynamic productions and live events, enriching both in-person and remote engagement. The impact of these improvements is reflected in the EDUCAUSE Fall 2024 Student Technology Survey, where Montclair students reported above-average satisfaction with Wi-Fi reliability and overall wireless experience compared to national benchmarks (#). Complementing these efforts, the University advanced its information security posture by expanding staffing, deploying state-of-the-art detection and response tools (Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) and Managed Detection and Response (MDR) solutions), implementing multi-factor authentication for nearly all applications, and launching campus-wide cybersecurity training and phishing simulations, resulting in a measurable decline in successful account compromises. A recent assessment of security controls, benchmarked against the NIST Cybersecurity Framework, identified additional areas for investment to further reduce institutional risk and enhance resilience (#). In parallel, Montclair virtualized its computing labs through a centralized Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), enabling students to access course software anytime, anywhere, while improving efficiency, extending device lifespans from 4 to 8 years, and generating significant cost savings (exceeding $300,000 over seven years). Operational benefits to VDI implementation include reduced service tickets, faster deployment of updates, and consistently high usage across campus locations—demonstrating both student demand and the effectiveness of the solution. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate a strategic commitment to a secure, high-performing, and student-centered digital environment.

Community and Civic Engagement

Since 2017, the university has deepened its partnerships with K-12, nonprofit, civic, and business sectors. The President's Community Advisory Board (CAB) continues to serve as a valuable resource as the institution builds long-term partnerships and place-based initiatives while expanding service-learning and community-based research opportunities (#CAB purpose; #CAB membership). Montclair's recognition as a Carnegie Community Engaged campus is just one indication of the institution's deep commitment to becoming a model public university (# Application). Montclair's Center for Community Engagement and the newly formed University Community Action Nexus (uCAN) build capacity for forging more long-term strategic partnerships with local communities to advance the aspirations of community partners and further enhance the research, teaching, learning, and service culture of the university.

A vivid example of this approach is the Paterson One Square Mile Project (OSM), a hyper-local, place-based, cross-sector initiative to accelerate the revitalization of a concentrated area in Paterson, New Jersey. The project aims to drive equitable outcomes in education, health, and economic opportunities for Paterson residents.

These advances have been guided by strategic directions rooted in equity, innovation, and public service, and propelled by strong leadership and sound financial stewardship. Collectively, these developments signal a university that has not only grown in size, but also matured in scope, impact, and ambition.

Ready for What's Next: Montclair's Transformational Momentum

In 2018–2020, Montclair engaged the entire campus community in shaping its next Strategic Plan, *Soar 2025*. Building on the university's longstanding commitment to a supportive, close-knit environment where students thrive, the plan introduced bold new priorities that reflected Montclair's evolving identity—such as faculty growth and research advancement (#SOAR). By 2020, the university was well positioned to align its budget, resource allocation, and assessment practices with the new plan. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted operations, requiring a swift redirection of substantial resources to maintain student progress and institutional stability. Several other external financial and political pressures on universities, a merger, and significant leadership and operational shifts have also sent Montclair in new directions. But what remains unchanged is the commitment to serve the students and provide exceptional education that drives their social mobility and personal fulfillment.

Five years later, Montclair State University has emerged stronger and more resilient, with a renewed sense of purpose and a reimagined mission that bridges its legacy with a forward-looking vision (# Mission Statement). The university is part of a select group of higher education institutions that are working to meet the emerging leadership challenges in higher education and drive innovation and effectiveness in delivering postsecondary education value to a diverse student population. Montclair has partnered with AASCU consultants to develop its next strategic framework by integrating the core principles outlined in the Post-Secondary Value Commission Action Agenda (PVCAA), which include a commitment to assessing and improving access, completion, and post-college outcomes. Engaged in this process that began in August of 2024 and continues today are a core team of 10 university administrators from varied divisions and an extended team of 40+ division/unit leaders that include members of the Executive Council and Academic Affairs Council. A key aspect of this new Strategic Framework is a deep investment in developing a strategic learning and development framework to transform Montclair into a premier learning organization with empowered leadership and enhanced organizational capacity and adaptability (#Docs for AASCU; #Slide Decks of progress; #Next-Level Multipliers: A Competency Framework).

Today, Montclair's self-study serves as a key driver in these efforts and documents institutional innovation and resilience. The university's revised mission and emerging Strategic Framework are grounded in four institutional priorities outlined in the Self-Study Design approved in May 2024 by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education:

1. Optimize Student Success
2. Drive Academic Excellence and Innovation
3. Fortify Institutional Vitality
4. Scale Up Impact and Reach

The new mission, strategic framework, and four institutional priorities serve as university-wide guideposts, helping all units and stakeholders set their own specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals through annual *Operational Goals and Action Plans (# Sample Action Plans)*. In AY2025, Montclair launched a new Institutional Effectiveness Portal (IEP), powered by Nuventive, enabling every academic and non-academic unit to develop annual plans, track their progress, and generate annual reports to support transparency, continuous improvement and collaboration.

The Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IRE) supports this process by offering training, guidance, and alignment tools to ensure unit goals reinforce the university's strategic priorities (# Docs of Cycle of Assessment for IE). Montclair's annual budget—totaling $XXX billion—is closely aligned with these institutional priorities. Through a newly implemented annual planning and reporting process, all

divisions now connect their budget requests and resource allocations to strategic outcomes, ensuring transparent and mission-driven use of resources (#Budget Docs).

Institutional Priorities and Strategic Initiatives for a Sustainable Future

Montclair State University's 2026 Self-Study is grounded in four institutional priorities that articulate the University's vision for the future. Each priority is linked to a suite of strategic initiatives designed to propel the institution forward with integrity, ambition, and purpose and is fully aligned with the new mission statement.

1. To Optimize Student Success

Montclair is committed to advancing student success with a focus on equity, belonging, and measurable outcomes. The University is refining its student success metrics while enhancing support systems that contribute to academic persistence, timely degree completion, and holistic student development. Initiatives such as the Student Success Collaborative (#), the First-Year Experience program (#), and targeted advising interventions for at-risk populations demonstrate this commitment. Additionally, expanded mental health services (#) and career readiness programs (#) reflect a comprehensive approach to student engagement and well-being.

2. To Drive Academic Excellence and Innovation
Montclair fosters academic excellence through innovation in curriculum design, pedagogy, and the development of new academic structures. This includes the development of the new SEEDS curriculum that replaced the existing general education curriculum (#SEEDS values encompass Social Justice and Equity, Educated Citizenry, Engagement, Agency and Leadership, Diversity and Intercultural Competency, and Self-Discovery and Self-Care), a reimagined Honors EDGE (#EDGE: Engage, Discover, Grow, Experience) program launched in fall 2024 that seeks to provide students with interdisciplinary and experiential learning opportunities with a special focus on creativity, and the expansion of signature high-impact practices (HIPs) including undergraduate research (#), internships (#), community-based learning (#), and global education opportunities (#). Faculty-led curriculum reform and the integration of digital learning tools ensure that academic programs remain responsive to evolving workforce and societal needs.

3. To Fortify Institutional Vitality

Institutional vitality is supported by data-informed planning, strategic resource allocation, and continuous improvement. Montclair has invested in enhancing its institutional research capacity, modernizing IT infrastructure, and aligning budget models with performance metrics. The successful integration of Bloomfield College exemplifies the University's ability to manage complex change, while maintaining its financial health and advancing mission-aligned goals. Cross-divisional collaborations now ensure shared ownership of student success and institutional sustainability.

4. To Scale Up Impact and Reach

Montclair seeks to expand its role as a regional and national leader in public higher education. This includes amplifying its research agenda, fostering public-private partnerships, augmenting the vibrant arts and cultural programming if offers, and serving as an anchor institution in its surrounding communities. The establishment of centers such as the Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America and the Center for Community Engagement underscores this commitment. The University is also growing its online and hybrid program offerings to reach new learner populations while extending its global footprint through strategic international collaborations.

The Self-Study Process and Community Engagement

Montclair State University's self-study process was designed to be inclusive, rigorous, and reflective, consistent with the expectations of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). The self-study is framed by the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, and it uses the "integrated" self-study model to analyze how institutional mission, priorities, and strategic actions align with the Standards.

The process was led by a Self-Study Leadership Team composed of senior administrators and faculty co-chairs who ensured coherence and transparency throughout the process. A Steering Committee of faculty, staff, and student leaders from across the institution provided oversight, while seven Working Groups—each aligned with one of the MSCHE Standards - engaged deeply with evidence, data, and stakeholder perspectives.

Thousands of voices contributed to the development of this report. Faculty, students, staff, alumni, trustees, and external partners participated in town halls, focus groups, surveys, and retreats. These engagements ensured that the self-study reflects the lived experiences, values, and aspirations of the Montclair community and its stakeholders. Bloomfield College of Montclair State University was also integrally represented in the process, highlighting the institution's commitment to inclusion and transparency.

This Self-Study Report invites readers to engage with the university's mission, its evidence-based assessment practices, and its forward-looking strategies for continuous improvement. Readers are encouraged to view the report not only as a compliance document, but also as a narrative of an institution charting its course through complexity with resolve, imagination, and a deep commitment to its public purpose.

Each chapter of the Self-Study opens with a table outlining the Standards, criteria, and sub-criteria, each linked to specific evidence in the inventory to support the university's compliance with MSCHE accreditation standards. The chapter narratives explore key lines of inquiry that connect Montclair's mission and strategic priorities, offering cross-referenced evidence, reflective analysis, and supporting documentation found in the second part of the evidence table. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive picture of a university that honors its past while preparing for the future. Each chapter also identifies strengths and areas for improvement to guide continued reinvention and resilience.

Middles States Requirements of Affiliation

Montclair is in compliance with all four Requirements of Affiliation:

ROA#1. Montclair State University Certificate of Incorporation, OSHE Licensure, New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education approval to grant degrees, New Jersey State Certification for specific programs.

ROA#2. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Institutional Profile Institutional Research Dashboards.

ROA#3. Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Statement of Accreditation Status, Montclair State University Research Dashboards.

ROA#4. Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Statement of Accreditation Status, Montclair State University Complex Substantive Change Supplemental Information Report 2023, Self Study Institute Follow Up Call

STANDARD I: MISSION AND GOALS

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard I and all its criteria. The Evidence Inventory presented below demonstrates that Montclair has a mission statement and a vision that clearly represents the university's purpose, its stakeholders, its scope, and impact. The emerging Strategic Framework and complementary initiatives demonstrate operational commitment to the mission.

Table X: Standard I Evidence of Compliance and Additional Evidence for the Narrative

Criterion	Supporting Evidence for Compliance
1a. **Clearly defined mission and goals that** are developed through appropriate collaborative participation by all who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional development and improvement;	New Mission Statement; Montclair's Institutional Priorities; The Road to a New Mission; Listening Sessions; Survey for Community Input; Timeline of Leadership Meetings for Mission Development; Fall 2025 Opening Remarks & Announcement of New Mission; Colleges Mission/Vision Statements.
1b. Address external as well as internal contexts and constituencies;	President Koppell Investiture Speech 9.15.2022; Carnegie Community Engagement Classification; Carnegie Leadership for Public Purpose Designation; Substantive Change and Merger with Bloomfield College; Montclair's Institutional Priorities.
1c. Are approved and supported by the governing body;	BOT Bylaws; BOT Approval of New Mission; Montclair Webpage with New Mission;
1d. Guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes;	Montclair's Path to the 2025 Strategic Plan; Montclair's Strategic Plan: SOAR 2025; Path to the Strategic Plan; Emerging Strategic Framework; People First: Montclair's Leadership Multipliers; Consultants' Documents; Strategic Framework Teams; Strategic Framework Fall 2025 Opening Day Town Hall Remarks; Strategic Framework Themes; Institutional Priorities Frame the Budget Cycle & Resource Allocation; Institutional Effectiveness: Annual Assessment Cycle Planning documents; Nuventive Operational Goals and Actions Plans – Academic & Non-academic Units; Combined F&A FY25 Annual Business Plan; Nuventive Strategic Framework Tracker; Budget Call FY2026 documents.
1e. Include support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity, at levels and of the type appropriate to the institution;	OSP Proposals and Awards FY2022-2025; NSF HERD Data FY2022-2025; Faculty FSP Proposals; Faculty Data on Research; Annual Student Research Symposium Data;

1f. Are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders.	University Communications Plan for Mission, Goals, and Strategic Framework; Featured Story Announcing New Montclair Mission.
2. Institutional goals that are realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with mission.	Montclair's Institutional Priorities: Roadmap for a Sustainable Future; Strategic Enrollment Plan; Paterson One Square Mile Initiative Reports; Bonner Foundation 2-Year Study: Effects of Community Engagement on Student Success; AmeriCorps Program reports;
3a. **Goals that focus on student learning outcomes and student achievement that** include retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates;	Montclair IPEDS – AIU Retention rates; Montclair IPEDS – AIU Graduation rate; Montclair IPEDS – AIU Transfer Rates; Degrees Awarded AY2020-2025 by degree level; College Scorecard – Earning Data; Career Services – Post Graduation Data Policies; 12Twenty Career Services Report – Class of 2023 Post-Graduation Outcomes; 12Twenty Report – 3-6 Months Post-Graduation Outcomes;
3b. consider diversity, equity, and inclusion principles;	US News Rankings - Data on Top Performers and Social Mobility;
3c. are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services; and	Student Engagement Data 2019-2024; UWill; Student Belonging:
3d. prioritize institutional improvement.	Office of Student Belonging; NSSE and FSSE Reports;
4. Periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable.	
Additional Supporting Evidence for the Narrative	
X, Y, Z,	

An Evolving Mission and Strategic Framework for the University

(This section maps to criterion 1 and addresses Montclair's Revised Mission Statement and Strategic Framework processes in progress)

Higher education is undergoing intense disruption, yet Montclair State University has navigated these challenges with agility and purpose. From the global pandemic and political and financial pressures to the merger with Bloomfield College and internal leadership transitions, Montclair treated disruption as an opportunity to reaffirm its core mission: serving students and advancing their success while contributing to the workforce development needs of New Jersey. Grounded and forward-looking, the university has emerged stronger, guided by a new mission that honors its legacy while charting a bold, sustainable path for the future.

Under the leadership of President Jonathan Koppell (appointed in 2021) and Provost Junius Gonzales (appointed in 2022), Montclair initiated a comprehensive review of its mission and the "SOAR 2025" Strategic Plan, which had been disrupted by pandemic-related pivots. Concurrently, Bloomfield College revised its mission following its 2023 merger with Montclair (see evidence inventory: mission statements, SOAR 2025). Montclair's mission statement revisions began in Spring 2023, following a nearly complete turnover in the University's executive leadership team.

Changes in leadership have also been accompanied by major operational restructurings that focus on enhancing academic excellence, expanding student services, and creating operational efficiencies. In the last 5 years the University has successfully launched three new Colleges (the College for Education and Engaged Learning (CEEL), the College for Community Health (CCHL), and the College of Communication and Media (CCOM) as well as the new School of Computing and more recently the Interdisciplinary School for Social Transformation while also exploring a restructure in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Red Hawk Central, a one-stop shop for students to address financial aid, student accounts, and registrar questions; the Office of Student Belonging (OSB) that provides targeted programming and support services to strengthen student success and retention; the new Division of Enrollment Management, the Office of Inclusive Excellence (IE²), and the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships as well as the Montclair State University Community Action Nexus (uCAN). Collectively, the new leadership and new initiatives infused energy and vision for reimagining Montclair State University, and commitment to continuous self-assessment to ensure the University meets the needs of both its internal and external constituents.

Mission Statement Revision Process and Timeline

The current draft of Montclair's new mission articulates its role as a public-serving institution committed to rigorous, affordable, and accessible education; civic engagement; research; and deep community partnerships (evidence inventory: Revised Mission Statement). The draft Mission Statement has been in development as of Spring 2023 through a collaborative and inclusive process involving executive leadership, faculty, staff, students, and trustees. The University President and the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing and his team have broadly engaged university stakeholders in the review, provision of feedback, and subsequent revision of successive drafts (evidence inventory: Timeline of Mission Statement Revision). Stakeholder groups include the University's Executive Council, whose membership includes Senior Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents, the University Leadership Council, which includes the Executive Council, the President's Cabinet, the Provost's Cabinet, and Deans of the Academic Colleges and Schools, and cross-sectional group of stakeholders drawn from faculty, students, staff, representatives from shared governance bodies, and managers from all divisions (i.e., Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Human Resources, University Facilities, etc.). The Board of Trustees, in its dual role as governing body and public representative, has actively contributed to shaping the university's direction as well (see Standard VII and evidence inventory: Interview with past and current Chairs of the Board of Trustees). Surveys were also distributed to invite written feedback (evidence inventory: October 2024 Mission and Commitments Survey Feedback and Results presentation).

The new mission statement is as follows (4.14.25):

MISSION

Montclair State University is a public-serving institution, advancing the common good…

by broadening access to rigorous education and exceptional learning opportunities for a diverse population, rich in talent, dedication and ambition,

by challenging and supporting students and employees in an inclusive and respectful environment where learners can grow and flourish as collaborative, compassionate citizen-leaders,

by advancing research to deepen understanding of our shared challenges and cultivating human creativity to develop innovative solutions, and

by forming partnerships to enhance prosperity, democracy and well-being in the communities we serve.

The university has concurrently articulated certain commitments that declare our ongoing promise and aspirational goals:

Provide Access and Excellence: We teach students how to learn by engaging them in the classroom and beyond, through research and hands-on experiences, extracurriculars and public service. We operate efficiently to keep tuition affordable, and we deliver education flexibly to help students balance family, work, and school.

Offer Expertise with Humility: We work as true partners with the communities we serve, leveraging the University's knowledge and resources to help them meet their goals while valuing their contributions and learning alongside them as peers.

Embrace Discourse and Fairness: We treat everyone fairly and respectfully and honor the rights of all humans. We value and encourage respectful discourse, recognizing that the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of new knowledge sustains discovery and is fundamental to democracy.

Innovate with Integrity: We respond flexibly and nimbly to changing circumstances, foster creativity, take intelligent risks and actively seek new approaches while holding each other accountable and using wisely the resources entrusted to us.

Embrace Local and Universal Aspirations: We are a national university that is proud to be of, by and for New Jersey. We serve our state's dynamic, varied communities while also fulfilling our obligations to serve our country, our planet, and the enduring truths that bind humanity as one.

Within this broader framework, Montclair's Colleges are encouraged to articulate their own mission and vision that honors their unique vision, educational goals, and success metrics (see College Mission Statements).

Strategic Framework Development

The previous strategic plan "SOAR 2025" was a static document with predictable lists of targets and excessive key performances indicators, but little discussion of how to achieve these targets, and no opportunity to address changing environments and emerging opportunities and challenges within the local and national contexts. The plan consisted of three pillars, enacted through an entrepreneurial strategy that aimed to leverage innovation and efficiency to meet the higher education needs of an evolving world:

> Pillar One: Fostering Student Transformation, centered around the student academic and co-curricular experience

> Pillar Two: Growing Through Diversity and Access, focused on inclusivity in enrollment and employment

> Pillar Three: Discovery and Application of Knowledge, striving to fulfill and expand the campus's R2 Carnegie research classification

This strategic plan has come full circle with some strong evidence of success. To guide planning and resource allocation more effectively, the university first undertook the development of a new "Strategic Framework," which is a new approach for Montclair. This learning and development approach invests first in Montclair people, aiming to provide them with the capabilities that can lift Montclair to the next level. Concurrently, Montclair is now engaging in identifying Critical Themes that are intricately tied to its new mission, commitments, and institutional priorities. A new Strategic Plan will emerge, one that is more dynamic and organic, clarifies institutional priorities, ensures financial sustainability, invests in talent, and reinforces Montclair's value to students and society. This multi-phase process to generate the new Strategic Plan began in 2024 when Montclair was one of five AASCU institutions selected by the Gates Foundation to receive support to develop a new strategic plan. The anchor for these efforts is participation in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Postsecondary Value Commission Action Agenda (PVCAA) initiative. The values of the PVCAA model focus on promoting equitable access to higher education, maintaining affordability, and promoting student success (evidence inventory: one of the PVCAA documents explaining what it is, how Montclair is implementing).

Two senior consultants from AASCU, Drs. John Jasinski and Tim Mottet, both former University presidents, began working with Montclair's Leadership Council in Summer 2024, leading a series of sessions and charrettes concerning Montclair's institutional priorities, our operational capabilities, employee competencies, and institutional capacity. The Strategic Framework under development is envisioned as a roadmap that will align Montclair's day-to-day operations with our new Mission Statement and institutional priorities while retaining flexibility to adapt quickly to disruptions.

This approach to a new strategic framework places great value on developing a deep bench of empowered and visionary leaders at the university who can propel operations to a new level to help the institution achieve its four priorities. A "core team" of 10 is leading the charge in areas of leadership and strategy, student and market focus, people and talent management, operations, and technology. Multiple teams have developed briefs in these areas that have subsequently guided the team's task to develop Montclair's

"Leadership Multiplier Competency Model" that harnesses talent to take advantage of both accelerators and disruptors in higher education.
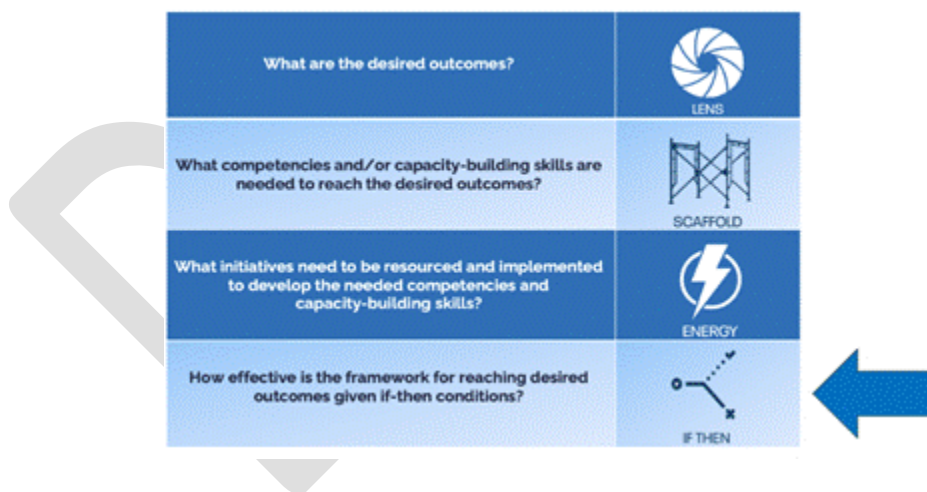
The 4 Competencies

1. Operational Insight
2. Emotional Agility
3. Communication and Relationship-Building
4. Future Foresight

4 Institutional Priorities

To Optimize Student Success: Explore opportunities to improve student success metrics and student engagement/belonging with equity.

To Drive Academic Excellence and Innovation: Foster academic innovation and excellence with the development of new academic structures, programs, and hallmark high-impact practices (HIPs).

To Fortify Institutional Vitality: Optimize data-driven decision-making for operational effectiveness, optimal integration with Bloomfield College of Montclair State University, and overall financial health.

To Scale Up Impact and Reach: Enhance the footprint of the University as a hub for excellence in teaching, research, and community service.

A "people team" of university members will move this model forward through specific learning opportunities (70% experiential learning, 20% social learning, and 10% formal learning) for leadership development across the four identified competencies. A larger team of 41 members, the Strategic Planning Framework Working Group, has been engaged from the beginning of the process and provides feedback and validates this ongoing work using the assessment process presented below:

What are the desired outcomes?	LENS
What competencies and/or capacity-building skills are needed to reach the desired outcomes?	SCAFFOLD
What initiatives need to be resourced and implemented to develop the needed competencies and capacity-building skills?	ENERGY
How effective is the framework for reaching desired outcomes given if-then conditions?	IF THEN

In the upcoming academic year, President Koppell will present the approved "strategic framework" to the broader university, and a dedicated "communications team" will launch a comprehensive campaign to share information and educate the campus community (include communication plan, collateral). The same core team of ten, and many other teams across the campus, have now been tasked with developing critical themes and strategic goals that operationalize the university's four strategic priorities with clarity and focus. The university aims for these efforts to culminate into an active document comprising themes, SMART goals, and activities that make it possible to measure progress and success in a sustainable manner long-term. Through all these efforts, Montclair continues to embrace its evolving identity—as a student-centered, research-driven, and community-anchored public doctoral university.

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment

In summer 2024, Montclair launched a new, integrated process to foster a data-driven culture that continuously assesses institutional effectiveness, learns from outcomes, and supports real-time decision-making. A unified template now aligns Unit Operational Goals and Action Plans with the University's four institutional priorities, the seven Middle States Standards, and the budgeting process. Most academic and administrative units have completed their first comprehensive plans for AY2026 (data from Nuventive dashboard). In collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE), new procedural documents outline the assessment cycle and direct leadership, faculty, and staff to relevant resources. All planning and assessment activities are conducted within the Nuventive platform, now supported by targeted training for managers and contributors (see Plans from X, Y, Z). Montclair has developed some comprehensive dashboards that will allow the mapping and tracking of success across annual themes and goals (Nuventive dashboard reports).

Integrated into the new process are the Master Academic Program Plans (MAPPs), a key initiative of Provost Gonzales, that present a three-year horizon to ensure dynamic processes for ongoing review, refinement, and growth of Montclair's undergraduate, graduate, online, and certificate programs. Presented by academic deans at an annual summer retreat, MAPPs help align academic planning with interdisciplinary collaboration and strategic resource allocation (MAPPs from 2025 summer retreat).

Connecting the New Mission to Institutional Priorities and Goals

(This section maps to criteria 1 and 2)

Montclair's revised mission directly informs its four institutional priorities:
- Optimize Student Success
- Drive Academic Excellence and Innovation
- Fortify Institutional Vitality
- Scale Up Impact and Reach

Below are some highlighted initiatives that demonstrate how each priority is actively advanced and resourced appropriately to have the desired outcomes and impact:

Optimizing Student Success

1. In 2024, Montclair unified student support services under a new Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Academic Innovation, and Student Success. This integration streamlines key offices including educational opportunity and success programs, academic advising for exploratory majors, academic coaching, experiential education, and a new Center for Teaching and Academic Innovation.

2. Peer-based support and co-curricular programs reinforce student belonging and success:
   a. Two EOF programs (Montclair and Bloomfield campuses).
   b. A suite of TRIO grants at Bloomfield provides academic coaching, leadership development, financial literacy, career readiness, and undergraduate research mentorship (evidence inventory: list of student support services grants).

3. A suite of high-impact practices include:
    a. A required first-year seminar for all new students (Standard Syllabus).
    b. Learning communities for major exploration and cohort building.
    c. Peer mentoring initiatives (e.g., Mentor Collective in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Peer Connect in the Feliciano School of Business, RISE Mentoring Program and University Fellows from the Provost's Office)
    d. Undergraduate research (e.g., NSF-funded Garden State Alliance STEM program, Summer Research Program in the College of Science and Mathematics, Student-Led Research and Creative Activities Scholarships (evidence inventory: Call for Student-Led RSCA proposals), Student Research Symposium (evidence inventory: 2025 SRS program), course-based and independent-study research experiences, research capstone seminars)
    e. Internships and co-ops at both undergraduate and graduate levels.
    f. Academic coaching that ties to strong and positive student outcomes.

Driving Academic Excellence and Innovation

Montclair offers nearly 300 degree and certificate programs across 11 academic colleges and schools, including disciplines in the arts, STEM, humanities, business, health, and education (evidence inventory: University Catalog, Programs A-Z). Many are accredited by national professional bodies (evidence inventory: list of Montclair's accredited program and accreditors).

