

Self-Study Design

SUBMITTED TO
THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
UTICA UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 14, 2025



Institutional Overview

Utica University is an independent, comprehensive university that historically serves a predominantly first-generation student population. The University was established in 1946 as a branch campus of Syracuse University (SU) to meet the educational needs of returning World War II veterans. In 1995, the University (then Utica College) became a fully independent institution with a Board of Trustees to oversee its educational programs, capital assets, and financial health. Even after becoming an independent institution, Utica College maintained a relationship with Syracuse University until 2008, when it began the process of separating itself from SU. In 2022, Utica College became Utica University.

In addition to its main campus in Utica, New York where on-ground and liberal arts majors are offered, the University has additional locations in St. Petersburg, Florida; Liverpool, New York; and Latham, New York. Accelerated degree programs in nursing are offered at these additional sites, an effort to address the nursing shortage in both Florida and New York State. The University also operated at an additional location in Miramar, Florida, which closed on May 31, 2024.

A fourth additional site is the Clark City Center in downtown Utica, where the University's undergraduate and graduate programs in business administration are offered. The University also offers a suite of hybrid and online undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business, cybersecurity, childhood and adolescent education, accounting, healthcare and health sciences, nursing, social work, and post-professional doctorates in physical therapy and occupational therapy.

Since the previous self-study and accreditation review, the University's leadership changed. Dr. Laura Casamento, who was appointed to serve as the 9th President in 2016, retired in July 2023. A national search was conducted to find her replacement, and in August 2023, Dr. Todd Pfannestiel assumed the position of University President. Dr. Pfannestiel had been serving the institution as Provost since 2018. Dr. Stephanie Nesbitt, Dean of Business and Justice Studies, was named the Interim Provost for the 2023-2024 academic year, and, following a national search, she became the permanent Provost in June 2024.

Board leadership likewise changed. Mr. Robert Brevnick concluded his term as Board Chair in May 2023, and Mr. Jeremy Thurston assumed leadership of the Board.

Additional administrative changes included the appointment of a new Vice President for Enrollment Management, a new Vice President for Financial Affairs/Treasurer, a new Vice President for Integrated Information Technology Services, a new Vice President for Advancement, a new Dean of Student Success position, and a new Dean of Students. A Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions and a Vice President for Emergency Management were added to the campus's leadership team since the previous self-study.

The University currently employs 170 full-time faculty. Forty-eight percent are tenured faculty, 22% are tenure-track, and 29% are non-tenure eligible, including Professors of Practice, most of whom serve the professional and pre-professional schools. The student-faculty ratio is 14:1.

Mission, Values, and Vision

The University’s mission statement was developed in 2019, when the institution engaged in strategic planning. The current mission reads, “We empower learners to achieve their career and life goals through personally enriching experiences and outstanding educational pathways.”

This mission rests upon a foundation of values that guide planning and decision making. These values are

- Individual attention
- Intellectual growth, creativity, and scholarship in the pursuit of knowledge
- Innovative and relevant approaches to teaching and learning
- Diversity of perspective, background, and experience in an equitable, respectful, and inclusive environment
- Freedom of expression and civil discourse
- Community engagement and service
- Ethical behavior and integrity
- Continuous pursuit of excellence

The University’s vision statement—“We will focus our innovative energy on inspiring learners to create a future beyond their imaging”—underscores the institution’s commitment to successful student outcomes and the importance of preparing students for their career and life goals.

Strategic Planning

Following its last self-study and reaccreditation, the University, under the leadership of President Laura Casamento, embarked on strategic planning. A strategic planning committee was formed consisting of Trustees, University leadership, faculty representing each of the three schools, professional staff, and the President of the Student Government Association. Focus groups were conducted to include diverse voices from the University community in the planning process.

The strategic planning committee met from December 2018 until September 2019. In fall 2019, a draft of the strategic plan and the newly revised mission statement were shared with the institution’s governance groups, who approved the plan for a January 2020 launch. The plan was created to guide the University from 2020 until 2025.