Curricular innovations include:
1. The SEEDS General Education Curriculum (2024), emphasizing inclusion, belonging, and civic engagement.
2. The new Honors EDGE Program (2023) that focuses on creativity, leadership development, community involvement, and interdisciplinarity that recently received a $5M gift from philanthropist John Martinson to expand experiential learning opportunities for students.
3. A growing portfolio of online programs, including recent launches in psychology, accounting, business, social work, and strategic communication. More than 30 fully online offerings now reach students nationwide (evidence inventory: list of fully online programs).
4. New program development is also underway at Bloomfield College of Montclair following a comprehensive academic review (integration report).
5. Innovation is further exemplified by the University's partnership with Dreamscape Learn to build a cutting-edge VR lab, supported by grants from the NJ Economic Development Agency and Lilly Endowment. This immersive learning environment will pilot VR curriculum integrated into SEEDS and prepare the next generation of content creators that will support New Jersey's growing film, television and media industry (include plans).
6. Academic restructures abound and serve the students and the state: the university combined the former Departments of Computer Science and Applied Math and Statistics to form the new School of Computing in 2023. The school offers degrees in Computer Science, Cybersecurity, Data Science, and Information Technology. The school has been a major driving force in the State of New Jersey for training and upskilling K-12 educators to prepare them to teach computer science (evidence: *Ask Kathy Herbert and Sumi Hagiwara for suggestions*).

Fortifying Institutional Vitality

Montclair continues to invest in data-driven decision-making, organizational restructuring, and inclusive excellence:

- The newly created Office of Inclusive Excellence led a campus-wide climate survey to inform equity and belonging initiatives.
- The University restructured its community engagement infrastructure under the President's Office, creating the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships (OCEP) which coordinates the institution-wide portfolio of community engaged learning, and oversees public service programs such as Americorps. OCEP leads initiatives such as the One Square Mile Project and the Hinchliffe Stadium Museum in Paterson, and the Montclair Community Farm, among others.

Montclair also supports its research ecosystem by:

- Recruiting world-class faculty and investing in research infrastructure (e.g., start-up funds, sabbaticals, internal grants)
- Reporting $43.8M in R&D expenditures in FY24, further solidifying its R2 Carnegie designation (evidence inventory: Montclair's NSF HERD responses, 2019 to 2024).
- Constructing a new 127,000 sq. ft. interdisciplinary STEM building (expected Fall 2028), funded by a $60M grant from NJ's Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, that will provide new teaching and research space and the expansion of STEM and Nursing programs.

Scaling Up Impact and Reach

Montclair leverages its academic and research strengths, as well as its reputation as an arts leader in the state, to expand regional and national influence:

- Launching new online programs with strong early enrollment (e.g., 500+ applications in four weeks).
- Broadening access and community engagement through AmeriCorps, UCAN, and sustained partnerships (CART 2024/2025 Community Impact Report).
- Creating an inviting point of cultural access for students and communities by presenting 500+ public events annually in the visual and performing arts, that include professional series such as PEAK Performances, the University Galleries exhibitions, and the Cali Immersive Residency program, as well as student performances that range from full-scale musical theatre productions (e.g. Oklahoma!), intimate plays (e.g. The Birds), dance performances, the Finley Gallery arts exhibitions, the Kaleidoscope Concert, and performances by the University Wind Symphony, the Symphony Orchestra, the Jazz Ensemble, the Vocal Accord, and the Opera Workshop (CART Performances 2024-2025).
- Deepening student–alumni connections through affinity networks and mentorship.

These efforts have earned Montclair national recognition, including:

- Carnegie Community-Engaged Campus (2015).
- Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose (2024).

The University aims to also pursue the Seal of *Excelencia*, a national certification for institutions that strive to go beyond enrollment to intentionally serve Latino students. *Excelencia* in Education's

mission is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education. The University is committed to significantly increasing the number of Latino students obtaining college degrees by 2030 in partnership with institutions.

Strategic Initiatives and Resource Allocation

(This section maps to criterion 2)

Montclair demonstrates how it activates its institutional priorities—Optimizing Student Success, Driving Academic Excellence and Innovation, Fortifying Institutional Vitality, and Scaling Up Impact and Reach—through strategic initiatives that align resources with mission and impact. One comprehensive example is the Paterson One Square Mile (OSM) Initiative.

The Paterson OSM initiative exemplifies Montclair's mission to advance the common good through equitable access to education and inclusive, place-based engagement. It brings to life the University's values and institutional priorities through a collaborative effort to revitalize historically underserved neighborhoods in Paterson, New Jersey. OSM embodies Montclair's identity as a public-serving anchor institution and illustrates the transformative potential of scaling up impact and reach through deep local partnerships.

Description

OSM is a hyper-local, cross-sector initiative focused on accelerating revitalization within a defined area of Paterson. Guided by a community-led, collective impact model, OSM tackles interconnected socioeconomic challenges through coordinated, multidimensional interventions (MSU Website, 2025). The initiative strategically connects university and community assets to generate lasting, systemic change—fortifying institutional vitality by integrating Montclair's operational, academic, and civic strengths.

Aligned with all four institutional priorities, OSM:
- Optimizes student success by embedding experiential learning and civic engagement opportunities that foster belonging, leadership, and real-world application.
- Drives academic excellence and innovation by positioning community-based scholarship and participatory research as hallmarks of academic rigor and relevance.
- Fortifies institutional vitality through strong community-university partnerships, effective use of grant funding, and alignment of internal units to support collective goals.
- Scales up impact and reach by offering a replicable model of university-community engagement grounded in equity and sustainability (Final Report – Geraldine R. Dodge Report, 2025).

Mobilizing Faculty, Staff, and Students

OSM mobilizes Montclair's academic and operational capacity to support a sustainable, community-engaged ecosystem:
- Faculty lead programs in ESL, harm reduction, and community storytelling, merging disciplinary expertise with community relevance (Paterson One Square Mile Update, 2024).
- Staff from the Office for Community Engagement and Partnerships and its University Community Action Nexus (uCAN) provide backbone coordination, manage grants, and sustain local partnerships—strengthening institutional operations and reinforcing institutional vitality.

- Students, through Bonner Leaders, Upward Bound, and Early College programs, serve as tutors, mentors, and collaborators, building leadership skills while expanding community learning opportunities (Paterson Promise, 2024)—thus optimizing student success in ways that go beyond the classroom.

This reciprocal engagement affirms Montclair's belief that teaching and learning are most impactful when integrated with the needs and assets of the communities it serves.

A Platform for Teaching and Learning

As a platform for academic innovation, OSM functions as a living lab for driving academic excellence and innovation:

- In Communication and Writing, Early College courses like *Argumentative & Analytic Writing* give Paterson high school students access to rigorous, college-level coursework centered on community-relevant issues (Final Report – Geraldine R. Dodge Report, 2025).
- In Public Health and Social Work, faculty co-design harm reduction workshops with local partners (Paterson One Square Mile Update, 2024).
- In the College of the Arts, faculty facilitate career exploration, storytelling and civic expression through summer bridge programs (Final Report – Geraldine R. Dodge Report, 2025).

These efforts advance academic quality while scaling access and building college-bound identities among local youth. Montclair faculty and administrators have also shared strategies and assessment findings from OSM at national forums such as the 2024 and 2025 Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) Conferences, helping extend Montclair's reach and impact (conference slide decks).

Building Community and Economic Development

While grounded in educational goals, OSM also drives economic development and capacity-building:

- A strategic housing plan, shaped by community input, addresses affordability, quality, and wealth-building (Housing Strategic Action Plan for Paterson One Square Mile, 2024).
- The emerging Paterson Anchor Collaborative brings together institutions in higher education, healthcare, public education, and the arts to coordinate hiring, procurement, and shared investment—further fortifying institutional vitality and community infrastructure (Anchor Collaborative One-Pager, 2024).
- Programs in ESL, early college, and career development expand opportunity and optimize student and community success by providing clear pathways to mobility and self-determination (Final Report – Geraldine R. Dodge Report, 2025).

Now in its second year, OSM has:

- Served over 2,200 residents,
- Regranted $300,000+ to grassroots organizations,
- Laid the groundwork for sustainable, long-term impact (Final Reports – Geraldine R. Dodge Report, 2024 and 2025).

A Replicable, Mission-Driven Model

Paterson One Square Mile exemplifies how a public university committed to service, equity, and innovation can activate its full institutional capacity for the public good. Through coordinated investments in curriculum, community engagement, research, and operations, Montclair optimizes student success, drives academic innovation, fortifies institutional vitality, and scales impact and reach—advancing a model of anchor institution engagement that is principled, effective, and ready to be shared.

Focusing on Ongoing Assessment and Institutional Improvement

(This section maps to criterion 3)

Student Success Outcomes

Key metrics for assessing the value of a Montclair education and achievement of our goals for student success and student learning outcomes include:

- Demand for a Montclair education: Montclair has experienced substantial growth in applications over the past 5 years at both the undergraduate (from 14,905 to 26,959) and graduate levels (3465 to 4621) (evidence inventory: Admissions summary data).
- Montclair's year-to-year retention rates: Our retention rates have remained high and stable even though Montclair's new student cohort has grown substantially from 2977 students in 2016 to over 4000 students currently (evidence inventory: Persistence rates from Tableau).
- Montclair's 4-year and 6-year graduation rates (evidence inventory: graduation rates): 56% of Montclair students were Pell-eligible as of Fall 2023. Our students strongly outperform the graduation rates projected for the communities from which our students are drawn. Montclair is regularly a top 15 performer on the *US News and World Report's* Social and Economic Mobility ranking, which assesses a university's success at advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students who receive Pell Grants.
- Montclair's history of degree conferrals: (evidence inventory: IPEDS) IN PROGRESS
- Employment outcomes for Montclair graduates: Montclair recently began implementing the First Destination Survey, which tracks students who have secured employment immediately upon graduation, those who are continuing to graduate and professional programs, and those who report that they are "still looking" for employment (*evidence inventory: Is one of the other standards including survey results?*)

Institutional Effectiveness

Montclair State University demonstrates a strong and ongoing commitment to institutional effectiveness through a culture of continuous assessment and data-informed improvement. The following recent and ongoing initiatives illustrate how the university systematically evaluates and enhances its programs, structures, and services to advance its mission:

Assessing Access and Equity in Admissions

To expand access and reduce barriers to college, Montclair joined the Common App platform in 2020. This strategic move was informed by a review of equity in the application process. The platform offers enhanced support for prospective students and families, including streamlined fee waiver processes,

financial aid and scholarship tools, virtual mentorship, and bilingual resources. Ongoing analysis of application and enrollment data helps assess the impact of this change on access for underrepresented populations.

Assessing Operational Processes for Efficiency and Impact

In 2020, the University established the Division of Enrollment Management to unify undergraduate and graduate admissions functions. This change followed a comprehensive assessment of process redundancies and resource allocation, leading to streamlined operations and enhanced service delivery.

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Montclair conducts annual assessments of all academic degree programs to ensure that learning outcomes remain relevant, clearly defined, and effectively achieved. Findings from these assessments are used to make curricular and pedagogical adjustments, ensuring students are well-prepared for careers and advanced study (see Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment).

Assessing Academic Unit Quality and Impact

 Each academic department participates in a comprehensive Six-Year External Review Committee (SERC) process. These reviews, conducted by 2–4 external experts, assess departmental performance in teaching, research, and service in relation to the University's mission. SERC reports identify strengths, areas for improvement, and resource needs, offering actionable recommendations to enhance program quality and alignment with institutional priorities (see Standard V; Evidence Inventory: SERC Overview).

Assessing Organizational Purpose and Structure

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) is currently engaged in a strategic assessment of its internal organization to improve academic collaboration, interdisciplinary activity, and student engagement. A university-appointed committee is evaluating models for restructuring the College's 15 departments into a smaller number of thematically aligned units, guided by data on student success, faculty collaboration, and strategic opportunity.

Assessing Mission Alignment and Strategic Refocusing

The Graduate School (TGS) is undergoing a mission-centered restructuring into a Graduate Center, with a renewed focus on providing robust student support services and co-curricular programming. This shift is informed by internal evaluations of graduate student needs, utilization data, and national best practices in graduate education.

Assessing Institutional Infrastructure and Administrative Effectiveness

Montclair has partnered with external consultants the past three years to conduct in-depth evaluations of core administrative areas, including research administration, procurement, Human Resources, and enrollment business processes. These assessments generated data-driven recommendations to align administrative practices with institutional goals and to ensure that infrastructure effectively supports mission delivery and operational excellence. (Summary reports with recommendations can be included in the evidence inventory.)

Communicating and Assessing Mission and Goals

(This section maps to criterion 4)

Montclair's revised Mission Statement and ongoing Strategic Framework process have been widely communicated through the President's biannual staff meetings, student/faculty/staff focus groups, and the Spring 2025 Town Hall, which drew ~1,000 attendees. The process is strongly supported by university leadership and the Board of Trustees (BOT). Both the current and former BOT chairs confirmed the revised Mission aligns with the Board's understanding of Montclair's identity (evidence: interviews with President Koppell and BOT chairs).

The new Mission Statement:

- Reaffirms Montclair's legacy of providing access to affordable, high-quality education
- Highlights the University's public service role
- Elevates research as a central component of the institutional mission

Assessing Mission Alignment and Impact

The relevance and effectiveness of the Mission are assessed continuously through activities such as the approval of new academic programs, hiring priorities, and major budget decisions, including the launch of new Colleges and Schools. Leadership promotes a comprehensive approach to assessment—one that includes not only outputs, but also meaningful outcomes and long-term impact.

Key indicators used to assess success in fulfilling the Mission include:

- Student outcomes: graduation rates, post-graduation success
- Personal stories: individual student achievements that inspire others
- Affordability: total student cost to degree completion
- Talent acquisition: strength of applicant pools for faculty and leadership roles
- Community impact: outcomes of partnerships with external organizations and communities
- Workforce development:
  - % of graduates entering New Jersey's workforce
  - Number and caliber of public-serving professionals produced (e.g., teachers, nurses)
  - Alignment of degree production with labor market needs
- Public engagement: extent to which local and state leaders collaborate with Montclair
- Public perception: taxpayers' sense of return on investment in the University

Summary Statement

Montclair has completed a comprehensive revision of its Mission Statement to better reflect the university's current purpose and values within today's higher education landscape. This long-overdue update—the first in over 20 years—was shaped by an inclusive, iterative process engaging stakeholders across the institution. The resulting Mission Statement is realistic, student-centered, and aligned with Montclair's enduring commitments.

While the Mission Statement had not been revisited in two decades, the University has consistently set institutional goals through five-year strategic plans, most recently SOAR 2025. As SOAR concludes,

Montclair is adopting a new "strategic framework" through a partnership with AASCU. This framework goes beyond metrics and checklists to assess organizational capacity, employee competencies, and institutional alignment—providing a roadmap for achieving long-term goals.

Key Findings

1. Mission & Planning: Montclair has successfully revised its 23-year-old Mission Statement and is now developing a strategic framework to succeed SOAR 2025.
2. Organizational Structure: Informed by continuous self-assessment, Montclair has undertaken major structural reorganizations to better deliver on its mission.
3. Access & Reach: The expansion of online degree offerings through "Montclair Unbound" enhances access and broadens the university's impact.
4. Student Success: Retention and persistence metrics are strong. However, employment outcomes—as reported in the First Destination Survey—present opportunities for improvement.
5. Research Growth: Research and development expenditures are steadily increasing. Montclair anticipates reaching the $50M threshold for Carnegie R1 designation within 2–4 years, barring major funding disruptions.
6. Community Engagement: [Insert key strengths and areas for improvement].
7. Resource Allocation: While budget initiatives are nominally aligned with institutional priorities, the connection between these priorities and how supplemental or new initiative requests are resourced or how their outcomes are assessed remains unclear. The new annual reporting process for institutional effectiveness should provide the space for better tracking.

Next Steps

1. Secure Board of Trustees approval for the revised Mission Statement (presented at the April 2025 Presidential Town Hall).
2. Establish a formal timeline and process for regular assessment of the Mission and institutional goals.
3. Develop robust data collection processes to evaluate mission fulfillment in terms of products, outcomes, and long-term impact—moving beyond a purely quantitative model.
4. Continue development of the strategic framework during Summer 2025, with a projected completion date of August 2026???

STANDARD II: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

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

Statement of Compliance

Montclair meets the terms of Standard II and all nine of its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard II can be reviewed in the table below:

Table X: Standard II Evidence Inventory of Compliance and Additional Evidence for Narrative

Criterion	Supporting Evidence
1. A commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights.	Montclair Faculty Handbook; Academic Freedom Policy; Bias and Free Speech; Expressive Activity Policy; Intellectual property Rights - Student Waiver; Faculty – NJ State Contract Article V: Academic Freedom; Patent Policy & Advisory Committee; Policy on Patents and Inventions; Invention and Patent Agreement; Vendor Contracts Policies.
2. A climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a variety of backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.	Maintaining an Equitable Workplace and Learning Environment; FSSE-NSSE Combined Report 2024 (p. 5); 2022 Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Survey; Disseminating Soaring Together Survey Results; ASSCU Postsecondary Values Commission Agenda; Respecting & Caring for Each other During Challenging Times 11.4.23; Message from the President 11.17.23
3. A grievance policy that is documented and disseminated to address complaints or grievances raised by students, faculty or staff. The institution's policies are fair and impartial and assure that grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably.	Title IX Information; Title IX Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault Policy & Procedures; Reporting Discrimination or Harassment; Title IX and Gender-based Misconduct; Code of Conduct; Grade Grievances; Non-grade Grievances; Grievance Policies and Procedures DRC;

	Grievance Procedure DRC Form; Writing the Appeal; Reporting Discrimination or Harassment; Consensual Romantic, Amorous or Sexual Relationship Policy; Collective Negotiated Agreements and Grievance Policies;
4. The avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents.	University Code of Ethics on Outside Employment; Employee Code of Ethics
5. Fair and impartial employment practices, including all phases of hiring, evaluation, promotion, and separation, with appropriate attention to diversity.	Employee Policies; Talent Acquisition; Suggested Advertising Venues; Office of Inclusive Excellence – Search Committee Education; Search Committees; Evaluating Search Committee Composition; Reappointment and Performance; AFT Professional Staff Evaluation and Reappointment Calendar; Managerial Evaluation and Reappointment – Competencies; 360 Evaluations; Learning & Talent Development; The PROPEL Project;
6. Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as internal communications;	Admissions Travel Piece 8.15.24; Admissions Transfer Guide 7.26.24; RedHawkWings 2024-2025; University Communication and Marketing - In the Know; Misrepresentation; NJ Student and Parent Consumer Information;
7a. **As appropriate to its mission, has policies, services or programs in place to** promote diversity, equity and inclusion;	NJ Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Environments in the Workplace The University strives to eliminate harassment through education and encourage reporting How to Report Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Environment in the Workplace

7b. promote affordability and accessibility;	The university works hard to ensure that our tuition remains affordable, keeping education within the reach of all motivated students regardless of their financial situation: Cost & Financial Aid Tuition & Fees Undergraduate Student Costs The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides assistance to students with physical, sensory, learning, psychological, neurological, and chronic medical disabilities: Disability Resource Center
7c. enable students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt.	NJ Student and Parent Consumer Information; College Navigator;
8a. **Compliance with all applicable government laws and regulations and Commission policies and procedures, including but not limited to** required information for students and the public;	All official University policies - https://www.montclair.edu/policies/ (includes Academic, Employee, Finance, Student, Technology and University policies); HIPAA and Healthcare Compliance;
8b. representation of accreditation status;	https://www.montclair.edu/provost/division-of-academic-affairs/accreditations-and-memberships-https://www.montclair.edu/middle-states/ - https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/colleges/schools_sector.shtml
8c. full disclosure of information on institution- wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates;	-Institutional Performance Data – Office Of The Provost - Montclair State University (includes Data Dashboard, Performance Data, IPEDS, etc.)

8d. institution's compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation;	Documentation including the URL where the institution publicly discloses its scope of accreditation (credential levels, locations) and substantive changes (Public Disclosures Policy and Procedures) o Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) (PDF format) o Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) (to verify scope of accreditation with Title IV certification) if applicable (provost's Office, IRE)
8e. verification of student identity in distance and correspondence education;	Policies and/or procedures used to ensure student identity verification in distance or correspondence education courses (Verification of Compliance - Verification of Student Identity and federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.17(g) (Contact IT)
8f. substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues which must be disclosed in a timely and accurate fashion.	In addition, there are many compliance policies posted for review, including links to the institution's CLERY reporting, Research Compliance, HIPPA requirements, etc. (https://www.montclair.edu/about-montclair/compliance/). Human Resources also posts their policies - (https://www.montclair.edu/policies/category/employee/)
9. Periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as evidence in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.	
Additional Supporting Evidence for the Narrative	

Introduction

Montclair State University is deeply committed to upholding the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all aspects of its academic, administrative, and community endeavors. As a public-serving institution, Montclair promotes a culture grounded in fairness, accountability, inclusion, and transparency—values that guide decision-making and institutional behavior at every level.

Ethics and integrity are reflected in Montclair's mission to advance the common good through expanded access to high-quality education, inclusive excellence, and public impact. These values are embedded in our strategic framework, daily operations, and community engagement practices. The University cultivates an environment where academic freedom is protected, diversity and belonging are championed, and professionalism and ethical behavior are expected of all members of the community. This culture is reinforced by well-defined policies, responsive procedures, and shared governance structures that support integrity in teaching, learning, research, and institutional leadership. University Counsel, the Internal Audit Department, and the Office of Inclusive Excellence, are just a few units that assist the university in carrying out its academic mission with integrity and in accordance with all legal, regulatory, and ethical responsibilities.

Montclair ensures compliance with federal, state, and accreditation standards, while maintaining robust internal systems for self-regulation, ethical accountability, and continuous improvement. The University's policies regarding academic and professional integrity, equity and accessibility, transparent communication, and the responsible conduct of research are continually assessed and updated to reflect evolving standards and community needs.

The remaining chapter examines four key lines of inquiry: Montclair's commitment to academic freedom, diversity, accessibility, and belonging; the institutional culture; standard communication practices; and ongoing compliance and assessment for improvement.

Together, these areas illustrate how Montclair fosters an environment of trust, respect, and ethical excellence in service of its mission and the publics it serves.

Commitment to Academic Freedom, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging

(This section maps to criteria 1, 2 and 7)

Academic Freedom

The university has an established policy on academic freedom that encompasses teaching and research, explicitly addressed in Article V of the State Master Contract between XX and XX. Academic freedom is also evident in how the university empowers faculty to lead curriculum development and innovation and in the many support programs for the pursuit of faculty research and creative activities. At Montclair, faculty initiate, develop, shepherd, and approve new courses and academic programs. Each academic department/school has a curriculum committee that vets new ideas and proposals and moves curriculum changes through the review and approval process, from department, to college, and university-wide committees (such as the Undergraduate University Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council), all the

way through to approvals from the Academic Issues Committee (AIC) and the New Jersey President's Council (NJPC) for new programs. The number of course topics available for study (n=???), as well as the extensive array of academic programs across represented disciplines (n=???), attest to a dynamic educational environment that enables a broad spectrum of inquiry and expression within the university.

Montclair maintains a robust sabbatical program and a Faculty Scholarship Program (FSP) for faculty (guidelines for Sabbaticals and FSP). Each allows faculty to pursue their research and creative agendas freely, continue to make unique contributions to their fields, and enhance their effectiveness as researchers and educators. Additional information about these programs is provided in Chapter III. The wide range of fields, lines of inquiry, and methodological approaches reflected in the approved sabbaticals and FSP proposals demonstrates Montclair's commitment to the exploration of new ideas, faculty autonomy, and investment in professional growth.

Inclusion and Accessibility

Inclusion and accessibility emerged as key issues to probe through this self-study. Montclair State University demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to fostering an accessible, inclusive, and supportive environment for students, staff, and visitors requiring accommodation. A range of offices and services—such as the Disability Resource Center (DRC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the CARE Team, and the Office of Equity and Resources—work collaboratively to support students with disabilities, mental health needs, and military service backgrounds. Initiatives like the Simple Syllabus design, universal design for learning, captioned Zoom access for remote learning and meetings, and disability-related cultural programming open to the public, such as the ReelAbilities New Jersey Film Festival that is administered through the Office of Education and Community Outreach in the College of the Arts, further reflect this commitment. The university has also launched supportive affinity spaces such as the Disability Caucus and hosted its first Disability History and Awareness Month in 2024. Transportation support via the PWD shuttle, the integration of digital accessibility standards, and resources like Mental Health First Aid training illustrate Montclair's effort to extend accessibility across physical, academic, and psychosocial domains.

Despite these significant achievements, challenges remain that limit full inclusion and equity. The university's hilly terrain, aging infrastructure, limited PWD shuttle services, and non-inclusive classroom furniture constrain mobility and classroom access for students with physical disabilities. Digital accessibility remains uneven, with many academic software platforms and instructional materials falling short of federal standards ahead of the 2026 Title II compliance deadline. Additionally, chronic understaffing at the DRC has strained the institution's capacity to respond to a growing number of students needing accommodations. Addressing these concerns will require institutional investment in staffing, infrastructure, technology, and campus-wide training to meet evolving accessibility mandates and to fully realize Montclair's aspirations for belonging and inclusion.

Belonging

In the fall of 2022 Montclair contracted SOVA, a higher education consulting firm, to conduct a campus and climate assessment and provide insights into how the institution can enhance a sense of belonging in order to provide baseline data for the new administration and guide strategic resource allocation to new

initiatives. The assessment employed a multi-method approach with data inputs coming at macro (Strategic Plan KPIs), mezzo (focus groups), and micro (interviews) levels. The Campus Assessment Committee led listening sessions and the administration of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) surveys to students, faculty and staff. In May 2023, a final report was made available. Although the response rate for the survey was low (9.2% for students and 28.5% for faculty and staff), some key findings have identified general themes, success areas and opportunities for improvement that will be integrated into the university's next strategic action plan:

Table X: Summary of CECE Indictor Observations by Group

Survey	Opportunities for Growth	Success Area
Student	• Campus Climate Experiences • Culturally Responsive Support • Sense of Belonging	• Collectivist Orientation • Humanized Environments
Staff	• Campus Climate Experiences • Diversity Institutional Support	• Importance of Diversity • Collectivist Care • Culturally Relevant Engagement Opportunities
Faculty	• Campus Climate Experiences • Course Evaluations on Diversity • Diversity Institutional Support	• Importance of Diversity • Diversity Behavior • Diversity Skills to Teach • Proactive Support

SOVA's report provided actionable next steps for the university to begin to address campus climate and culture issues and generate tangible improvements and positive impact: these included a leadership-level conversation to align the vision for change to specific actions, more sustained infrastructure support for these efforts, a clear communication strategy to inform and engage all stakeholders, completion of an asset mapping activity, and strengthening the overall culture of evidence-based decision-making.

Action Step: In order to launch change initiatives along these recommended lines, the university established the Office of Inclusive Excellence in December of 2024 and restructured the Office of Student Belonging in 2025. The Office for Social Justice and Diversity (which now houses the LGBTQ Center, Women's Center, Multicultural Center, and Center for Faith and Spirituality) will now be included under the Office of Student Belonging creating pathways for serving all students. In addition, Montclair's array of student organizations operating under the Student Government Association [e.g. the Black Student Union (BSU), Latin American Organization (LASO) and Unified Asian American Student Org (UAASO)], faculty and staff Caucuses (e.g. Disability Caucus), and academic support units established to embrace the university's HSI identity [e.g. Office of Hispanic Initiatives, First Generation Initiatives, and most recently the Center for Latino Heritage and Spanish (CLaSE)], ensure that all students and faculty and staff have multiple communities of interest to connect to and create meaningful relationships and impact at the university. Finally, the newly formed University Collaborative for Inclusive Excellence reimagines the former President's Commission for Affirmative Action and Diversity (PCAAD) and will advise the President, the Associate Vice President for Institutional Excellence, and the Executive Council on matters related to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

Action Step: In 2023 and 2024, Dr. Christopher Donoghue was recruited to lead an annual survey for the Office of Academic Affairs on Student Needs and Sense of Belonging. On the topic of belonging, the

questionnaires have included validated scales on peer support, faculty support, classroom comfort, perceived isolation, experience with racial or ethnic microaggressions, and comfort with diverse individuals. Questions have also focused on student challenges such as employment and other constraints, work and family demands, financial challenges, food insecurity, and housing insecurity. The response rate to the survey has been ~39% of all students who were targeted with a multistage cluster sampling strategy, or ~22% of all enrolled students in the Montclair and Bloomfield campuses (3,429 in 2023 and 4,506 in 2024).

Key findings from these surveys indicate that students struggling with belonging tend to have the most trouble with peer support and isolation. Faculty support and classroom comfort are only slightly below average for this group. Although the data cannot tell us if belonging is high or low compared to other colleges or national standards, a multivariate analysis showed that some groups were more likely to identify in the lower belonging group than others. Those groups included Black students, Latine students, male students, and those experiencing greater food and housing insecurities. Another notable finding was that First Generation students rated themselves significantly higher than Non-First Generation students in the areas of Drive to Achieve and Overall Self Advocacy. Data from the Student Needs and Sense of Belonging Survey have been presented in many open forums to faculty and staff, as well as to key administrators working in areas such as the SEEDS Curriculum, Student Success, and Faculty Excellence. This high level of engagement with the campus community is intended to facilitate evidence-based decision making.

An Institutional Culture that Values Ethical Behavior, Integrity, Fairness and Professional Excellence

(This section maps to criteria 3, 4 and 5)

Montclair's approach to creating a culture that values ethical behavior, integrity, and fairness is triangulated: first, ensure the revision and accuracy of all university policies and procedures and appropriate training to prioritize and remain in compliance with all state and federal regulations; second, pursue detailed and fair processes for talent recruitment, development, and evaluation (including faculty, staff, managers); and third, rely on the Office of Institutional Compliance, Labor Relations in Human resources, and Legal Counsel for the reporting and investigation of matters.

Policies & Procedures

Montclair's approach and commitment to creating a culture of ethical behavior and professional integrity encompassing its leadership, governance practices, and community members, including visitors and 3rd-party collaborations, is well evidenced by its policies, procedures, and select records included in the evidence inventory. Policies are housed under the umbrella site *Policies and Procedures* (#) highlighting Academic, Employee, Finance, Student, Technology, and University matters and each identifies the responsible office for the policy. Academic policy revisions are overseen by the Academic Policy Committee and there is now a rigorous review process. Drafts undergo a review process that includes the Academic Affairs Council, a community-wide Open Comment period (#), and approval by the Provost. The university community is annually notified via emails to all users of any academic policy revisions (#). There are policies addressing all key issues and the entire university community has full access to these

policies and procedures. As an example, to promote the avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents:

- Faculty are expected to self-report when they assign their own work and publications in class (which may pose a conflict of interest), and whether they perform paid work for other institutions.
- Vendors and employees are required to complete questionnaires identifying possible conflict of interest. Along with Officers and any employee with key financial responsibility, they are expected to complete the self-assessment and report checklist for business transactions within the university.
- The University also offers clear guidelines and a *Code of Ethics on Outside Employment* (#) and all employees have to self-report once a year any Outside Activity/Employment that must be approved by the manager and reviewed by an Ethics Liaison Officer at the university.

The *Student Code of Conduct* (#) details the rights and responsibilities of MSU students and student organization from academic matters to housing, drug and alcohol use, bullying, harassment, housing, diversity, disciplinary procedures, and grievances procedures in a very detailed and comprehensive manner. It also functions as the *Student Bill of Rights*. And the *Faculty Handbook* (#) details the governance structures and academic policies, contractual rights, and obligations, further promoting a culture of ethical behavior and professional integrity.

Recruiting and Cultivating Talent at Montclair

University policies regulate and ensure ethical and professional hiring processes. Initially the university developed its own training content and delivered in-person sessions at search committee charge meetings. While the process was helpful, it quickly became unsustainable. Shortly thereafter, the Office of IE began working with the Office of Human Resources to deliver the content virtually through Canvas. In March 2025, IE partnered with the Office of Institutional Research to develop a search committee survey assessment to gather search committee member experiences over the past three years and audited hiring practices to ensure they remain relevant and timely. Based on feedback, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, Office for Faculty Excellence and Human Resources have now partnered and reimagined the Search Committee process updating deliverables and search committee procedures and guidelines. All employees involved in a search must complete a Vector Solutions training entitled *Personal Skills for a Diverse Campus* and anyone participating in a faculty search must also complete the Canvas course *Faculty Hiring Best Practices* (FHBP) developed by the Office for Faculty Excellence. The Division of Human Resources (HR) offers guides regarding suggested advertising venues for positions and search committee composition. Human Resources automatically posts all positions on the Montclair career site and HigherEdJobs.com and any additional advertising venues selected by the hiring manager. When selecting advertising venues, hiring managers are encouraged to think creatively and strategically – the goal is to cast a wide net to yield a diverse and qualified applicant pool. (Ex. professional journals and associations; college/university placement offices and academic departments; affinity-oriented professional associations; and industry-specific listservs and publications). The recruitment guidelines and processes vary according to the type of position. There are detailed individual guidelines for hiring a Manager or Professional Staff (various classifications exist), a Civil Service Employee, or a Faculty Member. Ongoing assessment of these improvements will assist the university to further streamline the search process and ensure a robust and fair process.

All employees (faculty, staff, managers) are carefully guided through the evaluation process which for faculty involves reappointment, tenure, and promotion and for staff and managers a self-evaluation narrative (#, #, #) and varied levels of review and new contracts (annual, 1-year, 2-year, 5-year contracts, etc.). There are detailed calendars that guide each evaluation cycle (#) and many opportunities throughout that cycle to receive substantive feedback from many layers of the organizational structure to improve, grow, and succeed at the university (#, #, #).

The Learning and Talent Development team of the HR division provides all employees with opportunities to enhance job skills and professional growth. In 2023 Montclair established the Leadership University which offers an 8-week hybrid program comprising three modules: Know Yourself (in partnership with Franklin Covey: The Speed of Trust), Know How to Lead (in partnership with The Center for Leadership Studies), and Know How to Manage (Montclair module). Additional programs include the PROPEL Project (referenced in the Intro chapter), Managing@Montclair, a dynamic professional development program designed for supervisors/managers to help develop core leadership and management skills (#). Project Management 101 Learning Series that covers the most important concepts, processes, concepts, tools, and techniques in project management. (3), and Tools for Success – On Demand Webinars (#).

Reporting and Grievances

Montclair has clear and fair grievances procedures and complies with all state and federal regulations. The grievances procedures are very straightforward for both employees and students. MSU fully complies with FERPA (#), FMLA (#), OSHA (#), and NJ State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace (#) guidelines. Moreover, MSU regularly and systematically conducts campus climate assessments or surveys of a variety of stakeholder groups. Personal counseling services are confidential and free-of-charge for both employees and students. All employees must complete annual training for Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Training (offered in partnership with Vector LMS, Higher Education Platform) with a XXX% completion rate in AY2025.

Transparency and Effective Communication

(This section maps to criteria 6 and 7)

Transparency and effective communication are at the heart of every community and require ongoing refinement and attention. A prime example occurred when Bloomfield College merged with Montclair University and became Bloomfield College of Montclair State University. University Communications & Marketing engineered a comprehensive communications strategy, focused on both internal and external stakeholders at both institutions, to address the merger and respond proactively to questions. Specific communications for example targeted students and provided information about the teach-out plans that ensured all students could continue their studies uninterrupted and without graduation delays (#, #). Other communications targeted faculty and staff with updates on the continued hiring processes and decisions as they were slowly integrated into the union environment and tenure/promotion expectations at Montclair State University (#, #, #). Beginning in March of 2022, the University began issuing communications updates regarding the status of the emerging relationship between the two institutions. Both internal and external stakeholders were kept apprised with detailed messaging as to the status of the relationship in the form of news releases, community messages sent via email, and in-person town halls on both campuses to

continue educating the respective communities on the merger and the reasons for pursuing it. In all, 10 university-wide communications were disseminated across the two campuses and three official news releases were disseminated to external media. As the two institutions continue their integration, integration status updates have been posted to the Montclair website, and resources continue to be produced to educate internal audiences on changes to processes and procedures as well as to available offerings for students, faculty and staff on both campuses.

In the last few years, great efforts have been made to improve the use of communication channels and scale communication strategies to match the rapid growth of the student and staff/faculty population of the university and the increased complexity of university operations and emerging opportunities. President Koppell holds a fall and spring semester Town Hall that is open to the entire university community and other impromptu town halls or announcements from The President's Office as necessary to address emerging issues in higher education or at the university (#, #, #). There are many other regular meetings (X, Y, Z) to provide high-level updates to university leadership, faculty, and staff that are hosted by the President and Provost with invited guest speakers.

Other communication channels have also been upgraded and strategies expanded. On September 10, 2021 University Communications published the debut issue of *In the Know*, which started as a weekly newsletter to all employees and has now evolved into a bi-weekly newsletter during regular semesters with major news, updates, announcements, and kudos in order to keep the community informed (#debut, #latest). Similarly, many other divisions have instituted regularly distributed newsletters to engage stakeholders at Montclair, including *Instructional Technology & Design Services (ITDS) Weekly Updates* (#), *HR News* (#), *HR Learning & Talent Development* (#), *Finance & Treasury Updates* (#), and announcements from the *Budget Office* (#).

Montclair works to ensure accuracy and veracity of statements in social media and in promotional material. Yearly data on enrollment is provided online by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. This office also creates the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports, a requirement for all institutions that provide postsecondary education and are eligible to receive Title IV funding across the United States and its jurisdictions. In conjunction with the Office of University Communication, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions conducts an annual audit of marketing material, admissions webpages and email/text campaigns to verify that all information provided to the public is in accordance with the most up to date information available at the time of printing said promotional items. Additional recruitment communications highlighting Montclair's national rankings are supported by national and state independent reports.

On the student side, a wide range of communication tools are utilized regularly to inform and engage students. Some key channels include:
- Emails are primarily used to disseminate extremely important and timely information (e.g. emergency communications, registration info, payment deadlines; #).
- Emergency text messages, that are collaborations between University Police and Communications, use the Rave Mobile Safety Alert system (#).
- Red Hawk News, a bi-weekly newsletter (with a Monday and Weekend edition) shares campus events, career opportunities such as job fairs, and student resources with targeted communications for residents, commuters, and student cohorts. These efforts are further enhanced through the

Hawk Squad, a student-run leadership team that promotes events, clubs and organizations and helps students stay connected on campus (#).

- Social media channels are used to promote events, build a sense of belonging, and celebrate our diverse community and Red Hawk Life, a student focused social media team, does takeovers, profiles, giveaways and a video series called Prize Ride (#).
- NEST, the central hub for student account information, registration, class schedules, and financial aid, is used to post announcements and alerts with reminders and important deadlines (#).
- Digital monitors throughout all campus buildings are usually populated with specific content from different academic units and university-wide services (e.g. The Writing Center; #).
- Campus ESP is also used as a communication portal to keep families informed through newsletters and webinars of interest (#).

Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of these communication channels and strategies will assist the university in building a stronger sense of community and keeping everyone in the loop in a rapidly changing environment.

Finally, in the spring of 2023, University Communications undertook an audit of end user satisfaction with communications and identified some structural issues – both in terms of website structure (Montclair.edu) and institutional processes and procedures. To address these inefficiencies, the university is undergoing a comprehensive website overhaul that is being overseen by University Communications and Marketing. Slated to launch in the fall of 2026, the goals of the project are:

- To improve website effectiveness in student recruitment.
- To convey Montclair's distinctive brand and position it among national institutions.
- To prioritize prospective students while also providing information tailored to other external audiences like partners, funders, alumni, job applicants, and families.
- To build a website that is sustainable with the current level of resourcing.
- To move content intended for current students, faculty and staff to a separate platform to enable prospective students and their families to be able to more easily find the information intended for them.

Web content that is relevant to current community members will be moved to a series of internal solutions, including an Intranet for faculty and staff. This will result in addressing several areas of improvement, including information that is difficult to locate or old, dead or broken links on the site. It will also create a more streamlined experience for prospective students and their families and make it easier to find the necessary resources they are seeking. As is the case with the current website, the new site will fully adhere to WCAG 2.0 AA for accessibility standards.

Additionally, the University will be assessing how it communicates significant policy changes to its various internal stakeholders. An example emerged in the fall of 2024, when the University rolled out changes to its Expressive Activity Policy. Given the climate on university campuses surrounding the Israel/Palestine conflict, the changes were met with significant pushback due to certain sections of the policy being unclear. The policy was then reworked based on the feedback from the community, and reissued a short time later (#, #).

University Communications will continue to assess how to effectively roll out significant policy changes, particularly in situations where responses may be impassioned, to better educate the community and its various stakeholders on the changes and why they are occurring.

Ongoing Compliance and Assessment for Improvement

(This section maps to criteria 8 and 9)

In May 2023, President Koppell, following the campus climate assessment, determined that institutional compliance with various state and federal laws, including equity compliance efforts, should be bifurcated to enhance the employee experience at Montclair State University. As a result, institutional compliance functions were removed from the Office of Human Resources and relocated to the Office of University Counsel.

In May 2025, the University further strengthened its compliance efforts by appointing a Director of Institutional Compliance and Title IX. This role is primarily responsible for overseeing the University's response to issues of discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct while ensuring ongoing compliance with state, local, and federal regulations.

The University Counsel Office is responsible for advising the President and the Board of Trustees on all legal matters related to the statutory and regulatory environment of higher education in New Jersey. This includes reviewing all University contracts and overseeing the legal aspects of internal policies and procedures, such as those related to Title VI, Title VII, and Title IX.

Summary Statement

Montclair maintains robust and effective policies and procedures that are routinely reviewed and revised as needed and are widely available to all internal stakeholders and the public. Evidence demonstrates a strong commitment to academic freedom with policies modified with emerging circumstances, strong efforts to build an inclusive and accessible campus, a culture grounded in ethical behavior and integrity, and support for a communication environment that creates transparency and informs and engages the entire community.

Key findings.

- **Academic Freedom and Faculty Autonomy** – Clear contractual protections, faculty-led curriculum development, and robust research support programs reinforce a culture of academic innovation and independence.
- **Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging** – Comprehensive support services and affinity spaces advance equity, though physical, digital, and staffing gaps remain that require targeted investment.
- **Data-Driven Climate Initiatives** – Climate assessments and belonging surveys identify disparities for specific student groups, informing recent structural changes and initiatives to strengthen equity and inclusion efforts.
- **Ethical Culture and Professional Standards** – Comprehensive policies, evaluation systems, conflict-of-interest procedures, and training programs uphold fairness, compliance, and professional excellence.

- **Transparent, Multi-Channel Communication** – Diverse communication strategies support transparency, trust, and stakeholder engagement, with major improvements underway through a website overhaul. Ongoing assessment is necessary to ensure effectiveness and build engagement and trust.

Next steps.

While the University is compliant with federal, state and local regulatory, reporting and disclosure requirements, the self-study efforts reveal there is a need to coordinate the various offices and departments to safeguard a culture of ethical behavior and professional integrity and to ensure that all compliance requirements are being met. To this end, the University might look to:

- Establish a *Compliance Office* that would oversee and coordinate the collection, distribution and reporting of all required data points, statistics and reports. This would include a Compliance Officer and a team with representatives from various departments.
- Conduct regular training & awareness programs with faculty and staff which highlights key regulations and provides a clear understanding of how federal, state, and local regulations impact their daily responsibilities, ensuring compliance while fostering a culture of accountability.
- Implement auditing and monitoring systems to conduct internal audits and track policies, training and reporting.
- Maintain open communication & reporting channels to further foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

STANDARD III: THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

An institution provides students with learning experiences characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, across all instructional modalities. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program page/schedule, level, and setting, are consistent with higher education expectations.

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard III and all its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard III can be reviewed in the Evidence Inventory in the table below:

Table X: Standard III Evidence Inventory

Criterion	Supporting Evidence for Compliance
1a. **Certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential** are designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning.	University Catalog; 3.1.4 Curriculum Forms and Resources; 3.1.5 New Concept Approval Form; BS Business Analytics; 3.6 Doctoral PAD Clinical Psychology; 3.6 MSU Clinical Ph.D. Accreditation on Contingency, 2020; 3.6 Full Accreditation Decision Letter - 2024-5-6; 3.6 PhD Program Clinical Psychology Applications and Admissions Data
1b. are assigned a reasonably approximate number of credit hours (or other value) for the amount of work completed by a student.	3.1.2 NJ Administrative Code 9A; 3.1.3 University Regulations Credit Hours; 3.4 New Academic Calendar, Registrar Website)
1c. include sufficient course content and program length appropriate to the objectives of the degree or other credential.	University Catalog; Online Degree Programs; BA_HIST (P-12 Cert)_Alt; BFA_Theater Design Tech_Alt; BMus_Music Performance_Alt)
2a. **Student learning experiences that are designed, delivered, and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals who are:** rigorous and effective in teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service, as appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and policies.	3.2.2 Faculty Roles and Expectations*; AFT and NJ; 3.2 AFT Local Selected Procedures Agreement; 3.2. Faculty Personnel Action; 3.2 Teaching Faculty Agreement); 3.2 teaching-faculty-information-session slides
2b. qualified for the positions they hold and the work they do.	3.2.2 Faculty Roles and Expectations*; 3.2. MOU AFT and NJ; 3.2 AFT Local Selected Procedures Agreement; 3.2. Faculty

	Personnel Action; <mark>3.2.5 Faculty Qualifications</mark>*
2c. sufficient in number with a core of faculty (full- or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.	3.2.3 Student to Faculty Ratio*
2d. provided with and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional growth and innovation.	3.2 FSP; 3.2. OSP FY 24 Annual Report*; ITDS-Faculty Development & Support;E OFE; 3.2 Faculty Development Program; 3.2. New Faculty Program; OFE-TIP;
2e. reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated, clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures.	3.2.2 Faculty Roles and Expectations*; 3.2. Course Surveys; Peer Evaluations
3. Academic programs of study that are clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution in a way that students are able to understand and follow degree and program requirements and expected time to completion.	University Catalog; 3.1. Sample Degree Audit; <mark>add undergrad example for Degree Audit, with SEEDS</mark>
4. Sufficient learning experiences and resources to support both the institution's programs of study and the academic progress of all student populations.	3.4 Library Evidence Document*; 3.4. Online Review Checklist; 3.6 Student Research Symposium Program); BCMSU-Day of Research; 3.4. Internships; Study Abroad Report; CCHL Clinical Site Process; Employer Recruiting Policies_Career Services; 3.4 Library Policies; 3.4 Liaison Librarians; Library Resources Canvas Integration; 3.4 Library Agreements; 3.4 Interlibrary Services;
5a. **At institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:** offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field.	SEEDS Curriculum); 3.5 Gen Ed Focus Groups Executive Summary; 3.5 Announcement BRTF. Gingrich; 3.5 GenEdSelfStudyGuide. 2005; 3.5 BRFT Report to the Provost;3.5 P2 BRTF Report, April 2022
5b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.	SEEDS Curriculum); 3.5.8 SEEDS Assessment; 3.5 Seeds Rubrics; 3.5.8 SEEDS Training Module; 3.5 SEEDS value workshop agenda; 3.5 SEEDS Assessment Day;
5c. in non-US institutions that do not include general education, provides evidence that students can demonstrate general education skills.	NA

6. In institutions that offer graduate and professional education, opportunities for the development of research, scholarship, and independent thinking, provided by faculty and/or other professionals with credentials appropriate to graduate-level curricula.	Graduate School Policy Manual; 3.6 Graduate Student Micro-Internship Program_Call For Proposals; Doctoral Procedures Manual; Thesis Procedures Manual; Dissertation Procedures; Graduate and Doctoral Faculty Requirements; Terms and Policies of Graduate Assistantships Document ; 3.4 Spring 2025 Graduate Student Journal Article Writing Group;
7. Adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval of any student learning opportunities designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers.	3.4. Springshare LibChat 24/7; Employer Recruiting Policies_Career Services; CCHL Clinical Site Process; BCMSU Nursing; <mark>add guidelines from NURS and CEEL</mark>
8. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of student learning experiences for all student populations.	3.8. SERC Overview; 3.8. SERC Self-Study Guide; 3.1.6 List of Accreditors; NSSE24; 3.4. Undergraduate Student Needs and Sense of Belonging Survey

*Indicates that data/document will be updated in fall 2025

The remainder of this chapter provides analysis of key issues concerning the design and delivery of the student learning experience.

Introduction

This chapter addresses how Montclair State University designs and delivers the student learning experience. It describes how academic programs guide student learning in curricular and co-curricular activities, how the institution's newly revised general education program prepares students for the twenty-first century, and how the institution supports excellence in teaching and scholarship.

Montclair has developed a new program proposal process that centers on the needs of students in a changing employment environment. It asks faculty proposing new programs, at the undergraduate or graduate level, to assess graduating students' career prospects. In new and existing programs, the institution has developed strategies to expose students to high impact practices, particularly research and internships, to better engage them in their learning. Additionally, the institution has facilitated changes to increase flexibility for students to complete their degree programs.

Complementing the focus on career readiness in degree programs is a revised general education program. This newly implemented SEEDS program provides students with transferable skills while also engaging them in questions centered on important educational values.

Supporting both the degree programs and general education program, Montclair faculty demonstrate excellence in teaching and scholarship, with the institution providing support for faculty to improve and grow in both areas.

Academic Program Development Emphasizing Student Needs, High-impact Practices, and Flexibility

(This section maps to criteria 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8)

Student learning experiences are designed to deliver robust and engaging opportunities to explore the academic fields and provide opportunities for the students to connect that knowledge with their communities and lived experiences. As of the 2024-2025 academic year, Montclair offered 165 undergraduate and 104 graduate degrees through 13 schools and colleges. Program integration with Bloomfield College was completed in the fall of 2024, and the University Catalog (University Catalog) was updated accordingly.

The University's process for new program creation emphasizes creating new programs to meet evolving student needs and market demands. Central to all academic programs is a renewed commitment to embed high-impact practices into student experiences. Additionally, the University has made significant strides in offering students more flexibility to complete their programs of study.

New Program Development

To ensure new programs meet changing market and student demands, the Provost's Office leads a multi-layer, collaborative program design and review process. The Provost's Office Curriculum Forms and Resources Canvas page (3.1.4 Curriculum Forms and Resources) provides standard templates and instructions to facilitate the development of new programs and courses, and revisions. The New Concept Approval Form (3.1.5 New Concept Approval Form) initiates the process for a new program before developing a full proposal. The form documents the need and marketability of a new program. Following approval by the Dean and the Provost, the full proposal is developed by the faculty and reviewed by the Department, College, and University curriculum committees.

For example, a recent new program introduced at the undergraduate level is the BS in Business Analytics, which previously existed as a concentration under the Business Administration major. This major was expanded in response to the evolving demands of the global economy and the increasing importance of data-driven decision-making across industries. Organizations across sectors leverage data analytics and the growing artificial intelligence (AI) field to enhance operations, uncover insights, and create strategic advantages. Collaboration between academia and industry is a hallmark of this program, enhancing the university's role as a knowledge hub and economic contributor. The first cohort of students was enrolled in Fall 2023 and has seen increasing enrollment since its inception. The program is fully accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business and had its last site visit in Fall 2024. This program is evidence that Montclair continues to evolve its undergraduate programs according to the market's changing demands and fosters industry collaboration (BS Business Analytics)

In addition to developing new undergraduate programs, as an R2 institution, it is central to the University's mission to develop high-quality doctoral programs. In 2016, the Psychology department in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences submitted a Program Announcement Document (3.6 Doctoral PAD Clinical Psychology) to start a Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology. The program's

mission is to provide foundational doctoral-level training in clinical psychology and address a significant shortage of mental health professionals. The program follows the well-established scientist-practitioner model of training, which emphasizes the integration of psychological science and practice. The program was approved, and the first cohort of students was enrolled in 2017. Since its inception, the program has experienced significant growth and national recognition. The program submitted a self-study to the American Psychological Association for initial accreditation and in 2020; the program was "accredited, on contingency" (3.6 MSU Clinical Ph.D. Accreditation on Contingency, 2020). Program outcome data were collected, and a self-study was submitted in 2023. Following a site visit, the program received full accreditation by APA for 10 years in 2024 (3.6 Full Accreditation Decision Letter - 2024-5-6). This is evidence that Montclair develops high-quality training programs that are rigorous in nature and meet national standards of training in psychology. In addition to full accreditation status, the program's quality, rigor, and reputation are evident in the significant increase in applications received since the first cohort of students in 2017 (3.6 PhD Program Clinical Psychology Applications and Admissions Data). In 2025, the program received 373 applications for nine available positions; this is a significant increase (631% increase) from the 51 applicants received in the first year of the program. A total of 14 students were offered admission for the 2025 cohort (3.7% acceptance rate), with nine students matriculating in fall 2025 (2.4%). These data highlight the quality and national reputation of the program and demonstrate Montclair's commitment to excellence in graduate education.

The two examples of new programs described above demonstrate that Montclair's process to begin new programs is effective and leads to high quality programs that support the student learning experience. Such program development is on-going and a list of new academic programs being developed can be found in the Evidence Inventory (create list)

Student Participation in High Impact Learning Practices

The University offers programs that support students' participation in high-impact learning practices such as research, study abroad, and internships across all levels of study (undergraduate, masters, and doctoral), and students are encouraged to engage in faculty research. The Student Research Symposium allows students at the undergraduate and graduate level to showcase the research they have been involved in during the academic year (3.6 Student Research Symposium Program); additionally, showcasing student research occurs on the Bloomfield campus through the long-running BCMSU Symposium of Student Work, which mirrors the event on the Montclair campus (BCMSU-Day of Research). Support for student-led research projects is provided through various programs such as the Student-Led Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities (SL-RSCA) Program.

Graduate programs facilitate students' engagement in independent research; the Graduate Culminating Activities, including the master's thesis (3.6 Thesis Procedure Manual), comprehensive exams, and the dissertation project (3.6 Doctoral Procedures Manual), help graduate students hone their research, scholarship, and independent thinking skills. The Graduate School Website delineates and discusses these activities. University Libraries and the Center for Writing Excellence collaborate to run a graduate student journal article writing group every Spring semester (3.4 Spring 2025 Graduate Student Journal Article Writing Group).

Student research, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, is supported by the Montclair and Bloomfield libraries. Student surveys of library resources reveal that students highly value research consultations and chat research help (3.4 Library Evidence Document). Library policies and procedures demonstrate access for all students (3.4 Library Policies). Each academic department is matched with a liaison librarian (3.4 Liaison Librarians) who develops research guides embedded into each course via Canvas, and these guides often contain asynchronous learning materials such as videos and training modules (Library Resources Canvas Integration). Additionally, the Libraries partner with the Center for Writing Excellence, the Center for Academic Success and Tutoring (CAST), and IT to offer tutoring and writing services in the library and laptop lending. University Libraries also maintains several agreements with other academic libraries and library organizations (VALE, PALCI) and a longstanding interlibrary loan program to provide access to other library collections (3.4 Library Agreements; 3.4 Library Evidence Document; 3.4 Interlibrary Services).