The Covid pandemic and the subsequent shutdown in March 2020 impacted the University’s ability to achieve a number of the strategic plan’s goals, particularly those related to enrollment and financial growth. Nonetheless, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, the institution successfully achieved a number of its strategic goals, including a revision of its general

education program, an increase in the number of racially and ethnically diverse faculty, and the implementation of several DEI initiatives.

In May 2023, when it became apparent that the University was not going to achieve the remaining goals in the strategic plan, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that the 2020-2025 strategic plan be discontinued and that the University develop a three-year strategic plan.

President Casamento retired at the close of the 2022-2023 academic year, and in August 2023, Dr. Todd Pfannestiel was named the 10th President of Utica University. President Pfannestiel originally intended to begin the strategic planning process in his first year. However, the University's financial circumstances, which like many other institutions were affected by the pandemic, made resourcing strategic initiatives unlikely. Rather than develop a strategic plan, President Pfannestiel drafted an institutional effectiveness plan (IEP) in support of the University's mission and his own vision to create a sustainable institution by making comprehensive structural changes.

The IEP includes four institutional goals:

1. Develop a student success-focused approach to service in all operations.
2. Develop a strategic academic plan focused on educational offerings and academic footprint.
3. Develop a strategic enrollment and marketing plan to support the academic plan.
4. Achieve a sustainable financial model that supports institutional growth.

These four goals, congruent with the University's mission, guide decisions about resource allocations.

Curricular Offerings

Utica University's 69 undergraduate degree programs and 35 graduate programs are organized in three distinct schools: Arts and Sciences, Business and Justice Studies, and Health Professions and Education. Arts and Sciences is further broken down into two divisions: Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Health Professions and Education and Business and Justice Studies each have a dean appointed to them. In Arts and Sciences, there are two deans, one for each division.

The University's 2,335 undergraduate students seek degrees primarily in education, healthcare, nursing, business management, construction management, and cybersecurity. In fall 2024, 413 undergraduates (17.7%) were enrolled in liberal arts majors, 830 (35.5%) in business and justice studies majors, and 1,040 (44.5%) in health professions and education majors. Similarly, the majority of the 1,301 graduate students are enrolled in programs related to health professions and education, followed by business management, cybersecurity, and health care administration.

The following academic programs are accredited by discipline-specific accrediting agencies: Business (undergraduate and graduate programs), Construction Management, Education, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and the Master of Social Work. The chemistry program is approved by the American Chemical Society, and B.S. and M.S. Cybersecurity programs have been designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence, and a National Center of Digital Forensics Academic Excellence.

All academic programs engage in annual assessments of student learning and operational effectiveness. Programs that do not have a specialized accreditor also complete a self-study every five years as part of a program review process.

In addition to the undergraduate majors offered by the University, students may choose from 62 minors to advance their knowledge and skills in a specific discipline. Among the more popular minors over a 4-year period are Fraud and Financial Crime Investigation, Psychology, Healthcare Ethics, and Healthcare Advocacy. A certificate program in Financial Crimes Investigation is also available at the University.

Undergraduate students are further required to complete 37 credits in general education offerings. Since the previous accreditation visit, the general education curriculum underwent a major revision, as per the strategic plan and assessment findings that suggested a change was warranted. The current program is structured around 7 institutional learning goals and includes foundational courses and themed pathways that have students explore a topic from diverse liberal arts perspectives. The most recent assessment findings indicate that the majority of students perceive that their education contributed much or a great deal to their developing the skills and competencies associated with an undergraduate education, particularly in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and problem-solving.

Since the previous accreditation visit, the University has added academic programs that align with the goals of the strategic plan and that meet the regional needs of New York State, particularly Central New York. The following undergraduate programs were added to the University's academic portfolio: B.A. in Africana Studies, minor in Africana Studies, B.S. in Digital Media Marketing, and B.B.A. degrees in multiple business offerings. The University also established a partnership with Worcester Polytechnic Institute to create a 4-plus-1 program in physics to engineering.