Following the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the institution has made a concerted effort to reestablish another recognized high-impact practice—global education through study abroad. Since 2022 the number of students participating in a study abroad program has grown almost 40% (Study Abroad Report). One obstacle to study abroad programs has traditionally been their expense, which prevents many students from cohorts served by Montclair (e.g. first-gen students) from participating. To minimize this obstacle, the Provost's Office established the SOAR scholarships that are designed to support student participation in study abroad experiences. In the past three years, funding for these awards has more than doubled, and the number of supported students similarly increased (Study Abroad Report). This support is indicative of the institution's commitment to engage students in high-impact practices and to ensure that these opportunities are available to all students.

In addition to research and global education, Montclair students across undergraduate and graduate programs engage in high-impact practice activities to increase their learning through field work and internships. Many undergraduate and graduate programs incorporate field-based learning experiences into their curricula (3.4. Internships). Some programs require students complete field-based work as part of their training or include internship experiences as program requirements for graduation (e.g., MA/PhD in Clinical Psychology). In addition to field experiences within programs, initiatives across the university strive to increase student opportunities to engage in meaningful applied work. For example, The Graduate School (TGS) is launching a paid micro-internship pilot program for graduate students during the Spring 2025 semester, in which departments/units at the university make use of students' academic preparation and offer them practical hands-on experiences that are aligned with their career goals and will also support a need of the unit (3.6 Graduate Student Micro-Internship Program_Call For Proposals). These third-party internship and clinical sites are vetted by program faculty according to policies developed by the career services office (Employer Recruiting Policies_Career Services) or program-specific guidelines (CCHL Clinical Site Process, Need evidence from NURS and CEEL). These are examples of the university's commitment to facilitating high impact learning opportunities for students to apply the skills learned in the classroom and gain valuable experiences that will set them up for successful employment and further their professional development.

Data on students' engagement with high-impact practices are evaluated using the *National Survey of Student Engagement*. Findings from the 2024 NSSE (NSSE24) indicate that 23% of graduate students

hold at least one internship, demonstrating that about 1 in 4 students are benefiting from these opportunities. While these findings hold promise, the 2024 data also indicate that Montclair students are involved in fewer high-impact practices than comparable groups in the region and nationally. The notable exception is service learning, where seniors report participating in more activities than at comparison institutions, 15% and 12%, respectively.

In addition to evaluating engagement in high impact practices, the NSSE also evaluates student engagement in various areas, such as reflective and integrative learning, quantitative reasoning, collaborative learning, and student-faculty interactions. Findings from the 2024 survey indicate that first-year students report significantly lower levels of engagement than the students at comparable regional and national institutions. However, the same measures of seniors show no significant differences between the comparison groups on items related to academic challenges or the time and effort students put into their studies.

Further, Montclair's *Student Needs and Sense of Belonging Survey* results show that the student body, primarily underrepresented minorities and first-generation college students, enter the University with lower than the national average educational backgrounds, but with a strong sense of desire to succeed (3.4. Undergraduate Student Needs and Sense of Belonging Survey*)*. This quality and the faculty's commitment to student success resulted in Montclair's students' rise in meeting national averages on all engagement indicators in the NSSE survey.

Increasing Flexibility of Course Offerings to Meet Changing Student Needs

To serve its growing student body, the institution has taken steps to provide students with greater flexibility to complete their courses of study.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Montclair had started to offer online and hybrid courses, though in a limited capacity. The experience of operating remotely during the pandemic shifted student, faculty, and institutional perspectives on online learning, resulting in greater openness on all sides for fully or partially online courses and programs. The institution now offers a larger number of credits fully or partially online, providing more flexibility to students (See Table X). Additionally, the institution has approved several fully online undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs, including programs for students returning to complete their degrees (see Online Degree Programs).

Table X: Percentages of total credit hours Offered by modality, Montclair campus

Instructional Modality	2017/18 AY	2024/25 AY
In-person	73%	56%
Online	7%	24%
Hybrid	4%	12%
Other*	16%	9%

*The "Other" categories include the courses labeled as Cooperative Education, Thesis/ Dissertation/Extension, Independent Study, Internship, Externship, Field Ex, Study Abroad, Open

Learning, and National Student Ex. Outbound, which could not be categorized into one of the three categories.

In addition to offering more online courses and programs, Montclair has increased the flexibility of course offerings by adjusting its academic calendar. Beginning in January 2025, Montclair changed its academic calendar to enhance the student experience by creating year-round access to the educational resources of a comprehensive public research institution. The University, including Bloomfield College, moved to a three-term model – with a full term in the summer in addition to traditional spring and fall terms – to increase flexible learning options and ensure each student has an optimal path to completing a degree. Each term is now 14 weeks instead of 15 weeks, with partial terms of seven weeks. Class sessions increased in length based on weekly frequency to account for fewer weeks in the term. There are now two Common Hour blocks per week to increase opportunities for students to attend events and activities. Fall, Spring, and End-of-Summer Term breaks allow students, faculty, and staff to recharge. Full-term courses can be scheduled three days a week to increase student engagement, and terms will feature no separate final exam period. The registrar's website (3.4 New Academic Calendar, Registrar Website) provides an overview of the new schedule and outlines the benefits of this revision to the academic calendar.

A Meaningful and Flexible General Education Program for the Next Generation

(This section maps to criteria 1, 5, and 8)

General Education programs are the foundation of undergraduate education, and Montclair's last significant review and revision of its gen ed program occurred in 2001. Starting in 2019, the Office of the Provost convened various focus groups, task forces, and committees to revise the University's general education program (3.5 Gen Ed Focus Groups Executive Summary, 3.5 Announcement BRTF. Gingrich, 3.5 GenEdSelfStudyGuide. 2005, 3.5 BRFT Report to the Provost, 3.5 P2 BRTF Report, April 2022).

These efforts led to suggestions to move Montclair's general education program away from a course-based distribution model and toward a student-centered model emphasizing essential knowledge and desired student learning outcomes. A central element to the design of this model was convening faculty experts to develop rubrics for assessing student learning and developing a streamlined plan for assessment of student learning (3.5 Seeds Rubrics).

A change of institutional leadership in 2022-2023, with renewed focus on Montclair's public-facing, HSI status, prompted revisions to the design and mission of the new general education program. In conversation with the new provost, the university prioritized reducing the credit burden on students and strengthening student understanding, experience, and appreciation of the core curriculum. The general education task force aligned the core curriculum towards transformational goals of justice, equity, and liberation, refining the model in consultation with faculty department chairs and through a series of faculty focus groups.

The task force created SEEDS, with each letter standing for one of the five liberatory values that animate the curriculum: Social Justice and Equity; Educated Citizenry; Engagement, Agency and Leadership;

Diversity and Intercultural Competency; Self-Discovery and Self-Care. SEEDS offers a dynamic curriculum that addresses fundamental questions of the human condition; space to explore diverse disciplinary and cultural perspectives; and the tools to integrate learning and experience. Learning outcomes are clustered into Foundational and Exploratory categories (SEEDS Curriculum).

In preparation for the campus-wide implementation of the new SEEDS curriculum in Fall 2025, including Bloomfield College at Montclair State University, University College piloted the SEEDS curriculum starting in Fall 2024 with incoming pre-major (undeclared) freshmen and continuing with freshmen admits for Spring 2025. The Office of Undergraduate Education oversaw SEEDS training for the campus (3.5.8 SEEDS Training Module), and the implementation team continues to refine the assessment protocol. In Fall 2024, the SEEDS implementation team convened the first SEEDS values workshop on the topic of diversity and intercultural competency (3.5 SEEDS value workshop agenda). In Spring 2025, the implementation team organized the first SEEDS assessment day for classes in the Foundations section of the curriculum (3.5 SEEDS Assessment Day 3.5 SEEDS Assessment). The SEEDS pilot helped identify some challenges with current prerequisites and world language testing and informed improved strategic enrollment and scheduling practices ahead of the full rollout.

The SEEDS assessment analyzed student work samples in specific classes based on the student learning outcome within the SEEDS curriculum (SEEDS Curriculum). This analysis concluded that all SEEDS outcomes were met, with an overall average of 70.3% of work samples analyzed scoring at a "mastery" level. Departments will be provided with this analysis and asked to revise assignments, providing samples of student learning to ensure they are adequately aligned with the existing rubrics so that all criteria in the rubric can be assessed. Departments will also be asked to identify if elements of content or instruction can help increase the proportion of students meeting benchmarks in areas the assessment identified as lower.

Additionally, as faculty revised their programs' curricular pathways to incorporate the SEEDS requirements, faculty took the opportunity to tweak programs to better meet the needs of students. In some cases, this prompted programs to update curricular requirements so that students did not need more than 120 credits to graduate (BA_HIST (P-12 Cert)_Alt; BFA_Theater Design Tech_Alt; BMus_Music Performance_Alt). All programs, even if they did not submit curricular changes, reexamined and revised their degree pathways to incorporate the new SEEDS curriculum.

Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship

(This section maps to criteria 2, 6 and 8)

Excellent teaching and scholarship are essential to the University's mission. The statement of Faculty Roles and Expectations for faculty members lays out the criteria by which peer and administrative judgments of faculty reappointment, tenure, and promotion, and speaks strongly to the institution's respect for teaching effectiveness and scholarship. This statement, revised in 2024/25, recognizes the many forms that excellent teaching can take, from traditional classroom teaching to lab-based teaching to service learning and mentorship. The Faculty Handbook describes the expectation that "all faculty members are expected to engage regularly in activities designed to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching."

As part of the faculty evaluation process for reappointment, tenure, and promotion, students are given the opportunity to evaluate courses and faculty. Colleges and programs have tailored the evaluation forms to their curricula, resulting in targeted questions that are at times difficult to compare across the institution.

To assist faculty in developing their pedagogical and scholarly expertise, faculty at all ranks and career stages benefit from extensive professional development opportunities (3.2 Faculty Development Program) through the Office of Faculty Excellence (OFE), Instructional Technology and Digital Support (ITDS), academic librarians, and the forthcoming Center for Teaching and Academic Innovation. These resources support faculty in refining teaching strategies, enhancing student engagement, and integrating technology into instruction.

The OFE, created since the last self-study, supports onboarding new faculty (3.2. New Faculty Program). Its offerings include consultations with faculty; a robust collection of asynchronous teaching resources; professional development workshops on a variety of topics designed to enhance faculty development including human flourishing, belonging, reflective teaching, active learning, clear syllabi and assignment design, generative AI, academic honesty; career and research support, including writing groups and faculty showcases; and Teaching Innovations Programs (OFE-TIP), which is a year-long program that supports faculty in developing or redesigning a course or academic program. With its emergence in summer 2025, much of this pedagogical support will shift to the new Center for Teaching and Academic Innovation (CTAI), and the OFE will focus on onboarding and integration, career advancement and professional development, research and scholarship support, and faculty community and social engagement. CTAI will continue OFE's Teaching Innovations Program (TIP), a year-long program supporting faculty teams redesigning a course.

Following the integration of Bloomfield College, these resources have been extended to include faculty at that location ensuring that all University faculty now have access to these high-quality development resources, significantly enhancing the level of instructional support available. These initiatives empower faculty to innovate in teaching, leverage technology effectively, and contribute to a dynamic academic environment.

Montclair, an R-2 and inaugural designee of the Carnegie Leadership for Public Purpose Classification, is focused on supporting innovative research; programs to support scholarship are available to university faculty, including the Faculty Scholarship Program (3.2 FSP), where tenure-line faculty are provided a course release (reduction of 3 credits per semester) to pursue scholarship. Faculty scholarship is further evident through data from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Annual Report (3.2. OSP FY 24 Annual Report), which shows that Montclair was awarded $23,927,955 in grant funding in 2024. Sabbatical provides opportunities for faculty and librarians to focus on scholarship activities; the table below provides the number of applications and grantees.

Table X: Number of faculty sabbatical and approvals

Academic Year	Number of applicants	Number of applicants approved	Total # of semesters requested	Total # of semesters approved
AY 2017-2018	40	29	47	32

AY 2018-2019	32	21	40	25
AY 2019-2020	38	22	45	24
AY 2020-2021	33	20	47	26
AY 2021-2022	22	21	30	24
AY 2022-2023	33	25	41	29
AY 2023-2024	28	22	36	28
AY 2024-2025	44	25	58	32
AY 2025-2026	29	17	38	20

Faculty research contributes to the student learning experience, as students support faculty scholarship and are provided opportunities to engage in scholarship through student-led projects. Programs to support student scholarship and involvement in research are offered at the University and aim to increase students' participation in high-impact learning. For instance, in 2025, 14 students were awarded grants through the Student-Led Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (SL-RSCA) Program to support student-led research projects.

In addition to enhancing professional development opportunities for faculty, another important institutional change supporting teaching excellence was the creation of the new Teaching Faculty positions, which began in Fall 2024 following an agreement between the University and AFT Local 1904 (3.2 Teaching Faculty Agreement). These full-time positions demonstrate the University's commitment to high-quality instruction. The primary responsibility of the Teaching Faculty is teaching; they do not have requirements of scholarship, research, or creative work, enabling them to concentrate their time on supporting student success. Compared to the instructional and clinical specialist positions they replaced, these non-tenure track positions provide greater faculty stability, as there are opportunities for promotion and advancement. To support disseminating information related to these new positions and the contracts, AFT provided a training session for all faculty to learn more about the positions and the processes for reappointment and promotion (3.2 teaching-faculty-information-session slides). As the roles and responsibilities of faculty in these positions become more established, the University will need to develop a process to assess the outcomes from this endeavor regularly

Summary Statement

Montclair State University meets the requirements of Standard III and all its criteria. Analysis demonstrates that Montclair continues to monitor and improve its curriculum, including revising the general education program. Analysis revealed the strength and dedication of the Montclair faculty to student success and research endeavors. Montclair continues to expand its online offerings and support systems to accommodate the changing student demographics in the region. As the State and regional population continues to evolve, the faculty and the administration will utilize the policies and processes to review the programs and curriculum to ensure that Montclair meets the needs of employers, the community, and the students it serves.

1. The institution has developed processes for creating new academic programs that emphasize students' career prospects and embed career-advancing high impact learning opportunities into all programs, while also developing avenues to speed student degree completion.
2. The institution has revised its general education program to emphasize the acquisition of transferable skills; such skills are developed in the context of embedded values necessary in twenty-first century America.
3. The institution has clear expectations for faculty excellence and has created support structures to help faculty meet expectations; additionally, the recent creation of the Teaching Faculty positions provides the institution with an avenue to further emphasize and sustain teaching excellence.

Next Steps

Although Montclair has integrated thorough assessment processes in its academic programs, it continuously evaluates its progress and tries to strengthen assessment processes throughout its academic offerings. Areas identified for improvement include:

1. Complete implementation and assessment of the new general education program, including monitoring outcomes for effectiveness. The pilot set a relatively low threshold which defined "success" as at least 80 percent of students scoring at "basic" or above. The aim is to get 75-80% of students scoring "proficient" or higher.
2. Increase return rates on surveys, such as NSSE, as a means of collecting student feedback on engagement and learning indicators.
3. The creation of the new Teaching Faculty lines was a significant improvement that has the potential to enhance the quality of instruction and student learning. The University needs to develop a process to assess the outcomes from this endeavor regularly.
4. The institutions' wide variety of course evaluation forms, while providing the means to evaluate differing pedagogies and curricula, do not allow for consistent evaluation. The institution, in consultation with faculty, should reevaluate this process.
5. The change from a 15 to a 14-week semester, with integrated accelerated terms, provides the opportunity to provide students with accelerated and flexible avenues toward degree completion; the institution should monitor the impacts of this change and develop concrete strategies to realize their potential.

STANDARD IV: SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified and compassionate professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard IV and all its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard IV can be reviewed in the Evidence Inventory in the table below:

Table X: Standard IV Evidence Inventory

Criterion	Supporting Evidence
1-Ethical policies for admitting, retaining, and supporting students whose goals align with the mission, including: a. Clear financial processes and information (expenses, aid, scholarships, loans, refunds);	Admissions Requirements Admissions Procedural Handbook Financial Aid Processes Financial Aid Transparency and Supports Student Handbook for Financial Aid Undergraduate Student Costs Graduate Student Costs Miscellaneous Fees
1-Ethical policies for admitting, retaining, and supporting students whose goals align with the mission, including: b. A process for identifying and supporting underprepared students;	Accelerator Programs Writing Center Public Speaking Resource Center

1-Ethical policies for admitting, retaining, and supporting students whose goals align with the mission, including: c. Orientation, advising, and wrap-around services such as counseling supporting retention;	Undergraduate Orientation International Student Orientation Orientation Analysis Academic Advising Overview Academic Advising Student Learning Outcomes Early Warning Program Academic Retention Standards New Student Seminar
1-Ethical policies for admitting, retaining, and supporting students whose goals align with the mission, including: d. Processes for achieving educational goals (degree completion, transfer, placement).	Admission to Majors/Minors Policy Transfer Guide BA Liberal Studies Degree Completion Program Articulation Agreements Undergraduate 2+2 Agreements Language Placement Examination ALEKS Math Placement Examination
2-Policies for evaluating and accepting transfer credits and alternative learning methods.	Transfer Credit Procedures Credit for Prior Learning Draft Policy CLEP Examinations
3-Policies for securely maintaining and releasing student records.	Record Retention and Destruction Policy
4-Oversight of extracurricular activities under the same standards for all programs.	EADA 2024 Public Report Bloomfield College Athletics Report NCAA Sports Demographic Sponsorship Report June 2024 Student Athlete Handbook Campus Recreation Student Employee Handbook Center for Student Involvement Student Employee Handbook
5-Review and approval of third-party student services providers.	Bidding Opportunities and Awarded Contracts Third Party Providers
6-Regular assessment of student support programs' effectiveness.	Advising Satisfaction Analysis Academic Coaching Report University College/Office of Undergraduate Education Action Plans
Additional Supporting Evidence for the Narrative	

2020 Student Survey Report; 2024 Sense of Belonging Survey; 2023 Sense of Belonging Survey; Navigate Appointments AY 24-25; Progress Reports Dashboard Spring 2025; Undergraduate Student Focus Group Report; Graduate Student Focus Group Report; First Destination Survey Report [to be created]

Introduction

Montclair fosters a keen sense of belonging, ensuring every student feels supported, valued, and engaged. This includes a community built on helping students build meaningful connections with peers, faculty, and staff. The institution prioritizes access, offering tailored resources to support academic, social, and personal growth. Montclair empowers students to navigate challenges, build social skills, and succeed in their careers. Committed to student growth, Montclair prepares confident, capable leaders ready to make a lasting impact in the world.

Since the last accreditation, Montclair State University expanded as a leader in public higher education in New Jersey, with a 7% enrollment increase (see page X for enrollment figures). However, COVID-19 brought challenges, including remote learning transitions and social disruption. A 2020 campus survey found 61% of students felt less connected, aligning with the decline of campus involvement, with only 24% of undergraduates and 14% of graduates finding it easy to get involved, compared to 62% in 2019. By 2021, satisfaction had declined further, with fewer students feeling a sense of belonging (28% undergraduates, 31% graduates, down from 50% in 2019). [Evidence: Report on Survey]

Montclair also has seen a rise in mental health needs, with worsening anxiety, depression, and basic needs insecurity. As Montclair transitioned out of the pandemic's crisis phase, sustaining mental health support remained essential. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) saw a 52% rise in group therapy participation, a doubling of emergency cases, and a 21% increase in after-hours crisis calls (need raw numbers here as well for both issues). This was reinforced by two surveys, in 2023 and 2024, wherein students identified key obstacles to their success: health, work, family, and basic needs insecurities. In response, Montclair expanded initiatives focused on these issues. [Evidence: SOB Surveys].

Montclair's self-study highlights its response to the pandemic and ongoing evolution to meet student needs. Efforts are focused on re-engaging students, strengthening connections, and expanding support services. Communication channels like Red Hawk News, the NEST Portal, and Rave Alerts have been critical to these efforts and provide transparency. Montclair prioritizes mental health support through wellness newsletters, social media campaigns, including pop-up events, boosting morale. These efforts continue today by strengthening student engagement, well-being, and academic and career preparedness, fostering a supportive campus environment. Assessments guide institutional improvements and large-scale changes, including the integration of Bloomfield College into existing models and supports. The following section outlines these initiatives and their impact.

Addressing Gaps in Outcomes: Post-Pandemic Pivots to Best Support an Increasingly Diverse Student Population through their Journey

(This section maps to criteria 1, 4 and 6)

The pandemic highlighted critical gaps in equitable student support, but Montclair addressed them nimbly and in time to meet student needs. For instance, advising, coaching and tutoring is now offered both virtually and in person, for individuals and groups. Likewise, counseling is available using a virtual platform to increase the likelihood that students will avail themselves of mental health services. Student events are also available virtually to help remove barriers to student engagement.

Aligning Student Success Efforts

Montclair's student success mission is at the core of institutional strategies that enhance recruitment, retention, and holistic student support. Through data-driven enrollment management, equitable financial aid policies, review and revision of academic policies, and streamlined administrative services, Montclair has removed barriers to access and fostering an inclusive academic environment. Montclair's commitment to student success is reflected in key initiatives such as Red Hawk Central, a centralized, customer-focused hub for essential student services, and post-pandemic innovations that have expanded hybrid learning, virtual advising, and mental health resources. Over the past five years, The Graduate School has significantly expanded its retention and engagement initiatives through offering centralized services, modifying job descriptions to focus on student success, and making significant revisions to academic policies that posed unnecessary obstacles to student success. The number of doctoral degrees conferred has nearly doubled over this period. Additionally, Montclair is strengthening communication strategies to ensure students receive clear, accessible, and timely information, with a focus on social media consistency and digital accessibility. By integrating these efforts, Montclair State University continues to create a responsive, student-centered experience that supports academic achievement, financial well-being, and long-term success.

Bloomfield and Montclair Campus

Recognizing the distinct needs of students at both Bloomfield and Montclair campuses, institutional post-pandemic strategies aim to provide consistent and comprehensive support across locations. Key integration efforts have included merging two divisions, Enrollment Management and Student Development and Campus Life, under sole reporting structures, while maintaining professional staff on both campuses. Cross-campus housing was implemented in 2024, enabling Montclair students to reside at Bloomfield once Montclair reached capacity; shuttles running throughout the day and evening to facilitate student movement between campuses, though its lack of nighttime and weekend service presents an access gap. Students benefit from unified systems for Wi-Fi, ID cards, and parking, enhancing ease of access to shared resources like the Student Recreation Center. Student leadership remains partially siloed, with separate Student Government Associations and Greek Councils on each campus, albeit under shared advisement. All student events are populated and hosted on one platform, Engage, providing students a comprehensive view of available activities.

Enrollment Management Strategies

A key component of Montclair's student success efforts involves refining enrollment management strategies to optimize outreach, recruitment, and retention. Post-pandemic pivots in enrollment management included data-driven/informed decision-making to enhance recruitment efforts, personalized multi-channel outreach strategies, and tailored pathways to admission to accommodate diverse student needs.

Admissions, Financial Aid, Tuition, and Fees

To promote equity in access to higher education, Montclair has implemented policies that streamline the admissions process and provide increased financial support. Key adjustments made over the past 5 years include expanded financial aid packages and emergency grants and increased transparency in tuition and fee structures; simplified application processes through the introduction of the Common App; and compliance with new regulations permitting transcript release to students with account balances.

Red Hawk Central: A One-Stop Customer-Focused Approach

Red Hawk Central (RHC) continues to serve as a centralized hub, offering comprehensive student support services in an accessible and efficient manner. Enhancements include:

- Established a one-stop unit at the Bloomfield campus to provide accessible, consistent support on both locations.
- Streamlined customer experience for matters financial aid, billing, and registration.
- RHC provides white-glove, comprehensive support to students and families via multiple modalities (in-person, phone, email and chat). The team manages all inquiries until full resolution.
- A retention advocacy team was introduced in RHC in 2023 to assist with personalized re-enrollment outreach and support efforts. Students with registration holds or other obstacles receive personalized outreach and support until the obstacles are resolved and then they are referred to the appropriate Advising/Success Center in their College/School for advising and registration support.

Connecting Students and The Impact on Belonging

Post-COVID, colleges prioritized student belonging to address isolation and engagement gaps, recognizing the critical link to student success. Montclair responded by intentionally integrating academic, social, and wellness resources into a comprehensive wraparound approach. The University views supporting all students as a shared responsibility. The Division of Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL) and Academic Affairs (AA) have worked closely together to develop and implement meaningful support programs. Many initiatives, originally developed in response to immediate pandemic-related challenges, have since evolved into long-term efforts aimed at strengthening student success and well-being.

Montclair established the Office of Student Belonging (OSB) in 2022 to build student connections. A key initiative was the redesign of New Student Orientation, shifting in-person sessions to August and adding summer virtual support to build a cohort-based experience rather than individual sessions. As a result, participation grew by 15% from Fall 2022 to Fall 2024, with 77% of students reporting a stronger sense of belonging. OSB upholds this commitment through tailored cohort programs, including initiatives for

military-affiliated students, who saw a 22% increase in lounge visits, and over 200 first-generation students joining the Tri Alpha Honor Society. Together, these efforts strengthen Montclair's dedication to fostering belonging. **See evidence SDCL MSCHE 2024.**

CAPS implemented 24/7 crisis intervention via Uwill, a telehealth partnership with NJ. Mental Health Ambassadors connected students to services, while 'Zen Den' relaxation spaces and a Sensory Space in the library provided self-service wellness tools. Mental Health First Aid training, launched in 2023, has trained nearly 1,500 faculty, staff, and students. In July 2024, CAPS at Montclair and Bloomfield merged, ensuring access across campuses.

Transformative Undergraduate Advising – Coordinated Care for Student Success

Since 2019, Montclair has employed the SSIPP model (sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, personalized) to ensure that students receive tailored and individualized academic guidance. The University created student success centers at each of its colleges--easily recognizable locations offering a consistent service delivery model that is integrated into the student experience--and embraced advising caseloads, allowing for sustained advising relationships beyond the first year. Its investment in advisor positions over the last five years ensures that students who can benefit from proactive outreach and intervention receive personalized attention. Montclair also procured software, Navigate, through which advisors are strategic in their use of analytics and support predictors to identify students in need; 100% of professional advisors as well as dozens of faculty advisors now create transparent documentation of their work with students. Navigate is also embedded into academic support, the University's CARE Team, library research assistance, and many ancillary advising services, including study abroad and pre-professional advising.

Within Navigate the University developed an early warning program for all undergraduates, which today boasts a rate of 89-93% of students receiving at least one alert per reporting period. The alerts program allows advisors to be *de facto* embedded in the classroom with students, and represents a major step in faculty participation in advising activities. Montclair utilizes data dashboards to understand the full picture of alerts across the campus, including grade outcomes and demographic breakdowns of students and alert types [Evidence: Progress Reports dashboards]. In addition to alerts, Navigate's predictive model has been key in helping advisors determine their students' support needs in order to conduct appropriate outreach. In 2024-2025, advisors organized 310 campaigns that led to 7,340 students meeting with them on a variety of topics, including graduation review; that year, 41,909 advising appointments were created by students, demonstrating the usability of the system [Evidence: Navigate Appointmments AY 24-25]. More recently, an academic coaching program has been integrated into the advising model, offering personalized support to students with a focus on enhancing skills such as time management, organization, and study habits. This approach is designed to empower students, promoting self-awareness and the utilization of campus resources to achieve academic success. Further, the university has expanded and refined support for those students who are below the minimum academic standing (2.000 GPA). Montclair has shifted away from punitive language, renaming "academic probation" to "academic notice." To complement SSIPP, Montclair offers an academic recovery course for students who would have otherwise been suspended from the university. As students return to good standing, many receive academic coaching to promote short-term goal setting and academic skill-building. Finally, an academic

renewal program offers an opportunity to remove failing grades from GPA calculation and gain a fresh start.

Graduate Student Advisement and Academic Success

The success of graduate students is a shared responsibility spanning the academic program, faculty and staff mentors, The Graduate School (TGS), and partner offices across the University. Every graduate program is overseen by a graduate program coordinator (GPC) at the masters and certificate level, or doctoral program director (DPD) at the doctoral level, who provide largely "transactional" advising, consisting of guidance on course selection, monitoring timely completion of program milestones, and facilitating deep connections between students and faculty mentors for research and capstone activities. Programs with capstone requirements pair each student with a faculty mentor who works intensively with the student on project design and implementation, developing discipline-specific knowledge and skills, project management, interpreting and disseminating results, professional networking, and "socialization" with the professional community, which may include a faculty committee to provide academic and professional guidance.

The Graduate School provides additional administrative support and prescriptive advising. TGS monitors students who fail to meet the criteria for "academic good standing," and works with the GPC/DPD to develop a reasonable and realistic plan for regaining good standing. TGS also tracks doctoral student progress towards degree completion and proactively contacts students and mentors two years prior to the student's matriculation time limit in order to develop a degree completion plan, if needed. TGS additionally partners with units across the University to develop, implement, and/or promote academic support workshops and co-curricular programming such as one-on-one writing support for thesis and dissertation students, writing support groups, research compliance workshops (for example preparing Institutional Review Board protocols), workshops in professional communication and "strong student" skills.

Athletics and Student Life: Connection and belonging through student involvement and co-curricular experiences

Montclair fosters belonging through co-curricular activities, athletics, recreation, and wellness programs. Activities such as getting involved with the Student Government Association, student organizations and events offer meaningful experiences outside the classroom.

Athletics

In 2024, Montclair announced a realigned Athletics and Recreation program, in addition to integrating Bloomfield College of Montclair State University. This realignment reflects the evolving landscape of college athletics, where institutions adapt to better support student engagement, physical health, and leadership development. The newly-merged Campus Recreation and Athletics department fosters a campus-wide culture of health and wellness through comprehensive programs, ensuring all students have opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles, develop leadership skills, and build connections. The approach expands competitive sports by broadening club sports offerings, a key focus of the department's strategic plan. Montclair's programs accommodate all students, from varsity athletes to those seeking non-competitive wellness activities; their mission is to establish an innovative, inclusive athletics and recreation program prioritizing physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Montclair maintains a strong NCAA Division III athletics program with 19 varsity sports offered in 2025-2026, over 27 Club Sports teams, and a robust recreational program; in 2024-2025, 589 varsity athletes and 1,725 Club Sports athletes participated. Bloomfield College will shift to USCAA status beginning Fall 2025, by sponsoring four sports--Men's Soccer, Men's and Women's Basketball, and Women's Softball—as well as club sports. The Bear mascot will remain a symbol of Bloomfield College, while its own Athletic department will operate under Montclair's mission. Athletes' student success is tracked, including information about who transfers; Montclair's varsity athletes excel academically, achieving a 95% Academic Success Rate (graduation rate for Division III; see Evidence). The Department of Athletics and Recreation maintains an online presence at montclairathletics.com and bcbearsathletics.com, using social media to expand reach. A 2024 partnership with NJIT includes a shared stadium and turf after a $5.3 million renovation. Enhancements feature state-of-the-art turf, upgraded dugouts, new storage, improved bullpens, batting cages, VIP and press boxes, and upgraded locker rooms.

Undergraduate and Graduate Student Life

Post-pandemic, Montclair focused on re-engaging students. The Center for Student Involvement (CSI) remains key in connecting undergraduates, overseeing 150 student organizations and 34 Greek groups. The Engage platform links students to organizations, departments, and events. The Student Government Association (SGA), with a $1.5 million budget, enhances campus life through governance and programming. Dedicated staff support both residential and commuter students, fostering belonging. Bloomfield is fully integrated into student life.

Graduate students were queried directly about the student experience at Montclair via the 2024 Student Needs and Sense of Belonging Survey and during MSCHE focus groups for graduate students (*evidence inventory item, summary of Grad Student focus groups*). Over 70% of respondents rated traditional co-curricular and social activities as "not important." Similarly, focus group participants did not feel the need to establish a graduate student government organization for promoting graduate student life (particularly if it would result in new fees such as those at the undergraduate level). However, a point of concern is that 16% of the survey respondents reported feelings of isolation (highest amongst online students), concurrent with a lack of peer support. Montclair recognizes that graduate student communities are strongest at the peer-, program- and department-levels, facilitated by shared place of origin, cohort-based course schedules, department seminars, and department social events. To that end, TGS, International Academic Initiatives, and the Office of Global Engagement seek to promote peer networking via new student orientations and "welcome back" events for graduate students. In Spring 2025, TGS piloted a microinternship program to provide on-campus employment opportunities to promote a sense of belonging while simultaneously providing professional development and networking opportunities for graduate students. In response to the evolving needs of graduate students, the University is reimagining TGS, with discussions in progress for a new "Graduate Center" with a focus on student support services, academic skills support, co-curricular programing, and student-led programming.

Unlocking Potential: Strategic Development of Wrap-Around Student Support

(This section maps to criteria 1,3 and 5)

From 2021 to 2023, Montclair saw a rise in undergraduates facing basic needs insecurity (BNI), including food, housing, emergency aid, and mental health support. While these challenges existed before, COVID-19 worsened them, reinforcing the need for an integrated, compassionate approach that continues today. Montclair had begun addressing food insecurity in 2018, but the pandemic intensified student needs. In response, the Division of Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL) and Academic Affairs (AA) developed a comprehensive strategy incorporating academic, financial, mental health, and basic needs support.

By 2024, food pantry visits increased by 125%, leading to expanded hours and SNAP education. The Montclair Food Recovery Network grew, and the 2023 Food Champion Program launched to redistribute surplus food. These services continue, with new initiatives planned such as the monthly farmers market ensuring students have access to fresh healthy options.

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) enhanced case management, emergency grants, and housing/social service connections, while the Behavioral Intervention Team (CARE Team) saw a 194% rise in referrals from 2019 to 2024. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) experienced a similar rise and now serves over 3,000 students—a 547% increase—ensuring accessibility as a priority. Residence hall staff received expanded training supporting 5,200 students at Montclair's main campus and 200 at Bloomfield to connect to critical resources. In the post-pandemic recovery, the Student Health Center and the Office of Health Promotion played a vital role in supporting student well-being. By expanding outreach and increasing student engagement, these services helped address the heightened demand for medical care, mental health resources, and wellness support. The Student Health Center continues providing medical care, reproductive health services, and chronic illness management. The Office of Health Promotion expanded its outreach efforts in 2024, recording 5,500 drop-in visits and engaging over 15,811 students. This marks a significant increase from 2019, when there were 2,008 drop-in visits and 9,621 students engaged—reflecting a 174% rise in drop-in visits and a 64% increase in engagement. ***See SDCL DOS Strategic Initiatives Data.***

Montclair's wrap-around approach ensures students receive comprehensive support, from food and counseling to academic help and mentorship programs. While significant progress has been made, Montclair remains committed to adapting services to meet evolving student needs.

Supporting Career Development and Successful Post-Graduation Outcomes

(This section maps to criteria 1, 2 and 6)

Montclair State University graduates are uniquely positioned to explore and secure competitive careers in their respective fields. Montclair's "career everywhere" model offers a specialized approach to career planning, one in which students receive tailored career guidance from discipline-specific career centers. Within this decentralized structure, career advisors share their organizational expertise and knowledge with students, supporting them with finding experiential opportunities across a variety of industries. Students can select from a large portfolio of experiences that best suit their interests including credit-bearing internships, on-campus employment, project-based learning, student research, graduate

assistantships and micro internships. Montclair's newly minted, centralized Office for Experiential Education and Career Connections provides additional resources and support for each career center, ensuring their alignment with national best practices and standards for career success and cultivating internal and external partnerships. With a focus on building connected communities, the office has created a suite of technological tools that can support the goal of improving student access to fulfilling careers. As part of that toolkit, Montclair uses Handshake to connect students to career advisors, employers, opportunities and to strengthen their portfolio-building skills.

The career centers have used the First Destination Survey (FDS) in Handshake to track students' post-graduate career outcomes and have worked with the central office to identify priorities for improving students' career success. The First Destination Survey measures students' post-graduate outcomes and serves as a benchmark for student preparedness for their careers and an institution's ability to provide a proper return on investment. At Montclair State University, the rate of students with positive career outcomes (graduating students that are employed, pursuing further education, in the military, or pursuing entrepreneurship or other opportunities), has improved when compared to those students with poor career outcomes (not searching or still seeking a job). The latest report covers full- and part-time students from the August 2023, January 2024, and May 2024 cohorts within six months of graduation and shows an improvement in students with positive career outcomes from 49% to 58% in May 2025. Student participation in academic internships has also grown from 961 students in the 2024 academic year to 1140 in the 2025 academic year. Montclair ranked No. 4 in New Jersey and No. 104 nationally in the 2024 Wall Street Journal/College Pulse rankings, which are based largely on students' return on investment, or the extent to which a college boosts its graduates' salaries. For example, in November 2024, Montclair was awarded a five-year, $3 million NSF HSI grant for a project that enhances STEM internships by integrating psychoeducational counseling. The initiative aims to expand access to high-quality STEM experiences, provide socio-emotional support through group counseling, and evaluate its impact on students, faculty, and program coordinators at an HSI. Another notable mention is the two-year, $1 million grant from the PSEG Foundation to expand the Green Teams intern program, now in its tenth year, highlighting its impact on environmental challenges in New Jersey while supporting careers in the field.

Summary Statement

Montclair successfully meets the six benchmarks outlined in Standard IV with regular assessment of programs and ongoing efforts to align planning and resources with institutional goals that prioritize student success, high engagement, and operational efficiencies.

Key Findings

1. Assessment is a standardized process within divisions, with room for enhancement; in 2024, a new Director of Data and Assessment was hired for Student Development and Campus Life to continue improving that division's evaluation strategies.
2. Graduate students seek additional opportunities to build community in ways appropriate to their academic pursuits.
3. Academic advising and coaching are well-developed, evidence-backed models.
4. Montclair has placed a great deal of attention on the mental health needs and basic needs of students, through strategic partnerships and an increase in staffing.

5. Messaging to students is robust in modality but lacks multilingual options and social media consistency.
6. Career Services units connect experiential learning with career outcomes to address Montclair's below-average placement rate.

Next Steps

It is recommended that Montclair take the following actions:

- **Assessment.** Continue refining assessment processes to ensure consistent evaluation of student services. Programs such as academic coaching, early alerts, and basic needs support have expanded significantly, and it's essential to measure their impact and apply findings to inform data-driven improvements and strengthen institutional capacity.

- **Graduate Student Support.** Continue to expand graduate student access to assistantships, campus employment, and academic success resources. Expanding initiatives like micro-internships and exploring the feasibility of a graduate activity fee to enhance services and opportunities.

- **Fostering Belonging and Removing Barriers.** Continue developing strategies to promote belonging at both the Montclair and Bloomfield campuses. Build on successful efforts such as the revamped orientation, led by the Office of Student Belonging, and prioritize the removal of barriers to student engagement and enrollment. Continue strengthening integration between Red Hawk Central and college advising units to enhance student navigation of academic and administrative resources. Ensure staffing levels and infrastructure are scaled to match enrollment growth based on available data.

- **Meeting Basic Needs.** Continue expanding initiatives that address basic needs insecurity, and continue developing proactive communication strategies to increase student awareness and utilization of support services, especially during high-impact periods like registration and finals.

- **Career Services.** Strengthen the integration of experiential learning with career preparation. Improve the alignment of internships, co-ops, and learning opportunities with career outcomes, and build stronger partnerships with external organizations.

STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard V and all five of its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard V can be reviewed in the Evidence Inventory in the table below:

Table X: Standard V Evidence Inventory

Criterion	Supporting Evidence
1. Clearly stated student learning outcomes at the institution and degree/program levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission;	SERC-Process; SEEDS-SLO Assessment Plan & Report; Assessment Plan Templates-Program Alterations and New Programs; MA in Data Science Assessment Plan; Curriculum Map-Samples
2a. Organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should: (a) define student learning outcomes that are appropriate to higher education with defensible standards for assessing whether students are achieving those outcomes;	SERC-Process; SERC-EFET; SERC-History; SERC-ESPE; SERC-TETD; SERC-Linguistics Assessment Report-Exercise Science - Clinical and Pre-Professional Concentration (B.S.), 2022-2023 and 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Physics (B.S.), 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Mathematics (B.S.), 2021-2022 and 2023-2024); CAA Annual Report-Speech Language Pathology, 2023; AACSB Accreditation Study-Feliciano School of Business, 2019; BCMSU FYW Assessment Report 2024
2b. Organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should: (b) articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where	SERC-Process; SERC-EFET; SERC-History; SERC-ESPE; SERC-TETD; SERC-Linguistics Assessment Report-Exercise Science - Clinical and Pre-Professional Concentration (B.S.), 2022-2023 and 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Physics (B.S.), 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Mathematics (B.S.), 2021-2022 and 2023-

appropriate, further education. They collect and provide data on the extent to which they are meeting these goals;	2024); CAA Annual Report-Speech Language Pathology, 2023; AACSB Accreditation Study-Feliciano School of Business, 2019
2c. Organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should: (c) support and sustain assessment of student learning outcomes and communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholders;	SERC-EFET; SERC-History; SERC-ESPE; SERC-TETD; SERC-Linguistics Assessment Report-Exercise Science - Clinical and Pre-Professional Concentration (B.S.), 2022-2023 and 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Physics (B.S.), 2023-2024; Assessment Report-Mathematics (B.S.), 2021-2022 and 2023-2024); CAA Annual Report-Speech Language Pathology, 2023; AACSB Accreditation Study-Feliciano School of Business, 2019
3. Consideration and use of disaggregated assessment results for all student populations for the improvement of student learning outcomes, student achievement, and institutional and program-level educational effectiveness;	12twenty class of 2023; BC-Fact Book-2023
4. If applicable, adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers; and	NA
5. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment policies and processes utilized by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness.	Academic Assessment Committee (AAC); AAC Leadership Council (LC); Assessment Task Force Reports-2019; BCMSU Integration Plan; Assessment Guidebook

The remainder of this chapter provides analysis of key issues concerning assessment of educational effectiveness.

Introduction

This chapter addresses how Montclair State University aligns student learning outcomes with the institution's mission and priorities. It describes the university's comprehensive framework for student learning outcomes assessment, highlights how data analytics is utilized for curricular and pedagogical

improvements, and discusses how institutional resources are aligned with assessment processes to foster a culture of continuous educational effectiveness.

Since the last self-study, academic programs at Montclair State University have made serious efforts to tie all programmatic student learning outcomes to the institution's mission and priorities. All academic programs have developed program learning goals with student learning outcomes that connect to the institution's mission and strategic priorities. With the recent revision of the institution's mission and strategic framework, programs have begun to review program learning goals and student learning outcomes to ensure continued alignment.

Since the last self-study, Montclair has clarified the assessment framework and strengthened assessment processes to improve educational effectiveness. The institution has created clear assessment guidelines to ensure assessment is consistent across the institution. To assist with this, a clear institutional structure for academic assessment has been developed. Supporting this work has been investment in technological infrastructure to better manage assessment data. Since 2023, this work has included integrating Bloomfield College into the assessment procedures and mechanisms of assessment at the university.

Montclair has deeply integrated assessment data and reports to guide programmatic changes, new program development, and subsequent resource allocation. The institution has created a system for programmatic assessment that demands student learning assessment results be reviewed regularly. Results of these assessments are then used to revise academic programs and guide institutional resource investments.

Montclair State University has developed a rigorous, systematic approach to assessment that is embedded within its academic culture. The university's approach to assessment integrates clearly defined student learning outcomes at both the institutional and program levels, systematically evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning across all disciplines. This chapter will provide detailed insights into how these assessments are designed and implemented, and how they inform institutional decision-making processes, from curriculum development to resource allocation.

Aligning Student Learning to Institutional Mission and Priorities

(This section maps to criteria 1 and 5)

Educational effectiveness at Montclair State University is closely aligned with the institution's strategic goals, particularly in driving student success. Initiatives designed to improve educational effectiveness support Montclair's objectives of enhancing graduation rates, retention, and overall student satisfaction. These efforts are tightly connected to Montclair State's mission of fostering student success, community engagement, and workforce readiness. By aligning educational effectiveness initiatives with the university's strategic priorities, Montclair demonstrates its commitment to ensuring high-quality education.

To ensure the institution's mission and priorities are reflected in students' educational experiences, academic programs have designed program learning goals and course-specific student learning outcomes tied to the mission and priorities. These outcomes are interrelated across programs and reflect both the academic and professional skills students are expected to develop. In developing these outcomes,

programs ensure they are linked to the core competencies that are vital for student success in their future careers, contributing meaningfully to society, and advancing in higher education (Curriculum Map-Samples).

For example, with new degree programs, Montclair State University adheres to the procedures and requirements of the New Jersey Academic Issues Committee, which is responsible for reviewing all new degree programs in the state (AIC Manual & Forms). These procedures require narrative explanation and analysis regarding how the objectives of the new program align directly with our institutional mission and strategic goals. When academic units modify established academic programs, including degrees, certificates, and minors, college and university curriculum committees, along with the Provost's Office, review the assessment plan to ensure that program learning goals maintain an ongoing connection to the institutional mission and strategic goals (Program Changes-Assessment Plan). A similar process occurs at the course level of the curriculum. When a new course is proposed or an existing course is revised, the course learning objectives are reviewed to ensure alignment through a comprehensive workflow that includes the academic unit, its college, and the Provost's Office (CIM Example).

Aligning assessment with the institution's mission and strategic goals ensures that Montclair State University is not only meeting academic standards but also preparing students to thrive in their careers and broader life endeavors. This alignment ensures that learning goals are directly linked to the university's mission of promoting academic excellence, fostering an inclusive and engaged community, and supporting the personal and professional development of its students. As the roll-out of the revised mission and strategic priorities commences, programs will revise their own program learning goals, if necessary, during the regular cycle of program assessment.

The Montclair Framework and Process for Assessment and Education Effectiveness

(This section maps to criteria 1, 2, 4 and 5)

Since the last Self-Study, Montclair has clarified the assessment framework and strengthened assessment processes to improve educational effectiveness. In recent years, Montclair State University has witnessed a significant transformation in its approach to assessment, evolving from a less structured system to a more comprehensive, faculty-led model. Faculty engagement and leadership, supported by initiatives from the Provost's office, have become central to this model, which is supported by updated handbooks and templates that guide the development of assessment practices, a revised institutional committee structure for assessment, and additional technological infrastructure to support data management. The success of this model's flexibility and effectiveness is seen with the integration of Bloomfield College into the university's assessment efforts.

The Montclair Assessment Process

The current assessment efforts build on the foundation laid in the late 2010s, when Montclair State implemented a more structured, campus-wide approach to student learning outcomes and program assessment. During that period, the University established initial frameworks for data collection, reporting, and faculty engagement in assessment, which have since evolved into more systematic and sustainable practices.

Building on that foundation, Montclair's assessment procedures began to evolve. Emphasizing its role of providing support, the Office of the Provost offers a variety of resources to empower programs to take ownership of the assessment process. Program faculty are the experts in their disciplines and can best determine the level at which students are learning. As such, faculty serve as the primary drivers of the assessment process, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in evaluating student outcomes.

While approximately 150 programs adhere to in-depth assessment processes established by their discipline-specific accrediting bodies, the Office of the Provost recognized that nearly 140 programs did not have outside accreditors. Therefore, for these programs, it established a centralized assessment process and structure that allows for a rigorous faculty-led assessment.

To address the challenge of programs using differing assessment terminology leading to inconsistencies in interpretation and application, Montclair established and maintains a range of published resources that create a shared assessment vocabulary and establishes a common assessment process. These resources are available through several different formats (including Canvas sites, the Assessment Guidebook, the Program Assessment Planning Template, the Assessment Newsletter, Annual Assessment Cycle Checklist 2024-2025, Nuventive Manual December 2024, and Program Assessment Planning Template January 2025) and ensure uniformity across the institution. These resources provide clear, consistent definitions for key terms in the assessment process, enabling all programs to align with institution-wide standards.

The Assessment Guidebook details the assessment procedures expected for programs, including establishing program learning goals, student learning outcomes, rubrics, processes for data collection, and steps to "close the loop." As part of the assessment process, and as detailed in the Assessment Guidebook, programs are expected to have a curriculum map laying out where concepts are introduced, reinforced, and mastered. This curriculum mapping helps maintain a coherent curriculum. Through mapping, faculty can identify how courses build on each other, ensuring that students are exposed to a logical progression of concepts. This continuity helps to prevent redundancy, minimize gaps, and ensure that students receive a well-rounded education that is both comprehensive and cohesive (Curriculum Map-Samples).

To help programs with their assessments, the Office of the Provost's assessment staff regularly offers a range of training opportunities, including two weekly drop-in Zoom meetings for programs seeking help; one session provides assistance with navigating the Nuventive platform, and the other session is an "assessment lab," that can serve as protected time to work on assessment projects or informal question-and-answer time.

Programs with outside accreditors adhere to the assessment schedule imposed by those accreditors, and those accreditation reports (see samples Speech Language Pathology CAA Annual Report, 2023 and Feliciano School of Business AACSB, 2019) further integrate assessment data into the improvement process by ensuring that the program meets accreditation standards. These reports also inform institutional improvements, using assessment data as a basis for demonstrating the program's effectiveness and compliance with accrediting bodies' expectations.

Programs following the internal Montclair assessment schedule are required to assess all outcomes within a three-year period (sample, pages 18-22) and are strongly encouraged to develop a comprehensive long-term assessment plan that allows for annual revisions as necessary. Additional prompts for assessment plan updates may arise when a program submits a new course proposal or a program alteration, or when a

program conducts its six-year external review, which is a regularly scheduled program evaluation conducted by external evaluators for programs without discipline-specific accreditors (SERC-EFET; SERC-History; SERC-ESPE; SERC-TETD; SERC-Linguistics

The current assessment model at Montclair State University is characterized by its comprehensive and integrated nature, which reflects the lessons learned from past accreditation processes and assessment practices. The university's approach emphasizes faculty-driven assessment, continuous feedback loops, and the alignment of academic and co-curricular efforts.

Assessment of Organizational Structures

Changes to the organizational structure of the university, colleges, and departments have led to a clearly delineated integration of assessment in the governing structure of the university. This has streamlined and unified assessment practices across departments and colleges, ensuring consistency and alignment with university-wide goals.

The Office of the Provost established an Academic Assessment Committee (AAC), comprising at least one faculty member from each participating department; programs that have external disciplinary accreditors are not required to participate in this committee. Representatives serve as a communication channel between the Provost Office's Assessment Team and programs. This ongoing, strategic communication equips committee members with the tools and information they need to remain deeply engaged and actively drive the assessment process forward with unwavering dedication and purpose.

A Leadership Council (LC), consisting of five AAC members, plays a pivotal role in championing the assessment process. The LC is responsible for tasks such as developing and interpreting policies, as well as organizing workshops aimed at fostering faculty development. These initiatives show a commitment to our broader faculty community that assessment is a faculty-driven process, and they offer valuable opportunities to engage in collaborative learning and share best practices with their peers.

Additionally, the Six-year External Review Committee (SERC) process conducts external reviews, leveraging assessment results to provide an objective perspective on the program's strengths and areas for improvement. These reviews offer valuable insights that inform curricular adjustments and contribute to the program's continuous development. The use of SERC templates and materials helps ensure these reviews are structured and systematic.

At the college and departmental level, assessment processes and structures are more varied, depending on the discipline and size of the unit; however, all colleges and departments have a formalized assessment structure to guide faculty through the institutional assessment requirements.

Technological Infrastructure and Assessment Data Management

Montclair's Office of the Provost has prioritized investments in technological infrastructure to facilitate academic assessment processes and data management.

In 2022, the institution purchased access to Nuventive to act as a repository for data collection, to facilitate data analysis, and to house assessment reports from across the institution. A number of programs that follow discipline-specific accreditors' assessment processes elect to use an alternative platform or process; however, all other academic programs must use Nuventive as their annual student learning

assessment platform. Within Nuventive, programs maintain individual dashboards to annually review and record active PLGs, active SLOs, curriculum mapping, active assessment measures, data collection, results, action plans, and overall reflections. Programs can also upload rubrics used to analyze data, tables and graphs, student work samples, and other relevant materials that tell a complete story of the annual assessment (Nuventive User Manual, Guide to Using Nuventive for Annual Assessment Cycle).

Nuventive Action Plans (see sample reports: Exercise Science - Clinical and Pre-Professional Concentration (B.S.), 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, Physics (B.S.), 2023-2024, and Mathematics (B.S.), 2021-2022 and 2023-2024) play a critical role in closing the loop on assessment. Based on the data collected, action plans are developed to implement changes and ensure continuous program improvement. This process ensures that feedback from assessments is not only considered but actively used to refine the program.

Montclair uses Nuventive as its primary storage solution for assessment data, providing a centralized repository where data can be securely stored, easily accessed, and analyzed. Archiving assessment data also plays an important role in preserving historical records, allowing Montclair to track progress over time and assess long-term trends in program effectiveness.

Complementing Nuventive's capability as a data repository and analysis tool, Canvas Learning Outcomes provides program-level outcomes assessment tracking. Programs work with Montclair's Instructional Technology and Design Services (ITDS) to upload student learning outcomes, assign specific course assignments, and create outcomes-level rubrics. Program faculty evaluate student work using the outcomes-level rubrics, and ITDS shares the data at the conclusion of the term. Additionally, this data can be viewed in table or graph form in a program's Nuventive dashboard. This tool is relatively new, and the Office of the Provost and ITDS are working together to promote it and onboard more programs.

Some programs also incorporate into their assessments data available through the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, such as enrollment data and analytics in Gray DI. Montclair is in the process of implementing dashboards through HelioCampus, which provide another avenue for examining data related to student outcomes (provide some tangible examples here). As Montclair continues to grow, it may benefit from assessing its use of third-party vendors to ensure consistency and efficiency.

Integration of BCMSU into Assessment

A significant recent challenge was the integration of the Bloomfield College assessment process into Montclair State's broader assessment framework. The BCMSU Integration Plan provided a structured approach to align internal processes with external benchmarks, further strengthening the university's commitment to continuous improvement.

The merger with Bloomfield College highlighted the critical need for standardized language, as faculty were operating under differing definitions and processes. Assessment leaders in the Provost's office met with the existing assessment team at Bloomfield College to standardize language and processes, after which the revised assessment information was presented to Bloomfield area coordinators. As part of this Bloomfield area coordinators were trained on Nuventive and asked to load their programs onto that platform. Assessment processes at Bloomfield now follow the larger institutional model and timelines.

Using Assessment Data to Guide Programmatic Changes, New Program Development, and Resource Allocation

(This section maps to criteria 3 and 5)

Montclair has deeply integrated assessment data and reports to guide programmatic changes, new program development, and subsequent resource allocation. The institution has created a system for programmatic assessment that demands student learning assessment results to be reviewed regularly. Results of these assessments are then used to revise academic programs and guide institutional resource investments.

Assessment Data for Programmatic Revision

A central principle of the institution's academic operations is the use of ongoing, systematic assessment to inform curricular development and refinement. The commitment to evidence-based decision-making ensures that academic programs are continuously aligned with student needs, disciplinary standards, and institutional goals. Assessment is not viewed as an isolated task but as an integrated and cyclical process - one that directly influences both short-term pedagogical decisions and long-term strategic planning across departments and programs. Curricular updates are therefore not isolated changes but are systematically analyzed for their impact on learning outcomes, and assessment strategies are adjusted accordingly to maintain relevance and rigor.