Graduate offerings were likewise expanded to include an M.S. in Computer Science, M.S. in Dietetics and Nutrition, M.S. in Accounting, M.S. in Forensic Accounting, multiple M.S. programs in Nursing, a Master's in Social Work, and graduate certificates in Nursing.

To ensure the currency and relevance of undergraduate and graduate programs, significant curriculum revisions were made to programs in Psychology-Child Life, Psychology, Education, Exercise and Wellness, and Cybersecurity.

While the University expanded its academic offerings in some disciplines, continued low enrollments in others resulted in a Board resolution requiring University leadership to assess the University academic portfolio and make recommendations regarding the elimination of programs that have had historically low enrollments and minimal interest from prospective students. The following programs were discontinued in 2023: Criminal Justice (distance), Spanish, Geoscience (B.A. and B.S.), International Studies, Philosophy, Public Relations and Marketing, Healthcare Management (distance and on-ground), Nutrition, Sociology and Anthropology, and Therapeutic Recreation.

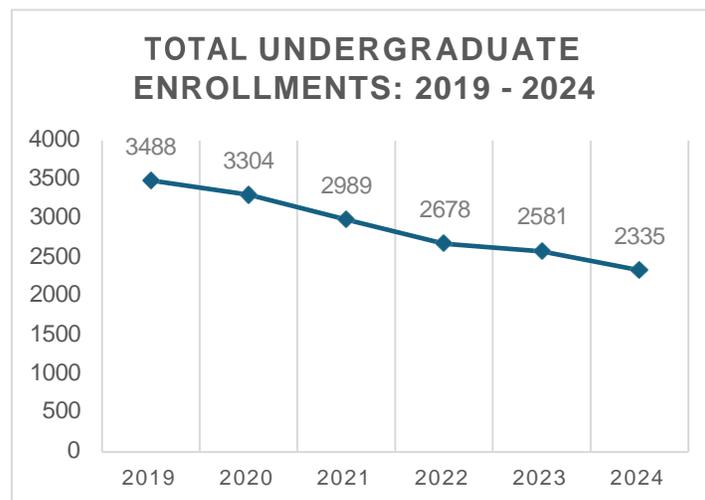
The students in these programs are currently being taught out.

Student Trends

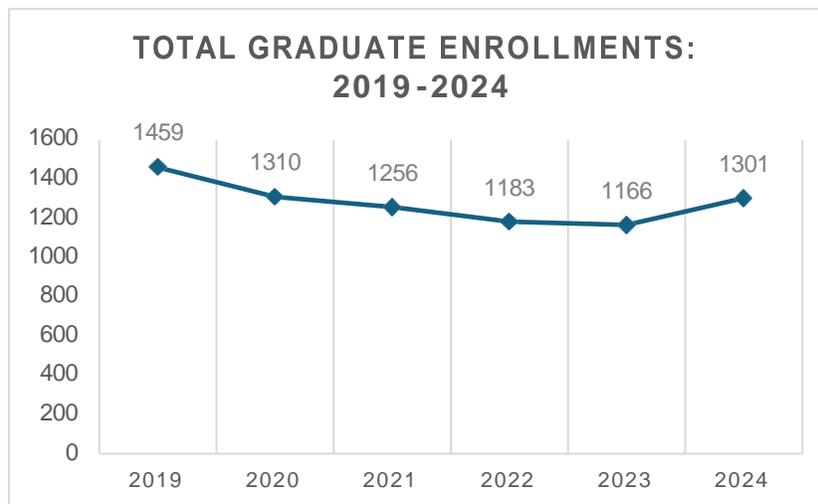
Utica University serves primarily first-generation students from New York State, particularly from those counties in proximity to the Utica campus. Forty-four percent of the first-time, full-time cohort in 2024 were Pell Grant recipients, a figure consistent with previous years. In 2023, US News and World Report ranked Utica University 28th in social mobility for regional universities in the North.

The University has a student population that is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2024, 28.9% of undergraduate students identified as members of a racially or ethnically diverse population, and 33.5% of graduate students identified as members of a racially or ethnically diverse group. Thirty-two percent of traditional undergraduates are student-athletes, and 44% reside on campus.