Assessment results are regularly reviewed at the course, program, and institutional levels to determine whether students are achieving stated learning outcomes. The results of ongoing assessments are used to identify areas for improvement within the curriculum. When specific learning outcomes are not being met at the expected proficiency levels, faculty and curriculum committees examine various aspects, such as course content, instructional methods, material sequencing, and prerequisite knowledge, to determine the necessary adjustments. This process often leads to refinements in teaching approaches and assignments, with feedback from direct assessment methods - such as rubric-scored assignments, exams, and portfolios - prompting changes in how material is taught and assessed. In some cases, assessment findings may result in structural changes to the program, including adjustments to credit hour requirements, alterations in the order of required courses, the introduction of new electives, or modifications to capstone experiences to better align with learning outcomes. Additionally, ongoing review of assessment instruments allows departments to evaluate whether the tools and benchmarks used to measure student learning are appropriate, valid, and effective, ensuring the accuracy and utility of future data collection.

For example, the Master of Data Science program follows a robust annual assessment process (see Master of Arts in Data Science Assessment Plan) aligned with student learning outcomes. Faculty use these results to inform continuous improvements in teaching and curriculum. For example, after identifying gaps in students' knowledge of deep learning through the assessment of SLO2.1, the department introduced a new course, CSIT 599: Deep Learning, to launch in Fall 2025. This responsive approach has supported program growth, with enrollment rising from 16 students in Fall 2020 to 137 in Fall 2024.

The development and modification of academic programs and individual courses originate within academic departments or units, driven by faculty expertise, disciplinary standards, market demand, and

student needs. Proposed curricula undergo a multi-layered approval process with assessment considered at each step. Throughout these stages, program designers are required to develop a comprehensive Assessment Plan (See resources: A Snapshot of the Assessment Plan and the Program Assessment Planning Template) that demonstrates how learning outcomes will be evaluated, what benchmarks will be used, and how data will inform instructional and curricular improvements. The integration of assessment at this early stage ensures that courses and programs are not only academically coherent but also assessable in terms of student achievement and educational effectiveness.

In addition to discipline specific curricular revisions based on assessments, the University embeds assessment processes and uses assessment results in university-wide programs. For example, since the last MSCHE Self-Study, Montclair has worked to revise its general education program (as detailed in Chapter 3). Assessment has been a central concern in the design and implementation of the new SEEDS curriculum. The report of the second Blue Ribbon Task Force included an Assessment Framework which has been subsequently modified in response to changes to the design and implementation of the program. Such revisions have retained the centrality of assessment for the creation of an academically rigorous program responsive to changing educational demands. Key features of the assessment framework include: a process of certification that requires that SEEDS courses align their course objectives to the student learning outcomes of the SEEDS curriculum. It is also required that every course is recertified every five years with the understanding that assessment data and results will be used for the purposes of recertification. More detailed information on plans for assessing the SEEDS curriculum can be found in the SEEDS Assessment Framework.

The new SEEDS curriculum was piloted in Fall 2024 with students who entered the institution as undeclared students. By the end of Fall 2024 SEEDS leadership had collected and analyzed data from courses certified in four of the Foundations learning outcomes. The results of these assessments can be found in the first SEEDS Assessment Report. This report represents the first of four reports that will complete the Pre-Implementation phase described in the SEEDS Assessment Framework. Data and results collected during this Pre-Implementation phase will enable SEEDS leadership to make recommendations for improvements to the existing curriculum and recertification. It will also inform changes to the methods and tools of assessment.

On the Bloomfield Campus, the First Year Writing (FYW) program has utilized ePortfolios since 2020 and has conducted assessments of student learning using ePortfolios since 2022. Results of ePortfolio assessments have included major revisions to the two-course curriculum and an expanded use of ePortfolios during both courses and in a required spring semester Student Symposium. (See BCMSU FYW Assessment Report 2024 Spring).

Montclair's approach to continuous improvement focuses on using assessment data to drive change, track progress, and measure the impact on student success both during their time at the university and after graduation. Through targeted strategies, measurable outcomes, and ongoing evaluation, the university ensures that its academic programs are continuously evolving to meet the needs of its students and the demands of the broader workforce.

Assessment Data for New Program Development

Ongoing assessment plays a critical role in shaping Montclair's academic offerings. Faculty and academic leadership regularly review assessment data to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Thus, assessment data plays a foundational role in the creation of new academic offerings. Insights derived from assessment activities guide departments in identifying curricular gaps, emerging student needs, workforce demands, and opportunities for innovation.

Assessment data play a crucial role in driving the development of new programs by uncovering unmet learning needs, such as student challenges that current course offerings cannot fully address. These insights often lead to the creation of new courses or concentrations designed to fill educational gaps. Additionally, program reviews and accreditation self-studies often involve benchmarking against peer institutions, enabling faculty to assess how current outcomes compare to national standards or similar programs, which may highlight areas where new curricula are necessary to remain competitive or meet professional standards. External requirements, such as those from accrediting bodies, licensing organizations, or employers, also influence new program development. When assessment results show that existing offerings fall short of meeting these external expectations, faculty are prompted to propose targeted additions. (See examples: UG Certificate in Neuroinclusive Practices and Leadership - New Certificate; MA Justice Leadership and Innovation - New Degree; Master of Social Work - Program Alteration; BA in Biology - New Degree)

Assessment for Resource Allocation

As referenced throughout this chapter, the process for assessing student learning, formalized in either programs' disciplinary accreditations or the university-led CERC requirement, influences programs' growth, evolution, and development. Decisions about programs' futures carry resource implications. During program reviews and assessment cycles, assessment findings are carefully evaluated, helping to identify areas in need of improvement and areas where resources should be reallocated. This data-driven approach not only ensures that financial and material resources are directed to where they will have the greatest impact but also strengthens the institution's ability to respond proactively to evolving academic needs. The program review process, coupled with regular assessment cycles, ensures that resource allocation decisions are not made in isolation but are deeply rooted in measurable outcomes.

Additionally, data collection and assessment results influence campus-wide initiatives requiring resource allocations. For example, [explain assessment results showing messy syllabi on Canvas]. To ensure clarity in syllabi across the institution, the university has launched the Simple Syllabus Initiative. This initiative aims to standardize and streamline the syllabus design process across programs, ensuring that all syllabi are clear, concise, and aligned with learning outcomes and assessment strategies. By simplifying the syllabus, the initiative enhances communication between faculty and students, setting clear expectations from the outset. The initiative emphasizes the inclusion of essential components, such as course learning outcomes, assessment methods, grading policies, and course materials, making it easier for both faculty and students to focus on the core objectives of each course. This initiative is an important part of the university's broader goal of ensuring consistency and alignment across curricula, supporting student success and making assessment more effective and transparent.

In order to foster a culture of innovation and excellence, the allocation of resources aligns strategically with the institution's broader goals. As Montclair evolves and adapts to new academic, technological, and societal trends, the resource strategy remains flexible and forward-looking. This strategy ensures that investments are directed toward areas that enhance the institution's capacity for innovative teaching, learning, and research, while also supporting its mission to provide high-quality education that meets the demands of today's global landscape.

Summary Statement

Montclair State University meets the requirements of Standard V and all associated criteria. The institution has developed a rigorous, systematic approach to assessment that is embedded within its academic culture. The university's approach to assessment integrates clearly defined student learning outcomes at both the institutional and program levels, systematically evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning across all disciplines. This chapter will provide detailed insights into how these assessments are designed and implemented, and how they inform institutional decision-making processes, from curriculum development to resource allocation.

Key Findings

- Montclair State University has developed clearly articulated student learning outcomes (SLOs) at both the institutional and degree/program levels. These SLOs are interrelated and connected to the university's educational experiences, ensuring they are aligned with the university's mission. The SLOs are designed to prepare students for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, when applicable, further education.
- The university has established robust feedback mechanisms that link assessment outcomes to curriculum modifications. These cycles are critical for continuous improvement, ensuring that academic programs remain relevant and responsive to student needs and industry trends.
- The institution has established a well-organized approach to the assessment of student learning outcomes. Faculty, in collaboration with other appropriate professionals, regularly evaluate student achievement of these outcomes. The assessments are grounded in defensible standards and practices, ensuring that they are appropriate to higher education. Data collected from these assessments are utilized to evaluate the success of institutional and program-level goals and to inform ongoing curriculum development. Assessment results also guide new program development and resource allocation

Next Steps

Although Montclair has integrated thorough assessment processes in its academic programs, it continuously evaluates its progress and tries to strengthen assessment processes throughout its academic offerings. Areas identified for improvement include:

- With the revision to the institutional mission and strategic framework, all academic programs will need to ensure existing program learning goals align with the revised mission and strategic priorities and make revisions as necessary.
- The institution will need to continue strengthening the feedback loops between assessment results and curricular adjustments. This will include refining communication channels to ensure that the results of assessments are shared more broadly with all stakeholders. Additionally, more

structured reporting mechanisms will need to be established to track the effectiveness of curriculum modifications based on assessment data.

- Montclair will continue its commitment to periodic review and refinement of its assessment policies. In particular, the university will enhance its processes for evaluating the effectiveness of third-party providers and services where applicable, ensuring that these external contributions align with institutional goals.
- Programs will need to meet the ongoing challenge of ensuring faculty engagement and shared ownership of the assessment process. While many faculty members actively participate in assessment and recognize its value, others may view it as a compliance-driven task rather than a tool for continuous improvement. Sustaining broad-based engagement requires ongoing communication, professional development, and institutional support is vital to ensure assessment of academic programs continues to strengthen.
- As the University continues to revise and implement its General Education curriculum (SEEDS), there is a need to recalibrate assessment strategies to align with new learning goals and ensure comprehensive evaluation of outcomes across all undergraduate programs.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard VI and all its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard VI can be reviewed in the Evidence Inventory in the table below:

Table X: Standard VI Evidence Inventory

Criterion	Supporting Evidence
1. Institutional and unit goals that are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation;	Division/ unit goals and objectives: Combined F&A FY25 Business Plans University Communications and Marketing Goals SDLC Goals Documentation of an implemented, systematic, and sustained institutional assessment process linking the assessment and evaluation process to budgeting, planning and resource allocation: Non-Academic Assessment Progress at MSU Nuventive Progress Update
2. clearly documented and communicated planning and improvement processes that provide for inclusive constituent participation;	Documentation of planning and assessment processes used to make improvements: Nuventive Data SDCL Data Team - Dashboard Proposal HelioCampus Data EDUCAUSE Student Technology Survey University Communications Evidence of consideration and use of appropriate assessment by key institutional and unit stakeholders for identifying opportunities for innovation and/or the improvement of educational effectiveness at division/unit levels: Comprehensive Learner Record Initiative Workday Student Files Integration of OSJD to OSB
3. planning that integrates goals for institutional effectiveness and improvement, including a focus on student achievement, educational outcomes, overall institutional improvement, and the results of institutional assessments;	Note: Need more info on the new strategic framework Most recent institutional strategic and other documentation of strategic planning: Toward a Strategic Framework Presentation from the Provost April 3rd Management Meeting Slides Strategic Plan 2025 Strategic Plan 2025 KPIs

4. planning for diversity, equity, and inclusion that is aligned with the institution's mission and goals, maintains sufficient resources, and leads to institutional improvement;	Evidence of the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in the development and implementation of the institution's strategic plan and resource allocation Strategic Plan 2025 Strategic Plan 2025 KPIs Updated University's Mission Statement (Draft) Mission Statement and date of revision published on the MSU website Student Headcount Data, disaggregated by relevant populations: Montclair State University: Enrollment Data Bloomfield: Enrollment Data Montclair State University 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Bloomfield College 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Montclair IPEDS Data Feedback Reports Human Resources Data, disaggregated by relevant populations: Montclair State University: Human Resources Data Bloomfield College: Human Resources Data Faculty and Student Demographic Data (Fall 2023) Montclair State University 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Bloomfield College 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Learning & Talent Development Documents HR Support Center Data Montclair IPEDS Data Feedback Reports Bloomfield IPEDs Data Feedback Reports
5. a financial planning and budgeting process that is aligned with the institution's mission and goals, evidence-based, and clearly linked to the institution's and units' strategic plans/objectives;	Budgeting policies, procedures, and resources: FY 24&25 Montclair Operating Budget Montclair 5-Year Capital Plan Budget Projections Unit Budget Examples (CSAM and Development) FY26 Budget Call Memorandum Budget Policies and Procedures New Budget Model Documents FY 26 Budget Priorities Budget Call User Guide Budget Documents and Resources Enrollment projections and strategic enrollment management plan: 2021 - 2023 Strategic Enrollment Management Plan Enrollment Management Budget Narrative (May 2023) Enrollment and Five Year Projections Slide Deck (BOT Presentation) Enrollment Projection Narrative - 2025 Enrollment Projections (as of 10-25-2024) Montclair State University: Enrollment Data Financial planning: Montclair 5-Year Capital Plan Risk Management Documents

6. fiscal and human resources as well as the physical and technical infrastructure adequate to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered;	Human Resources Data: Montclair State University: Human Resources Data Bloomfield College: Human Resources Data Faculty and Student Demographic Data (Fall 2023) Montclair State University 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Bloomfield College 2024 IPEDS Data Feedback Report Learning & Talent Development Documents HR Support Center Data Montclair IPEDS Data Feedback Reports Bloomfield IPEDs Data Feedback Reports Evidence of adequate resourcing at all branch campuses and FY 24&25 Montclair Operating Bloomfield College Integration into Montclair Budget Processes Montclair 5-Year Capital Plan HelioCampus Data Facilities Apprenticeship Program Facilities Apprenticeship Program Operating expenses: MSU Operating Expenses FY 24&25 Montclair Operating Budget Office of Sponsored Programs 2024 Report Office of Sponsored Programs Annual Reports
7. documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability;	Financial ratio analysis: Financial Ratio Analysis Capitalization Ratio Montclair State University Capitalization Ratios Debt service, last four years Montclair State University Debt Service Instructional expense per credit hour Break-Even Analysis Presentation Break-Even Analysis Calculations Form 990 Montclair State Foundation's Form 990 (2023) Documentation of funding streams from related entities: Montclair State University Foundation - Financial Statement (24 and 23) Bloomfield Endowment: Goldman Sachs Statement Montclair State Foundation's Audited Financial Statements Montclair State Foundation's Reports Webpage Auxiliary Services Documents Montclair Unbound Documents Pre-College Summer Program Documents

	Analysis of state appropriations: FY25 NJ State Appropriations Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations Bill Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Bill FY26 Tuition Hearing Presentation Bond Ratings Montclair State University Bond Ratings
8. a record of responsible fiscal management, including preparing a multi-year budget and an annual independent audit confirming financial viability and proper internal financial controls, with evidence of corrective measures taken to address any material findings cited in the audit or an accompanying management letter;	Annual financial audit statements: Audited Financial Statements Divisional Quarterly Review Data Internal Audit Data Annual Financial Statements Webpage Supporting documentation to assist with understanding financial statements Single Audit (A-133 Reports) Annual Financial Statements Webpage Follow-up on any findings or material weaknesses Evidence of follow-up on any findings or material weaknesses narrative Audited Financial Statements Annual Financial Statements Webpage
9. well-defined, inclusive decision-making processes and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability for achieving institutional and unit effectiveness;	Organizational charts for the institution, including divisions and units Administrative Organizational Charts Sample of agenda and decision-making meeting minutes BOT Minutes (PDFs) BOT 02/05/2025 Public Agenda BOT Expense analysis Operating Expenses
10. comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology that includes consideration of sustainability and deferred maintenance and is linked to the institution's strategic and financial planning processes;	Comprehensive plans for facilities, equipment, and supplies Capital Facilities Master Plan: Vision 2030 DRAFT Document Master Buildings Spreadsheet Facilities Division Reports Bloomfield Integration Data Sustainability Data Comprehensive Plans for Facilities, Equipment, & Supplies Documents Environmental Health & Safety Emergency Response Plans Fire Emergency Prevention & Response Plans UF Surplus Furniture Program

	Facilities condition analyses and deferred maintenance: Gordian Report- Condition Analyses & Deferred Maintenance
	Space utilization studies Space Use Assessment Study: Phase One Findings Space Use Assessment Study: Phase One Findings Executive Summary
	Capital budget and expenditures Capital 5-Year Plan FY 24&25 Montclair Operating Budget
	IT expenditure and replacement cycle documentation Lifecycle Replacement Expenditures Computer Lifecycle Policy Web Overhaul Project Evidence
	Documentation regarding ownership Ownership Documentation - Leases Montclair State University Insurance Policies Bloomfield College Insurance Policies
	Sample of agreements and/or contracts with third party providers for key business functions Sample Agreements and Contracts
11. compliance with its program responsibilities under existing federal title IV and other state laws and regulations, including any audits of financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations;	Program participation agreement (PPA) Montclair State University PPA PPA Approval Letter from ED

Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) Statement of Accreditation Status

Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR), most recent ECAR

Heightened Cash Monitoring (HCM) Status. Note: Bloomfield is not longer reporting as of March 2025; Does not apply to Montclair BC of MSU Unrestricted Cash Balance as of 02-28-25 (final one) BCMSU Cash Reporting Email 02-28-25 (final one) Bloomfield HCM Status Documents

Title IV Responsibilities (Verification of Compliance - Title IV Responsibilities and federal regulation 34 CFR 602.16(a)(1)(x)) |

	Three-year official cohort default rate (FY21) Official Cohort Default Rates for Schools webpage Financial Responsibility Composite Scores webpage Note: Financial responsibility composite score / composite score index does not apply for Montclair State University (public colleges do not have composite scores; only private, not-profit, and proprietary)
	Program Review Determination Letter Program Review Determination Letter Response back to Program Review Determination Letter
	Single Audit (OMB Circular A-128; OMB Circular A-133, 2 CFR 200 Subpart F: Uniform Guidance) Single Audit (A-133 Reports) Note: USDE Correspondence and institutional response related to limited, suspended, terminated eligibility to participate in Title IV and For Profit Institutions - 90/10 Rule – percentage of revenue from federal funds do not apply to Montclair State University
12. strategies to measure and assess the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals; and	Resource planning and analysis of resource utilization Vendor analysis for HR realign Vendor analysis for Procurement realign Unit Goals and Organization Charts
13. periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources.	Evidence of discussion and use of evidence noted above by governing body, chief executive officer, staff, and faculty in budgeting, planning, and resource allocation Institutional assessment process Non-Academic Assessment Progress at MSU Consultant and taskforce reports: Vendor analysis for HR realign Vendor analysis for Procurement realign
Additional Supporting Evidence for the Narrative	

Introduction

Montclair State University demonstrates a sustained commitment to its strategic framework, financial stewardship, and institutional effectiveness through a data-informed approach that aligns resources with the University's mission and priorities. Enhancements to the budgeting process (Row 27, Column I - FY26 Budget Call Memorandum & Guidelines 2-20-25), including scenario and operational planning, have strengthened connections between fiscal decisions and institutional performance. The ongoing transition to a hybrid Responsibility Center Management (RCM) model (Row 27, Column K - New Budget Model Documents - Montclair NBM - FY26 Topics) further advances transparency and accountability. Despite significantly lower per-student state funding than peers (provide details here), Montclair maintains lower operating costs, lean staffing, and disciplined debt service at 5% of the $650 million FY '26 budget (Placeholder for new evidence - new operating budget or audited financial statement). Sustainability principles are embedded across operations through the Office of Sustainability, statewide decarbonization efforts (Row 55, Column I - Sustainability Data - New Jersey Clean Energy Program's Higher Education Decarbonization Pilot), and investments in preventive maintenance, green purchasing, and student engagement.

Institutional growth is pursued deliberately to ensure new initiatives strengthen both mission delivery and operational efficiency. The merger with Bloomfield College of Montclair State University (BCMSU) expanded academic offerings, broadened access, and achieved operational gains through shared services and system integration (Row 33, Column F - Bloomfield College Integration into Montclair Budget Processes; Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary - June 2025). Strategic technology investments, such as the Workday enterprise suite (Row 12, Column F - Workday Student Files - Workday Student Webpage) and Montclair Unbound (Row 43, Column K - Montclair Unbound Documents - Montclair Unbound Webpage), advance administrative modernization and academic innovation. Operational capacity has been further enhanced through the HR Support Center (Row 32, Column K - HR Support Center Data - Introducing the HR Support Center) and the June 2023 appointment of the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration (Row 11, Column I - University Communications - Hirings - University Hires Chief Operating Officer; placeholder for organizational chart), who provides executive oversight for finance, human resources, information technology, auxiliary services, business services, facilities, and sustainability.

Major institutional changes, strategic initiatives, and campus-wide projects are communicated through multiple channels, including town halls, leadership meetings, project websites, newsletters, and the *In The Know* employee digest (Row 11, Column I - University Communications). These practices ensure transparency, foster engagement, and reinforce shared accountability, sustaining the University's culture of collaboration and mission alignment.

Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

(This section maps to criteria 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11)

Strategic Financial Planning and Resource Stewardship

Montclair exemplifies responsible fiscal management and long-range planning through its consistent alignment of resources with mission-driven priorities. Operating with 21% fewer employees per student and maintaining expenditures 33% below the sector average (placeholder - need to confirm amount and tag evidence), the University has stabilized its institutional cost per full-time equivalent (FTE) student even as enrollment has steadily increased and state funding remains limited. Montclair students are underfunded by nearly 52% compared to their public research peers in New Jersey and 29% compared to other senior public institutions in the state. (Row 44, Column H - FY26 Tuition Hearing Presentation, Slide 13)

State Funding

State appropriations from New Jersey totaled $121.9 million in 2024, including $3.7 million allocated to Bloomfield. This compares to $128.7 million in 2023 (with $13 million for Bloomfield) and $104.8 million in 2022. These totals include both general operating support and fringe benefit reimbursements (Row 47, Column E - Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 21) (Placeholder for new evidence - 2025).

In 2024, the University received $80.7 million in general operating appropriations, surpassing the $72.4 million received in 2023 and $63.3 million in 2022. The 2024 amount includes $17.9 million in Outcomes-Based Appropriations (OBA) for Montclair, $1.8 million for Bloomfield, and $4.7 million in additional fringe benefit support. In 2023, the general appropriation included $14.8 million in OBA and $2.2 million in fringe benefit support **(**Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 21) (Placeholder for new evidence - 2025).

The Outcomes-Based Appropriation, introduced by the State in fiscal year 2020 for senior public institutions, aims to promote equity and improve student outcomes. Fringe benefit reimbursements declined slightly to $42.0 million in 2024 from $43.3 million in 2023, due to increased fringe costs and changes to the State's reimbursement rate. (Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 21) (Placeholder for new evidence - 2025)

Employee compensation, which represents 62% of the total operating budget, is the University's largest cost category. Annual increases, at minimum 4%-5%, are driven by collective bargaining agreements and fringe benefit costs outside of the university's control. (Placeholder to link upcoming audited financial statements for 2025. This paragraph information verified by James Solodar) (previous evidence is at Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024). Montclair exercises strict oversight of staffing decisions, prioritizing growth in roles that directly support student success, including new faculty lines and student services.

Montclair's growth philosophy centers on generating demand before investing in new infrastructure. Debt management has enabled over $700 million in capital construction while maintaining annual debt service at just 5% of the $662 million budget (Row 33, Column E - FY25&26 Montclair Operating Budget).

Capital investments are strategically prioritized through a five-year comprehensive capital plan (Row 59, Column E - Capital 5-Year Plan), which guides long-term facility planning while remaining responsive to

changing institutional priorities. *Vision 2030*, the facilities Capital Master Plan (Row 55, Column E - Capital Facilities Master Plan: Vision 2030 DRAFT Document), outlines an overview of 25 projects strategically targeted to position the University for success in its pursuit to provide a welcoming, supportive, and responsive campus experience that fosters student post-graduate success. *Vision 2030* provides a financial outline for prioritization of the institution's investment in facilities and infrastructure asset management. Projects are included based on their department needs, research priorities, ongoing maintenance requirements, and physical circulation safety and compliance improvements.

Major upcoming projects include a $100 million interdisciplinary science building (Row 55, Column E - Capital Facilities Master Plan: Vision 2030 DRAFT Document. Row 55, Column G - UF FY 24 Division Report) and the expansion of advanced learning environments such as a virtual reality teaching and design lab (Row 55, Column G - UF FY 24 Division Report).

Preventive maintenance is a core strategy. Annual contributions to an internal plant reserve fund (Placeholder for evidence) allow Montclair to self-finance repairs and replacements, helping avoid deferred maintenance and service disruptions. This cost-effective model supports Montclair's commitment to long-term sustainability and infrastructure resilience.

Retention is a key driver of Montclair's financial strategy, as students who persist through graduation generate more tuition revenue than multiple students who leave early. With tuition, fees, and room and board comprising the largest share of operating revenues, student revenues, net of scholarship allowances and bad debt expense, totaled $246.6 million in 2024, $234.8 million in 2023, and $214.5 million in 2022 (Row 47, Column E - Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 20) (Placeholder for new evidence for 2025).

Student tuition and fees were $329.3 million, $309.2 million, and $256.8 million in 2024, 2023 and 2022. In fiscal 2024, $20.1 million in additional student tuition and fees resulted from the University enrollment increase of 5.8% for academic year 2023-2024 and an average 6.8% increase in tuition and fee rates. In fiscal 2023, $32 million in additional student tuition and fees resulted from merger with Bloomfield and $20.4 million was attributed to Montclair's enrollment increase of 4.8% for academic year 2022-2023 and an average 4.6% increase in tuition and fee rates. (Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 21) (Placeholder for new evidence - 2025)

Scholarship Support

The University prioritizes scholarship support as a key element of its commitment to ensuring student access and affordability. Scholarship allowances, or financial aid, represent the difference between the published tuition and fee charges and the actual amounts paid by students or third-party sponsors. These allowances are recorded as reductions to revenue and totaled $141.2 million in 2024, $128.9 million in 2023, and $85.9 million in 2022. Scholarships and fellowships are awarded to students and applied as offsets to their tuition, fees, and room and board charges. The distribution of financial aid is contingent on the availability of funding. (Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 21) (Placeholder for new evidence - 2025)

Montclair State University Foundation, Inc.

The Montclair State University Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports the University through fundraising and stewardship efforts aimed at enhancing its educational, cultural, and research opportunities. The Foundation's Board of Trustees, which is independent from the University's Board of Trustees, oversees the use of all funds raised. (Placeholder - Updated Foundation financials expected Fall 2025)

As of June 30, 2024, the endowment value was $95,423,011 (Row 43, Column F - Montclair State Foundation's Financial Statement 24 and 23, p. 25). Following the merger between Montclair State and Bloomfield College, the Bloomfield Foundation was absorbed into the Montclair Foundation, strengthening fundraising alignment and operational efficiency. On Mar 7, 2025, the Foundation received $17,826,373 from the Bloomfield Endowment, bringing the combined total to $113,249,384 currently. (Row 43, Column G - Bloomfield Endowment: Goldman Sachs Statement)

Auxiliary Services

In January 2025, Auxiliary Services transitioned under the Division of Finance and Treasury (placeholder for organizational chart) while maintaining its mission as a financially self-sustaining unit that funds operations, plans for facility upgrades, and contributes to long-term institutional growth (Row 33, Column I - Auxiliary Services Documents - Auxiliary Services Vision Webpage PDF). Auxiliary Services delivers innovative, student-focused services across three enterprises including, dining, the bookstore, and the ice arena. These strategic business partnerships enhance the campus experience and add value for the community. Net revenue totaled $23.9 million in 2024, $19.7 million in 2023, and $20.2 million in 2022, with changes driven primarily by food service revenue fluctuations, including a 2024 increase from a new commuter dining plan and a 2022 rebound from eased pandemic restrictions (Row 47, Column E Audited Financial Statements 2024 p. 22).

Dining Services & Catering (Row 63, Column E - Sample Agreements and Contracts) exemplifies these efforts, offering diverse options across the Montclair and Bloomfield campuses, national retail outlets, campus-made venues, dining halls, and convenience stores, all while measuring student satisfaction, aligning outlet availability with peak demand at cost-effective prices, comparing operating costs to demand and participation rates, and automating operations where feasible, all while maintaining an inviting, student-centered experience.

Budgeting, Operational Planning, and Resource Allocation

(This section maps to criteria 5, 7, 8, 12)

Montclair has developed an advanced and integrated approach to budgeting and resource planning that supports institutional priorities while reinforcing accountability, transparency, and adaptability. The budget model is designed to ensure that financial decisions are mission-aligned, responsive to changing conditions, and grounded in evidence. (Row 27, Column I - FY26 Budget Call Memorandum & Guidelines 2-20-25)

In FY26, Montclair implemented two major enhancements: scenario planning and operational planning. (Row 27, Column I - FY26 Budget Call Memorandum & Guidelines 2-20-25) Scenario Planning requires each division to plan for three financial situations: baseline, reduction, and increase. This enables proactive decision-making and strategic trade-offs based on available revenue, inflationary pressures, and contractual obligations. Operational Planning grounds resource allocation in functional reality by requiring each unit to identify major activities and objectives, define performance metrics linked to strategic goals, map personnel and non-personnel budgets to core functions, and conduct a resource-to-outcome analysis. This approach promotes consistent prioritization, reinforces institutional goals, and lays the foundation for Montclair's transition to a hybrid Responsibility Center Management (RCM) model. (Row 27, Column K - New Budget Model Documents - Montclair NBM - Hybrid RCM Vision and FY26 Topics)

Budgeting and planning are supported by an integrated system infrastructure:

- Workday Financials manages all transactions, procurement, and accounting, while Workday (HR) manages payroll.
- Adaptive Planning is a Workday application that supports budget development. (FY26 Budget Call User Guide)
- Currently, Banner provides administrative and academic functions to manage data and student enrollment business processes, providing an integrated foundation for managing student data.
- In 2027, Workday Student (Row 12, Column F - Workday Student Files - Workday Student Webpage, Workday License and Student Impl 20221026, and Workday Student Deck 2022-05-30) will become the new student information system, replacing Banner. This move is expected to improve and streamline processes, including recruiting and enrollment, student financials and financial aid, registration and graduation.

Revenue Forecasting

Revenue forecasting is a critical component of financial planning, ensuring that resources remain aligned with institutional priorities and adaptable to changing conditions. Plans are underway to strengthen forecasting and maintain actual revenue within 5% of projections, supported by rolling updates that refine enrollment and tuition estimates throughout the year. This approach enhances budget stability, anticipates shifts in enrollment and tuition, and safeguards long-term commitments such as financial aid, capital investment, and debt management. (Placeholder for evidence from Adam R)

Procurement Practices

In 2024, vendors Edge and First Tyron conducted an assessment of Montclair's procurement function, by examining activities, structures and processes within 5 key dimensions: Structure and leadership, productivity, customer service, alignment with authority, and business process and related technology. As a result of this analysis the University revised its procurement policies and guidelines to support greater efficiency, transparency, and alignment with sustainability goals (Row 73, Column F - Vendor analysis for Procurement align).

Risk Management

The Division of Finance and Treasury has prioritized enterprise risk management as a core element of the University's institutional planning framework (Row 29, Column G - Risk Management Documents - Risk Management Webpage PDF). In July 2025, a Director of Risk Management was appointed to lead efforts to identify, assess, monitor, and mitigate risks across academic, administrative, financial, and operational areas (placeholder for organizational chart). Risk Management proactively addresses a broad spectrum of risks, including regulatory changes, cybersecurity threats, natural disasters, reputational issues, legal liabilities, and public health crises, ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive approach to institutional resilience.

A central component is the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework, which embeds risk considerations into strategic planning and daily operations. The ERM approach supports informed decision-making, efficient resource allocation, proactive mitigation, crisis preparedness, and accountability in oversight, which strengthens resilience, safeguards Montclair's mission and assets, and ensures its long-term sustainability.

Institutional Sustainability and Infrastructure Development

(This section maps to criteria 1, 3, 5, 10, 12 and 13)

Office of Sustainability

In April 2024, the University established the Office of Sustainability to integrate sustainable practices across operations and foster a campus-wide culture of sustainability (placeholder for organizational chart). Prior to the formation of this office, foundational work was already underway. The 2022 Facilities Sustainability Plan outlined infrastructure-focused priorities (Row 55, Column I - Sustainability Data - PSEG ISS Green Teams Programs), while the PSEG Institute for Sustainable Studies promoted student-led sustainability initiatives through its notable Green Teams Program (Row 55, Column I - Sustainability Data - Facilities Sustainability Plan - 2022 Facilities Sustainability Plan PDF). Two examples of Montclair's many key sustainability achievements and initiatives include:

- The Office of Sustainability completed and submitted, in August 2025, Montclair's first submission to the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS has fostered a cross-campus stakeholder network, shared data practices, and a common sustainability language across academic and administrative units. (Row 55, Column I - Sustainability Data - AASHE STARS folder - multiple MSU and AASHE webpages)
- Participation in the NJ Clean Energy Higher Education Decarbonization Pilot, with the grant providing up to $5 million in planning and implementation support in partnership with Johnson Controls. (Row 55, Column I - Sustainability Data - NJ Clean Energy Pilot PDF)

Facilities Initiatives

Montclair has undertaken various strategic initiatives to enhance infrastructure, technology, and

transportation, reflecting its commitment to safety, efficiency, and student-centered service. The following projects align services with stakeholder needs and support a secure, accessible, and responsive learning environment:

- *Campus Building Access and Security Improvements:* A new Building Perimeter Access Control Policy (placeholder for policy document) will take effect in summer 2025, requiring authorization and a valid ID for perimeter door entry during secured hours, with all swipe activity logged. It applies to all academic and administrative buildings at Montclair and Bloomfield College (placeholder for press release evidence).
- *Bloomfield Shuttle Service Expansion:* Shuttle service between the Montclair and Bloomfield campuses began in Fall 2024; promotion, schedule adjustments, and student feedback increased Spring 2025 ridership to an average of 200 passengers per day (placeholder for shuttle evidence).
- *Shuttle Bus Tracking and Communications:* In FY24, the University contracted with Tripshot, INC. for shuttle tracking (Row 55, Column N - Facilities Initiatives - Shuttle Service Tracking System - TripShot Waiver Increase) and in FY25 requested installation of variable message signs at 11 stops to display real-time arrivals and provide emergency messaging.
- *Maintenance Management System Replacement:* In FY26, the Nuvolo system was implemented to replace IBM Maximo, integrate with ServiceNow, and consolidate multiple facilities systems. Training and communications will support the transition (Row 11, Column I - University Communications - Facilities – New Facilities Work Order System).
- *Facilities Management Operational Analysis:* In Spring 2025, the University engaged business consulting firm Weaver to conduct an operational analysis of campus facilities management. The study, launched in July 2025 and expected to conclude in Fall 2025, aims to provide actionable recommendations to improve efficiency and effectiveness. (Placeholder for evidence – report late Fall 2025)

Space Utilization Study and Office Environment Assessment

In Fall 2024, the University partnered with vendor Gensler and Freespace to conduct a space utilization study assessing faculty and staff office use and campus work environments (Row 11, Column I - University Communications - Facilities - Space Utilization Study). From October 7 to November 15, occupancy sensors were deployed in 585 private offices, 575 workstations, and 39 meeting rooms across Cole Hall, Dickson Hall, University Hall, and Overlook. A concurrent campus-wide survey gathered feedback from 640 respondents on work patterns, workspace priorities, and perceptions of effectiveness (Row 58, Column D - Space Use Assessment Study: Phase One Findings). Results revealed significant underutilization of private offices, primarily in academic buildings, and a mismatch between reported priorities and available space. While collaboration was the primary on-campus activity, satisfaction with collaborative and teaching spaces was low, suggesting a need to rebalance space allocation and design (Row 58, Column E - Space Use Assessment Study: Phase One Findings Executive Summary).

The second phase, now underway, extends analysis to classrooms and labs, with findings to be shared with stakeholders in Fall 2025 (Placeholder for future evidence) to guide space planning and use of underutilized areas. Meanwhile, Montclair is piloting shared and reservation-based office and meeting

space models, reinforcing its commitment to continuous improvement, responsible stewardship, and environments that support teaching, research, and collaboration (Placeholder for phase 2 evidence).

Institutional Growth, Technology Integration, and Strategic Mergers

Bloomfield College of Montclair State University (BCMSU)

July 1, 2023 marked the official beginning of the post-integration phase following the merger that formed Bloomfield College of Montclair State University (BSMSU), a historic partnership and the first of its kind between a public and private higher education institution in New Jersey. A project management team was formed to undertake these detailed tasks and organized into 12 functional areas each led by the respective vice president or their delegate, under the guidance of an executive steering committee.

Below reflects a few of the highlights of the numerous major post-merger integration milestones.
- Over $5 million invested in technology, capital upgrades, and system integration.
- Full transition of Bloomfield's HR and Finance systems to Montclair's Workday platforms (Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary- June 2025).
- Integration into Banner for registration and financial aid services (Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary- June 2025 and BCMSU Post-merger Integration MAJOR Milestones).
- Bloomfield Foundation merged into Montclair Foundation following approval by NJ Attorney General, University Board and Foundation Board. Bloomfield endowments and scholarships will continue to support Bloomfield College students resulting in potentially improved returns on investment for funds and potentially increased annual spend on student aid and other initiatives supporting the academic mission (Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary- June 2025 and BCMSU Post-merger Integration MAJOR Milestones).
- Established a secondary fiber optic pathway to improve network reliability and availability. This also paved the way to extend the services leveraging the high-speed intercampus link (Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary- June 2025 and BCMSU Post-merger Integration MAJOR Milestones).
- Migrated employee, staff and students to Montclair Google workspace for email, calendar and collaboration tools (Row 55, Column H - Bloomfield Integration Data - Bloomfield Post-merger Integration Summary- June 2025 and BCMSU Post-merger Integration MAJOR Milestones).

Importantly, Bloomfield's operational and financial planning are currently fully embedded in Montclair's institutional systems; there is no separate budget process. This unified structure reinforces equity and institutional coherence. (Row 33, Column F - Bloomfield College Integration into Montclair Budget Processes).

Technology and Online Expansion

Montclair's investment in digital modernization has enhanced administrative efficiency and supported staff stability despite enrollment growth. The implementation of Workday Financials, HCM, and Student modules has enabled process automation, centralized data management, and improved service delivery. Additional technology initiatives intended at continuous improvement and operational efficiency includes Enhancing Campus Cybersecurity; Datacenter consolidation & Cloud migration; Migration to Zoom phone; and wireless network infrastructure upgrade.

Montclair Unbound Expansion

Montclair is expanding its online education footprint through Montclair Unbound, a strategic initiative to drive enrollment growth, revenue, and student success (Row 32, Column K - Montclair Unbound - Montclair Unbound Webpage). Leveraging labor market trends and institutional strengths, it oversees 21 fully online programs and 30+ certificates, with plans to add 10–20 more within five years and projected annual growth of 2–5% (Row 32, Column K - Montclair Unbound - Montclair Unbound Online Goals (as of 7.28.25)). Programs are vetted using labor market data, supported with marketing and student services, and strengthened by a partnership with Collegis Education, which focuses on enrollment management. (Row 32, Column K - Montclair Unbound - Montclair Unbound and Collegis Narrative). Performance is tracked through enrollment growth, persistence, and outcomes data from Slate, Canvas, the Enrollment Intelligence Hub, early warning systems, and quarterly advisory board reviews.

Montclair Unbound operates with a core staff of four plus a Vice Provost (tag organizational chart here), with plans to expand staffing in student success coaching. Instructional design is supported by the University's 20-member ITDS team, while UCM manages web strategy and search. Key platforms include Collegis Education Services (three-year, $15M investment), GrayDI, Canvas, and EAB Navigate. A help desk and capability gap analysis (Row 32, Column K - Montclair Unbound Documents - Integrations – Canvas) are enhancing scalability and support. Cross-functional collaboration with IT, Enrollment Management, University Communications and Marketing, and other units ensures academic and administrative alignment for sustained growth.

Montclair State University Website Overhaul

The University launched a comprehensive website redesign in 2023 to modernize its digital infrastructure, strengthen institutional identity, and meet evolving user expectations. Supporting institutional improvement, enrollment growth, and effective communication, the project will deliver two purpose-built platforms: a redesigned public-facing *montclair.edu* focused on marketing and recruitment, and a new internal-facing *inside.montclair.edu* for students, faculty, and staff. Scheduled for launch in Fall 2026, the multi-year effort, led by the division of University Communications and Marketing (UCM) with broad stakeholder collaboration, began in 2023 with vendor engagement, research, and platform selection, and continues through 2026 with content planning, governance design, and technical implementation (Row 60, Column G - Web Overhaul Project Evidence - Website Overhaul Academic Affairs Leadership Council 4-8-25; Website Overhaul Project Briefing for Senior Leaders 9-1-23; Web Overhaul Summary & Status May 2024).

The redesign advances Montclair's strategic priorities by enhancing recruitment through a user-centered, accessible experience with clear information on affordability, programs, outcomes, and admissions; unifying messaging and visual design; improving operational efficiency in content management; and ensuring equity and accessibility through WCAG 2.1 AA compliance. Montclair.edu will prioritize prospective student engagement while continuing to serve alumni, media, and community audiences, and inside.montclair.edu will centralize internal resources such as academic calendars, HR policies, and departmental updates improving service delivery and reducing reliance on email or fragmented web tools (Row 60, Column G - Web Overhaul Project Evidence - Web Overhaul Summary & Status May 2024).

Web Governance, Sustainability, and Resource Management

In 2025, the University implemented a centralized web governance model to ensure the long-term sustainability of its digital platforms (Row 60, Column G - Web Overhaul Project Evidence - INTERIM University Website Governance Plan - March 2025). Led by University Communications and Marketing (UCM) in partnership with trained subject matter experts, the model establishes clear editorial roles, defined workflows, and annual content reviews using tools such as SiteImprove to maintain accessibility, accuracy, and relevance. This evidence-based approach aligns technology investments with recruitment, brand, and operational goals; improves communication and reduces duplication; supports inclusive excellence through accessible design; and fosters cross-campus collaboration, exemplifying Montclair's integration of planning, resource stewardship, and continuous improvement.

Human Capital and Administrative Optimization

Montclair recognizes that faculty and staff are its most valuable resources. In 2024, under the leadership of the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, the University evaluated its existing human resources practices to streamline operations, reduce costs, enhance efficiency, and integrate sustainability into core functions. One of the recommended strategies from this assessment include leveraging the use of data to help develop a plan of action to streamline services provided by HR, and to implement a strategy to improve the HR customer service experience for employees and applicants (Row 73, Column E - Vendor Analysis for HR realign).

One recommendation from the vendor evaluation being brought into action was the launch, in June 2025, of the HR Support Center (Row 24, Column K - HR Support Center Data - Introducing The HR Support Center) which is housed under a new HR Operations Division, to enhance service delivery and administrative efficiency. The HR Support Center is a central point of contact for: Benefits administration, payroll and compensation, talent acquisition and job classifications, and Workday HR system support.

The HR Support Center's effectiveness is measured using the ServiceNow (SNOW) ticketing system reports and call agent software to track inquiry volume, resolution times, and issue types, helping identify pain points, inform training, and improve HR website content and communications (Row 24, Column K - HR Support Center Data). Optional voluntary post-interaction surveys provide additional feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. A key long-term goal is to reduce calls and tickets as employees access information independently, with baseline metrics and KPIs to be established over the next three

years (Row 24, Column K - HR Support Center Data). This model enhances responsiveness, consistency, and employee experience.

Facilities Apprenticeship Program

Montclair has launched New Jersey's first public university facilities apprenticeship program, providing employees with specialized training in plumbing, electrical, and HVAC trades. Designed to support career advancement for internal staff, the program also creates a pipeline of skilled workers to meet the University's future needs. Reflecting Montclair's broader mission to promote academic and professional growth, the initiative brings together employees from across the Facilities Division, including groundskeeping, building maintenance, and mechanical work, who are eager to gain new skills and transition into the trades, setting a precedent for workforce training across the State. (Row 33, Column I - Facilities Apprenticeship Program -University Facilities Apprenticeship Program PDF and Montclair Launches NJ's First Public University Facilities Apprenticeship Program)

Learning and Talent Development Opportunities

The Learning and Talent Development team, within Human Resources, provides opportunities to strengthen employee skills, build leadership capacity, and support professional growth through customized learning plans, online and in-person courses, and a supportive environment. Using a partnership-driven approach, the team regularly engages vice presidents, deans, directors, and unit leaders to assess needs, identify learning gaps, and design responsive development opportunities. This work has led to tailored workshops on topics such as team building, listening to understand, and direction, alignment, commitment, as well as targeted programs for specific employee groups, such as (Row 32, Column J - Learning & Talent Development Documents - Learning & Talent Development WebPage and L&TD Offerings folder).:

- *New Employees* – The New Employee Experience and HR Tools for Success
- *Administrative Professionals* – Monthly Professional Development Webinars and HR Tools for Success
- *Aspiring People Managers* – Monthly Professional Development Webinars and HR Tools for Success
- *New Managers/Supervisors – Managing@Montclair* and Project Management 101
- *Assistant Directors and Above* – Leadership University 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0

To ensure effectiveness, follow-up surveys capture participant feedback on monthly professional development sessions and specialized programs (Row 32, Column J - Learning & Talent Development Documents - L&TD follow-up surveys folder), to help help identify what is working well and where improvements are needed, reinforcing a continuous cycle of assessment and refinement. These initiatives, along with resources such as the *Managing@Montclair* series and defined learning paths, demonstrate the Montclair's ongoing commitment to employee development and career advancement.

Internal Audit: Enhancing Accountability and Institutional Improvement

The Office of Internal Audit strengthens accountability, financial stewardship, and operational effectiveness through independent evaluations of Montclair's financial, operational, and IT controls, and compliance with policies and regulations (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - Internal Audit Webpages - About the Department PDF). Reporting functionally to the President and Board of Trustees Audit Committee and administratively to the Vice President for Finance and Treasury (tag organizational chart here), the department follows the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) of the Institute of Internal Auditors, updated in 2025 to reflect best practices (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) - Global Internal Audit Standards). The Audit Committee oversees financial, audit, and investment policies; reviews financing plans, compliance, and audit performance; investigates misconduct; and authorizes contracts in compliance with laws. The chair must have accounting or related expertise, with most members expected to have similar qualifications (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - MSU Internal Audit Charter - DRAFT V3; Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - Internal Audit Webpages - Audit Committee Charter PDF).

The Office of Internal Audit develops an annual risk-based audit plan approved by the President and the Board of Trustees Audit Committee (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - FY25 Transitional Audit Plan - APPROVED), conducting audits through a structured process of planning, consultation, fieldwork, reporting, and follow-up to ensure transparency and responsiveness. The objectives of the Internal Audit Charter (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - MSU Internal Audit Charter - DRAFT V3) address risk management, compliance, operational effectiveness, information integrity, and resource stewardship. Beyond audits, the department provides consultative and investigative services, coordinates with external auditors, and recommends best practices—efforts that strengthen governance, risk management, and strategic planning (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - Internal Audit Webpages - About the Department PDF). The Director also serves on the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) steering committee, where Internal Audit functions as an independent third line of assurance complementing ERM's second-line support (Row 47, Column G - Office of Internal Audit Data - ERM Notebook Screenshot).

Integrating Data-Driven Decision-Making and Institutional Assessment

(This section maps to criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Montclair strengthens institutional effectiveness through structured assessment and data-informed planning. Administrative units increasingly use dashboards and performance tools, introduce or expand data-driven decision-making, and realign roles to support these efforts, reflecting a campus-wide commitment to continuous improvement, resource allocation, and service delivery.

Nuventive Assessment Platform and Non-Academic Assessment Practices

Montclair has prioritized assessment as a driver of institutional effectiveness by embedding goal setting, outcome measurement, and annual reporting into non-academic units. This ensures data-informed decision-making, aligns operations with University priorities, and identifies opportunities to improve services and optimize resources. Integrating results into institutional planning reinforces accountability, transparency, and evidence-based action (Row 9, Column E - Non-Academic Assessment Progress at MSU). The Nuventive platform advances this work by streamlining reporting, defining timelines and metrics, and supporting resource decisions, with training provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) and outcomes feeding directly into broader planning (Placeholder for future evidence: sample reports, policies – Fall 2025).

The Non-Academic Assessment Team has developed guidelines to promote transparency, engagement, and standardization across administrative and support units. These guidelines encourage shared responsibility and will be disseminated to strengthen alignment and communication. Unit leaders have also reviewed Operational Goals and Action Plans to ensure consistency with institutional priorities, integrating them into Nuventive to establish a centralized system for tracking progress, informing decisions, and advancing continuous improvement (Placeholder for future evidence: sample reports, policies – Fall 2025).

Integration of the HelioCampus Platform

Montclair launched HelioCampus in Spring of 2025 to advance data-informed decision-making, with an initial focus on Admissions, Student Success, and Financial Aid which are areas critical to enrollment and student outcomes. Stakeholders across administrative and academic units, including the Provost's Office, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, Information Technology, and Finance, access curated dashboards developed by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE), while financial aid data remains restricted for privacy and compliance. The platform pulls daily data from Slate and Banner (starting with Fall 2016) through a secure ETL process into Amazon RedShift, producing dashboards on registration, retention, completions, and financial aid. Graduate admissions data is still being validated, and warehouse access is tightly controlled. Future integrations will include Workday Student, historical Bloomfield College data, OIRE's frozen census files, NJ OSHE SURE data, and National Student Clearinghouse records to expand analytical capacity and ensure continuity and comparability across student lifecycle and institutional performance metrics. (Row 33, Column H - HelioCampus Data - HelioCampus Information PDF and Helio Campus at MSU 7-16-2025)

Student Development and Campus Life

To advance continuous improvement and student success strategies across Montclair State University and Bloomfield College of Montclair State University, the Division of Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL) created a Director of Data and Assessment position (placeholder for organizational chart) to develop and oversee comprehensive assessment plans focused on key student experience indicators, such as sense of belonging, engagement, mental health, retention, and persistence. This position collaborates with Student Affairs units to collect and interpret data, manage a centralized repository, and lead initiatives including quarterly student experience reports and participation in CAS (Council for the

Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) self-assessments, ensuring student support programs are informed by timely, actionable data and fostering inclusive, responsive campus environments.

Pre-College Summer Programs

Montclair's Pre-College Summer Programs give high school students in grades 9–11 a one-week residential experience that blends college-level academics, personal growth, and career exploration in fields from medicine to finance (Row 43, Column L - Pre-College Summer Program Documents - Pre-college Summer PDF). At $1,800, the program covers tuition, housing, meals, co-curricular activities, and field trips while enhancing skills, broadening perspectives, and supporting recruitment. (Row 43, Column L - Pre-College Summer Program Documents - Deadlines and Program Costs PDF) This fee structure not only supports the operational costs of the programs but also bolsters the university's financial standing. Drawing participants from 12 states and seven countries last year (placeholder for evidence), it boosts Montclair's national and international visibility, strengthens enrollment, and elevates the university's brand prestige.

Summary Statement

Montclair State University demonstrates sustained alignment between strategic planning, resource stewardship, and institutional improvement, meeting all thirteen criteria under Standard VI. This alignment is supported by a transparent, data-informed framework that links resource decisions to institutional priorities and measurable outcomes. Strong financial resilience, anchored in operational efficiency, disciplined investment, and strategic growth management positions the University to adapt with agility to shifting enrollment, economic conditions, and sector-wide challenges.

Ongoing modernization efforts, including a restructured budget model, upgraded enterprise systems, and integrated sustainability practices, further enhance the institution's adaptability and long-term operational effectiveness. The University's commitment to sustainability extends beyond compliance, embedding environmental considerations into planning, procurement, and engagement initiatives. These strategies reinforce Montclair's resiliency and readiness to respond to immediate demands while preparing for emerging priorities.

Montclair's capacity for transformative growth is reflected in its ability to integrate new academic and administrative functions, implement enterprise-scale technology, and invest strategically in human capital. Robust oversight mechanisms sustain a culture of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Collectively, these strengths highlight Montclair's capacity for effective change leadership and ensure the University remains well-positioned to fulfill its mission, advance its priorities, and thrive in an ever-evolving higher education landscape.

Key Findings

- The impending shift to a hybrid Responsibility Center Management (RCM) budget model, along with scenario and operational planning, is expected to improve alignment between resources and strategic priorities and lay groundwork for more accurate revenue forecasting.

- The Bloomfield merger successfully unified budgets and systems, while enterprise technology investments (Workday, Montclair Unbound, website overhaul) are modernizing administrative functions and expanding academic reach.
- Tools like Nuventive and HelioCampus are enabling administrative units to set measurable goals, track performance, and align planning with institutional priorities, fostering transparency and continuous improvement.
- Montclair operates with 21% fewer employees per student and costs 33% below the sector average while maintaining enrollment growth, disciplined debt service (5% of budget), and strategic capital planning.

Next Steps

1. Provide additional training for unit leaders regarding the Hybrid RCM budget model in decision-making and resource reallocation to drive performance improvements.
2. Extend HelioCampus integrations (Workday Student, historical data) and continue the expansion and training regarding using Nuventive in all non-academic units to strengthen evidence-based planning.
3. Complete STARS submission and establish measurable campus-wide sustainability KPIs to track progress and inform capital investment decisions.
4. Expand multi-channel updates (town halls, newsletters, inside.montclair.edu) to communicate progress for institutional projects and planning initiatives.

STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with a related entity, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy

Statement of Compliance

Montclair State University fully meets the terms of Standard VII and all five of its criteria. Evidence that Montclair meets Standard VII can be reviewed in the Evidence Inventory in the table below:

Table X: Standard VII Evidence Inventory

Criterion	Supporting Evidence
1. A clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for inclusive decision making by each constituency, including the institution's legally constituted governing body, administration, faculty, staff, and students, as well as any related entities;	Organizational charts: Administrative Organization Charts SDCL Organization Chart Organization charts for senate, councils, and committees: BOT, Senate, and Other Org Charts (PDFs) University Senate BOT Description of the legally constituted governance structure: MSU Faculty Handbook - Governance Description Faculty Handbook/ University Charter Board of Trustees Bylaws SGA governing documents - constitution and statutes in SGA evidence folder Senate Constitution Senate Bylaws
2a. **A legally constituted governing body that:** serves the public interest, ensures that the institution clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals, has fiduciary responsibility for the institution, and is ultimately accountable for the academic quality, integrity, planning, and fiscal well-being of the institution;	BOT Documents - this needs to be unpacked
2b. **A legally constituted governing body that:** has sufficient diversity, independence, and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution. Members must have primary responsibility to the accredited institution, meet	Code of Ethics of BOT

regularly, and not allow political, financial, relationship with a related entity, or other undue influences to interfere with their governing responsibilities;	
2c. **A legally constituted governing body that:** ensures that neither the governing body nor its individual members interfere in the day-to-day operations of the institution;	Board of Trustees Bylaws
2d.**A legally constituted governing body that:** oversees at the policy level the quality of teaching and learning, the approval of degree programs and the awarding of degrees, the establishment of personnel policies and procedures, the approval of policies and by-laws, and the assurance of strong fiscal management;	BOT Documents - need to choose documents from this folder
2e. **A legally constituted governing body that:** plays a basic policy-making role in financial affairs to ensure integrity and strong financial management. This may include a timely review of audited financial statements and/or other documents related to the fiscal viability of the institution;	Minutes of BOT in the BOT Documents folder
2f. **A legally constituted governing body that:** appoints and regularly evaluates the performance of the Chief Executive Officer;	Code of Ethics of BOT
2g. **A legally constituted governing body that:** is informed in all its operations by principles of good practice in board governance;	Code of Ethics of BOT, Minutes of BOT in the BOT Documents folder
2h. **A legally constituted governing body that:** is not chaired by an institutional or system representative to avoid conflict of interests;	Board of Trustees Bylaws Faculty Representative BOT Student Representative BOT
2i. **A legally constituted governing body that:** establishes and complies with a written conflict of interest policy designed to ensure the impartiality of the governing body by addressing matters such as payment for services, contractual relationships, employment, and family, financial or other interests that could pose or be perceived as conflicts of interest. A majority of members have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution;	
2j. **A legally constituted governing body that:** supports the Chief Executive Officer in maintaining the autonomy of the institution;	Board of Trustees Bylaws

2k. **A legally constituted governing body that:** makes freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations and ensures the institution describes itself in comparable and consistent terms to all of its accrediting and regulatory agencies.	Board of Trustees Bylaws
3a. **Chief Executive Officer who:** is appointed by, evaluated by, and reports to the governing body and shall not chair the governing body;	Procedures for Presidential Search Presidential Leadership Profile Board of Trustees Bylaws
3b. **Chief Executive Officer who:** has appropriate credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization;	Board of Trustees Bylaws Presidential Leadership Profile
3c. **Chief Executive Officer who:** has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, including developing and implementing institutional plans, staffing the organization, identifying and allocating resources, and directing the institution toward attaining the goals and objectives set forth in its mission;	Responsibilities of the BOT
3d. **Chief Executive Officer who:** has the assistance of qualified administrators, sufficient in number, to enable the Chief Executive Officer to discharge his/her duties effectively and is responsible for establishing procedures for assessing the organization's efficiency and effectiveness;	Presidential Leadership Teams
4a. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:** an organizational structure that is clearly documented and that clearly defines reporting relationships;	Organizational charts for the Administration and Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL)
4b. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:** an appropriate size and diverse representation with relevant experience to assist the Chief Executive Officer in fulfilling his/her roles and responsibilities;	Relevant Job Descriptions of Senior/Exec Level Positions in the Org
4c. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:** members with credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization and their functional roles;	IR& Report - Employee Data IPEDS Feedback Report 2024
4d. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:**. skills, time, assistance, technology, and information systems expertise required to perform their duties;	

4e. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:**. regular engagement with faculty and students in advancing the institution's goals and objectives;	Schedule of President's meetings
4f. **An administration possessing or demonstrating:** systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and for using assessment data to enhance operations;	Survey Research – Office Of The Provost
5. periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration.	
Additional Supporting Evidence for the Narrative	

Introduction

Over the last decade, Montclair State University has navigated transformational shifts and external challenges through an evolving governance model rooted in shared leadership, adaptive structures and a commitment to mission. A summary of these challenges can be captured in three themes: disruptions, leadership, and persistence, and the key to the success of the university can be seen in the collective strength and resolve of the university community.

At the end of the last Middle States accreditation cycle, in the beginning of Fall 2017 the University launched an extensive program of data gathering, analysis and consultation which resulted in a new strategic planning process designed to "help us understand our history, values, and accomplishments; our place in higher education in the state, region, and nation; and the ways we have been successful in moving the University from its inception more than 110 years ago to today."

With advice and assistance of an external consultant, this process consisted of numerous steps including: a review of the 2011 strategic plan and the signature accomplishments under it; an analysis of findings and recommendations from the 2016 successful Middle States Commission of Higher Education accreditation (MSCHE) report and study; a thorough environmental scan of relevant demographic predictors, labor market projections, technology developments in classroom instruction and program delivery modes, comparative degree production data among New Jersey institutions, and State funding expectations (as documented in the Strategic Plan 2025 and the Path to Strategic Plan.), all of which contributed to an understanding of the University's market position; two summit discussions with campus leadership, including faculty, staff, administrators and students; a SWOT analysis based on input from more than 550 University community members; three presentations to and discussions with the Board of Trustees; many dynamic conversations and extended working sessions by the Committee on University Effectiveness (CUE) and five Design Teams charged with shaping key success outcomes and strategies; two public fora to which the University community were invited for open discussion of the draft plan; and an extensive benchmarking study and comparison of universities through which 11 universities were identified that reflected significant achievements in areas of interest to Montclair State's growth. This was a transformative step in the university's history. It was a marked departure from Montclair's past as a normal school.

Although Montclair had officially become a university in 1994, and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2014, by 2017, Montclair had gained distinction as a Carnegie R3 institution and was charting an ambitious path forward. Already the state's second largest public university, it was ambitiously seeking to

become a Carnegie R2 research designated institution that served over 25,000 students, a classification unlike the other members of the state colleges/universities grouping. Montclair's future vision hinged on three pillars: fostering student transformation, growth through diversity, access and discovery, and the application of knowledge.

Internally, the university was undergoing fundamental changes. A new general education requirement started taking shape and global initiatives with study abroad programs emerged. There was early recruitment of international students and the hiring of new administrative personnel to shepherd curricular transitions on both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The vision set the stage for renewed residential, commuter, and virtual enrollment growth. There were plans for capital improvements and new development. Well poised for such future demographic changes, the university shifted to the Common App to recruit a wider student pool. The results were immediate with greater diversity and thousands more applicants. The number of graduate students approached 5,000, pushing enrollment over 21,000. It looked like the target of 25,000 students by 2025 was guaranteed, and by 2019 Montclair was recognized as both a Minority Serving Institution and a Hispanic Serving Institution. The university was now home to a significant number of Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college students.

Yet, as Montclair State University appeared firmly on course toward achieving the ambitious vision as outlined, an unprecedented global disruption would put that vision, and the institution's resilience, to the test.

Disruptions: Transformation through Turbulence
The Pandemic as a Catalyst for Change
(This section maps to criteria 1,2, 3 4, and 5)

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Montclair State University with profound challenges, disrupting traditional learning models and testing the strength of its leadership and governance systems. In March 2020, upon recognizing the magnitude of the impending crisis, President Susan Cole called together senior administrators and campus leaders. These meetings led to the decisive move to cease daily campus operations and shift to remote instruction. Under her direction, the university adopted a crisis response posture, rapidly mobilizing resources to support faculty in transitioning to online instruction and ensuring the welfare of students.

Montclair quickly adopted digital technologies to support remote instruction and sustain academic continuity. University governance processes also transitioned to virtual formats, including Faculty Senate meetings, Board of Trustees sessions, and other key decision-making forums. These shifts enhanced transparency, broadened participation, and enabled timely, informed decisions, helping foster a culture of adaptability, inclusivity, and shared responsibility across the institution.

Communication during the crisis was clear and frequent, as policies and decisions were shared through emails and newsletters. Zoom became the primary tool for instruction, interaction, and institutional coordination. Daily consultations between the president, her executive team, a coalition of medical and science professionals, and faculty union and governance leaders ensured collaborative problem-solving and informed policymaking.

Financially, the university acted decisively. Strategic spending reductions and resource reallocations helped Montclair manage the economic fallout of the pandemic, including declining revenues and

increased operational costs. Prudent financial oversight and transparent communication allowed the university to maintain institutional stability and reinforce its mission. Remarkably, despite the global disruption, student enrollment remained resilient.

As the pandemic began to subside, the university reopened its physical doors, though campus life remained altered. Faculty, staff, and students navigated varying degrees of hesitation about returning to in-person environments, and senior leaders, including President Cole, worked to rebuild community and trust.

A New Chapter in Leadership

With the immediate crisis behind it, Montclair found itself at a pivotal moment. The experience had tested and strengthened its governance systems, clarified institutional priorities, and underscored the need for adaptive, forward-looking leadership. It was during this period of reflection and momentum that President Susan Cole, after nearly a quarter century of distinguished service, announced her retirement, setting the stage for a new chapter in the university's evolution.

The Board of Trustees, led by Chairman Dr. Francis Cuss, assumed a more visible and prominent role, initiating a national search for a new president.

The appointment of Dr. Jonathan Koppell as President in 2021 marked a clear inflection point. Building on Montclair's strong foundation, Dr. Koppell brought a renewed emphasis on public service, external collaboration, and global engagement. In partnership with a newly appointed Provost, he has advanced strategic priorities focused on expanding online offerings, growing international enrollment, and deepening the university's role as a community-anchored institution. This period of transition prompted a recalibration of institutional priorities and a reorganization of the university's leadership team and structure, reflecting a broader commitment to responsiveness, innovation, and societal impact. These shifts demonstrate the university's ability to navigate disruption while maintaining a strong foundation of shared governance and mission-driven leadership.

Merging Missions: Preserving Access, Advancing Equity

The recalibration of Montclair's leadership and strategy was soon tested by a high-stakes opportunity to extend its mission. As national concern grew over the future of small, under-resourced colleges, Montclair faced a defining decision - one that called for both institutional vision and a strong commitment to equity and public service.
That decision was the integration of Bloomfield College into Montclair State University - a bold, mission-driven response to an urgent challenge. Bloomfield, New Jersey's only Predominantly Black Institution and one of the state's few Hispanic-Serving Institutions, was facing imminent closure. Montclair's leadership recognized not only the opportunity but also the responsibility to act. The university responded swiftly and deliberately to preserve access to transformative education for historically underrepresented students.

The process was a testament to shared governance in action. The Board of Trustees fulfilled its fiduciary and policy-making responsibilities by approving the merger and providing strategic oversight, while appropriately deferring to administrative leadership on operational execution. Institutional leaders navigated the complexity of the integration with clarity of purpose, ensuring that the process remained grounded in mission alignment, student continuity, and the preservation of academic quality.
More than a structural change, the merger exemplifies Montclair's capacity for principled decision-making, inclusive planning, and transparent execution. It reflects a governance framework in which

oversight and executive responsibility are thoughtfully balanced -and one that enables the university to meet disruption with innovation, all while upholding its core values of equity, access, and public service.

Shaping the University: Strategic Structural Changes

The integration of Bloomfield College reinforced Montclair's identity as a mission-driven institution capable of bold, values-based decisions. That same spirit of intentionality and shared purpose continued to guide internal transformation. With strong collaboration between academic leadership, faculty governance, and administrative planning, Montclair actively reshaped its institutional structure to support long-term strategic priorities.

In 2023, the College of Education and Human Services was restructured into two distinct academic units: the College for Education and Engaged Learning, and the College for Community Health. This move acknowledged both the evolving nature of the education profession and the growing demand for health-focused academic programs. That same year, the university launched the School of Computing within the College of Science and Mathematics, an initiative shaped through consultation with faculty and informed by industry demand.

The elevation of the School of Communication and Media to college status, effective July 2025, marked another strategic milestone. This decision, supported through shared governance and grounded in data on enrollment trends and national impact, underscored Montclair's capacity to evolve its academic structure in ways that amplify institutional strengths and respond to the shifting landscape of higher education.

Governance and Leadership in General Education Transformation

Just as Montclair restructured its academic units to reflect areas of strength and opportunity, it undertook a parallel effort to rethink its academic core, with the transformation of its general education curriculum. This transformation exemplified a leadership model rooted in shared governance, institutional agility, and broad-based collaboration. The development of the SEEDS curriculum began in 2019 with faculty-led focus groups, responding to internal reflection and shifting student needs. This extensive process included multiple task forces and widespread faculty consultation, culminating in a 2023 faculty ballot.

The SEEDS curriculum empowers students to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, and engage as informed citizens in an increasingly complex world. It offers a more flexible, inclusive, and integrated learning experience that aligns with Montclair's mission and evolving educational priorities. The 2023 faculty ratification of the new Montclair general education core marked a significant milestone, reflecting broad faculty commitment to shared governance and the program's ongoing evolution.

Leadership and Governance Amid National Disruption

Building on the transformative curricular and structural changes, Montclair State's leadership now faces a broader set of external challenges that test the resilience and values of the institution.
The current national and global landscape poses significant challenges to higher education, including economic instability, shifting federal policies, and rising social and political polarization. Montclair State has not been immune to these disruptions: from reductions in research funding and changes to immigration enforcement, to legal shifts that threaten inclusivity. Navigating this complex environment requires leadership grounded in shared governance and a steadfast commitment to the University's mission and values.

President Koppell has provided clear and consistent leadership through this period of uncertainty by reaffirming the University's public-serving mission and its commitment to inclusivity, opportunity, and academic excellence. In his Spring 2025 Town Hall address to the university community, he acknowledged the unprecedented pressures facing higher education, but emphasized Montclair's unwavering identity as an institution where *everyone belongs*. He reinforced that "we are not changing who we are," and stressed that Montclair will continue to be a place where all people can reach their potential through education.

The development of a new University mission statement through a participatory and inclusive process exemplifies how Montclair engages in shared governance even amidst disruption. Faculty, staff, and other stakeholders contributed to a values-based articulation of the University's purpose, ensuring broad community investment in our direction. This updated mission will guide the University forward with clarity and confidence.

In addition, the University is actively building a Strategic Framework designed to help Montclair colleagues adapt to and lead through change. This framework includes experiential, social, and formal learning opportunities intended to develop the decision-making capacities and resilience of all employees. Rather than retreat from challenge, the institution is investing in people, building capacity, and preparing for future disruption with intentionality and alignment.

Finally, visible commitments to the future - such as new academic programs, immersive learning spaces like the Dreamscape Learn Lab, and interdisciplinary initiatives - serve as further evidence that leadership at Montclair is both aspirational and action-oriented, even in turbulent times. These initiatives reflect the University's long-standing commitment to public purpose, inclusion, and excellence, and demonstrate the strength of its leadership and shared governance culture in navigating disruption.

Leadership: Building a Strategic and Inclusive Governance Culture
(This section maps to criteria 1,2, 3, 4 and 5)

Sustaining momentum amid disruption requires more than bold initiatives - it depends on capable, values-driven leadership and a governance structure that is strategic, inclusive, and responsive. At Montclair State University, leadership has not only adapted to new challenges but has also reimagined how the institution operates, engages its community, and fulfills its public mission. By cultivating a dynamic leadership model, rooted in collaboration among the President's Office, Board of Trustees, and shared governance bodies, Montclair has strengthened its foundation while advancing bold, transformative goals.

President Koppell and his new Provost have championed student success and elevated the University's public-service role, with an emphasis on external collaboration, community engagement, and the expansion of online and international enrollment. Recent examples of signature initiatives include *One Square Mile*, a multi-year, community-driven effort to revitalize neighborhoods in Paterson through education and housing initiatives, and the opening of *The Charles J. Muth Museum of Hinchliffe Stadium*, which provides experiential learning opportunities for Montclair students while honoring the cultural history of one of the last remaining Negro League stadiums. A passionate advocate for social mobility, President Koppell has worked tirelessly to bridge gaps between education and broader societal needs, ensuring that students are equipped not only with academic skills but with the values and tools to drive positive change.

Strategic Stewardship: The Role of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees holds Montclair State University in trust for the public, representing the public interest in the governance, policy direction, and advancement of the institution. Chaired by Kent Sluyter - a distinguished executive with deep experience in the insurance and investment industry - the Board operates independently of institutional or system representation, in alignment with governance best practices.

With a transparent leadership selection process and rigorous adherence to state conflict of interest policies, the Board plays a vital role in safeguarding institutional autonomy, ensuring ethical oversight, and stewarding University resources. A recently expanded subcommittee structure enhances Board engagement and oversight across critical domains such as student success, financial health, and human capital development (accomplished through the following committees: Audit and Risk; Infrastructure and Operations; Student Success; Human Capital; Governance).

Trustees bring external insight and societal perspective to campus decision-making, interpreting the evolving needs of the broader world to guide strategic priorities. Through regular participation in Board and committee meetings, they contribute to thoughtful deliberation and forward-looking decision-making that protects the integrity and future of the institution.

The Board is also deeply committed to financial oversight—ensuring that strong management plans are in place, resources are effectively allocated, and new funding opportunities are pursued. Their leadership in securing both public and private support reinforces Montclair's capacity to innovate, grow, and fulfill its public mission.

Inclusive Leadership - Shared Governance

Montclair State University's model of shared governance reflects a commitment to transparency, collaboration, and inclusive decision-making. The legally constituted governing body - the Board of Trustees - works in partnership with the University Senate and Student Government Association (SGA) to shape institutional direction and ensure accountability.

The University Senate serves as a key forum for shared decision-making, bringing together faculty, administrators, librarians, administrative professionals, professional staff, clinical/instructional specialists, and students. It provides an inclusive space for discussion and policy recommendations on academic, administrative, and student affairs, ensuring all voices can raise issues and contribute to institutional dialogue. President Koppell has actively looked to build connections to the University Senate and has publicly voiced his belief that it has an important role to play in shared governance. He has worked collaboratively with members to implement Senate recommendations (e.g., the creation of the University's Land Acknowledgement Statement), and he has also reached out to the Senate for help in shaping the development of his own policy initiatives (e.g., formalizing guidelines for romantic relationships). In addition, as a response to the Senate informing him that the campus community was asking for more clarity with regards to the nature of higher education funding in New Jersey, President Koppell hosted a special town hall focused on that topic. At this point in his tenure, President Koppell has fostered a notably open and constructive relationship with the University Senate and its Executive Board in a way that gives renewed optimism for the future of shared governance.

The Student Government Association (SGA), an independent not-for-profit corporation, represents all fee-paying undergraduates and is dedicated to enhancing student life. The SGA appoints student

representatives to university committees and manages the election of the student member to the Board of Trustees, ensuring that student perspectives are reflected in university governance.

The Board of Trustees, University Senate, and SGA together exemplify a robust model of shared governance at Montclair State. Each contributes uniquely to the University's resilience, responsiveness, and continued advancement by helping to shape the mission, approve educational policies, and uphold transparency, academic freedom, and ethical governance.

Shared Voices, Informed Leadership

The president maintains regular engagement with faculty, staff, administrators, and the broader campus community through a variety of structured forums. These include attendance at Academic Leadership Council meetings, academic department meetings, Chairs Council, and University Senate sessions, where the president provides updates and meets monthly with the Senate Executive Board. The president also hosts campus-wide town halls and participates in College and School meetings—typically visiting each of the university's Colleges and Schools once per semester (four in the fall and four in the spring). These meetings, usually hosted by the respective Deans, provide opportunities for the president to speak directly with faculty and staff in each academic unit. In addition, Board of Trustees meetings are open for all to attend. A full record of these engagement activities is available in the President Meeting file.

 Additionally, the Provost meets with students once each semester, while the President connects with students through various informal activities. He hosts *Cooking with Koppel*, a show produced by students and aired on the University's streaming network, and is known for fun interview videos like *Red Hawt*, where he eats hot wings while chatting with students. The President also engages with students as a DJ at the campus radio station, WMSC, and through "walk-abouts" for casual conversations.

Each year, the SGA hosts town hall events where students engage directly with Deans and administrators from the schools and colleges, asking questions and receiving clear, actionable responses. These activities foster a culture of inclusive governance by creating multiple, accessible avenues for dialogue and participation across all campus contingencies.

Regular engagement with faculty, staff, students and other campus leaders, both in formal and informal interactions, ensure that diverse voices are heard and reflected in decision making. By actively inviting input, using interactive media to open lines of communication, the University is creating an environment where every member of the community can contribute to shaping the direction and priorities of the Institution.

Investing in Leadership Excellence

Montclair State University has significantly enhanced its commitment to professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators under its new leadership. The Division of Human Resources' Learning & Talent Development team offers programs like Leadership University 1.0, a multi-week initiative designed to cultivate leadership skills among Assistant Directors and higher-level administrators. This program emphasizes personal leadership, trust-building, and adaptive leadership strategies, including workshops on unconscious bias and management best practices.

Complementing this is The PROPEL Project, which provides funding, support, and coaching to managers and administrators aiming to enhance their professional skills and leadership within the university community. The project focuses on facilitating active participation in professional conferences, coupled with coaching to maximize the benefits of these experiences

For faculty and professional staff, the Office of the Provost administers the Career Development Program, offering opportunities for professional growth to faculty, librarians, teaching faculty, instructional specialists, and clinical specialists. This program underscores the university's dedication to supporting individual development as a means to foster institutional growth.

Under President Jonathan Koppell's leadership, the university has taken meaningful steps to promote a campus culture that values respect, access, and a sense of community for all. The creation of the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Institutional Equity (IE²) reflects this ongoing effort. IE² is dedicated to cultivating a welcoming environment where every member of the university feels acknowledged, empowered, and equipped to thrive.

Montclair State University's approach to leadership is distinguished by its deliberate integration of strategy, inclusion, and continuous engagement. By fostering meaningful collaboration across governance structures, investing in leadership development, and ensuring broad-based participation in decision-making, the University has built a resilient leadership culture capable of navigating change and complexity. This strong foundation enables Montclair not only to adapt in the face of disruption, but to persist - advancing its mission with clarity, agility, and an unwavering commitment to the public good.

Resilience: Sustaining Mission Through Complexity and Disruption
(This section maps to criteria 1,4 and 5)

Montclair has demonstrated remarkable resilience in upholding its mission through an era of complex challenges, structural transformation, and societal disruption. Across significant presidential transitions (both institutional and national), a global pandemic, an institutional merger, and substantial academic reorganization, Montclair has remained committed to equity, access, student success, and academic excellence. This enduring focus has been supported by its governance structures, data-informed planning, and a culture of inclusive leadership.

Commitment to Academic Excellence

Academic innovation and quality remain at the center of Montclair's governance model. The Board of Trustees plays an active role in ensuring that academic programs align with the university mission and with societal needs. The Board authorizes new degree programs, confers degrees, and regularly reviews academic initiatives as part of its policy-level oversight responsibilities.

At the academic leadership level, dean's retreats and Master Academic Program Planning (MAPP) ensure that deans and their units engage in cyclical reflection and forward planning. These mechanisms tie directly to Montclair's strategic framework and enable continuous refinement of academic offerings in response to student needs and external demand. As mentioned earlier, the redesign of the general education curriculum, which involved transitioning from the 2002 Core to the SEEDS framework, further reflects institutional adaptability and commitment to maintaining relevance and rigor in undergraduate education.

Montclair operates within the highly regulated and politically dynamic context of New Jersey higher education. The institution has remained mission-focused despite leadership changes at the state level, public scrutiny of higher education funding, and increased calls for accountability and access. The institution's governance culture, including adherence to the New Jersey Code of Ethics, public meeting requirements, and formal reporting obligations, reinforces trust and transparency in decision-making. The

Board of Trustees, through its bylaws and committee structure, ensures that governance remains independent and grounded in fiduciary responsibility, free from external interference.

Transparent and Inclusive Engagement

Transparency and engagement are critical for success in institutional leadership. Governance documents, Board bylaws, and meeting minutes are publicly accessible, providing visibility into processes and decisions.

Participatory governance extends to budgeting and planning processes. Student Government Association leaders, for example, have advocated for policy changes such as mental health days and feminine hygiene product access. Faculty primacy in curricular decisions, strategic planning input, and participation in governance through the University Senate further anchors shared governance in everyday operations. These formal structures are complemented by the president's and provost's consistent, visible engagement with students, faculty, and staff through campus forums, informal activities, and direct dialogue, fostering bidirectional communication that ensures leadership remains accessible, accountable, and responsive to the voices of the entire community.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Montclair's governance and leadership rely heavily on data to guide planning and assessment. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provides the infrastructure for data collection, analysis, and reporting across all academic and administrative areas. This capacity supports institutional accreditation, annual budget reviews, performance evaluations, and long-range planning.

A key change under President Koppell and Provost Gonzales has been the shift from a prescriptive strategic plan to a more dynamic strategic framework. This framework, which is organized around four pillars: Student Success, Academic Excellence and Innovation, Institutional Vitality, and Scaled Impact, allows the institution to remain agile while maintaining coherence in decision-making. Regular assessment of progress toward strategic goals, supported by performance metrics and stakeholder feedback, enables leadership to course-correct and adapt without losing sight of mission-driven outcomes.

Cultural Anchoring

Montclair's ability to persist through complexity is grounded in more than structures and policies, it is rooted in a resilient culture and a community of administrators, faculty, and staff who genuinely care about the populations they serve. Leadership turnover, technological modernization, and academic restructuring have not undermined the institution's core identity; instead, they have been leveraged to reaffirm and reimagine its mission. In this way, Montclair has shown not only that it can withstand disruption, but that it can use disruption as a catalyst for transformation.

Summary Statement

Key Findings

Montclair State University has demonstrated resilient and adaptive leadership amid significant disruptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and broader national challenges facing higher education. The university's governance model reflects a strong commitment to shared leadership, transparency, and inclusivity, with collaborative engagement among the Board of Trustees, President, University Senate, and Student Government Association ensuring broad-based participation in decision-making. Under President Koppell's leadership, Montclair has reinforced its public-serving mission, commitment to access and opportunity, and strategic innovation while fostering open communication and continuous campus-wide dialogue. Strategic academic restructuring and curricular reform highlight the institution's agility and commitment to mission-driven leadership.

Next Steps:

While the university has made notable progress in strengthening governance, leadership, and administrative practices, several opportunities remain to further enhance transparency, inclusivity, and alignment across systems and stakeholders. The following recommendations are offered in that spirit:

1. Enhance the Flow of Communication: The Koppell Administration has taken significant steps to increase transparency and community engagement. The President's regular messages, newsletters, town halls, and direct outreach reflect a strong commitment to open dialogue and shared governance. The Provost's frequent engagement with Deans, Department Chairs, and academic councils has further reinforced this foundation.

Despite these efforts at the senior level, critical information does not always reach faculty, staff, and students clearly or consistently. Communications often remain at the leadership level and do not cascade effectively throughout the institution. To help bridge these gaps, the university may consider:

- Brief, broadcast-style updates (e.g., monthly 5-minute videos or voice notes from the President or Provost) to reinforce institutional priorities in an accessible format.
- Two-way briefings, where Deans and Chairs routinely share Provost-level updates with their teams - possibly in bullet-point summaries or as standing meeting agenda items - and collect feedback to share upward.
- Internal communication liaisons in each college or major unit to help clarify messages, surface questions, and ensure input flows in all directions.

By building on the strong foundation already in place and supporting broader dissemination, the university can foster a more connected and informed campus community.

2. Support Board of Trustees Continuity:
 As Board membership evolves, continuity of governance can be strengthened through more structured mentoring and onboarding practices for new trustees. While the university has initiated expanded ethics and governance training for existing trustees - including a new in-person session planned for November 2025 in collaboration with Grant Thornton - additional focus on personalized mentoring for new members remains essential. Such mentoring can help preserve institutional memory, accelerate trustee readiness, and maintain strategic alignment through periods of change. Furthermore, implementing a formal assessment process to gather trustee feedback on training effectiveness will support continuous improvement and ensure governance practices remain responsive to evolving needs.

3. Leverage Technology to Strengthen Shared Governance: The university has made meaningful progress in adopting digital tools - such as Canvas, Navigate, CourseLeaf, and Zoom - that support academic and administrative functions. The upcoming transition from Banner to Workday Student represents another important step toward modernization.

However, these systems often operate in silos, making data sharing difficult and reconciliation time-consuming. This fragmentation limits timely access to reliable information - an essential ingredient for effective planning and shared governance.

Moreover, while engagement around major system changes does occur, it is not always inclusive of the individuals most affected. Faculty, staff, and mid-level administrators are not consistently brought into early conversations, nor kept well-informed throughout the process, which can hinder adoption and collaboration.

To align technology more closely with institutional values of inclusion and transparency, the university might consider:

- Establishing centralized data governance to clarify data ownership, access, and definitions.
- Enhancing integration across platforms to reduce duplication and improve data flow.
- Publishing a digital roadmap of major transitions, timelines, and engagement opportunities.
- Investing in proactive communication and training, so that new tools are not only launched, but also clearly explained and supported.

By connecting systems, data, and people more effectively, the university can ensure its digital infrastructure supports - not complicated - collaborative decision-making.