Utica University has experienced significant declines in enrollment since the last accreditation. In 2017, the total number of students was 5,258. This number dropped to 3,636 in 2024. The following chart shows the decline in undergraduate enrollments since 2019.



In graduate programs, there has been a slight increase in enrollments in 2024, largely attributable to an increased number of international students attending Utica University to earn degrees in business, cybersecurity, and computer science.



The University has improved its graduation rates since the previous accreditation visit. In 2017, the 6-year graduation rate was 49.1%. In 2024, it was 56.1%. Seventy-seven percent of graduates from 2024 who responded to a survey regarding their employment status indicated they were employed full-time, and 60% indicated that their employment was directly related to their career goals.

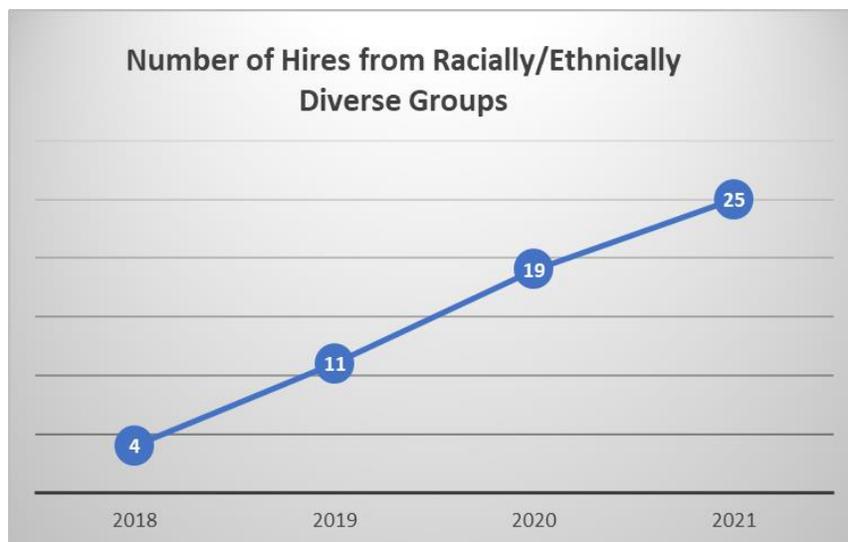
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Utica University has historically demonstrated a commitment to the principles embraced by diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. At the time of the previous self-study and accreditation visit, the institution had a Dean for Diversity and Inclusion who reported to the Provost. Under this dean’s leadership, a strategic advisory committee for diversity, equity, and inclusion was formed; an operational plan was developed to address the goals of DEI; and the Bias Response Referral Network (BRRN) was established.

In 2019, following a series of racially biased incidents on campus and based on data gathered from a climate survey, President Casamento created a Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position to serve as a member of her Cabinet. Three professional staff positions were added to support the effort of the vice president.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan included the goal, “Develop a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive climate,” and key performance indicators were established to measure progress on this particular goal.

The institution further committed resources to increasing the number of faculty and staff who represent a racially or ethnically diverse group, and the number of employees hired representing racially or ethnically diverse groups significantly increased over a 4-year period.



The financial challenges the University experienced post-pandemic have resulted in hiring freezes, an increase in the number of vacant faculty-staff positions, and a decrease in the resources available to recruit a diverse workforce. Nevertheless, the institution continued to successfully attract faculty representing a range of races and ethnicities. In 2023-2024, 33% of the faculty hired represented a racially or ethnically diverse group, and 91% of faculty from racially and ethnically diverse groups were retained at the institution.

In 2020, the Division for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions collaborated with the Division for Advancement and the *Alpha Phi Alpha* Fraternity to launch three scholarships supporting underrepresented students, particularly students who identify as Black, African American, or Latinx.

The following year, the University's Advancement team secured a gift that funded the renovation of the Francis A. Wilcox Intercultural and Student Organization Center, a facility for DEI programming. Advancement further secured funding for the Wilcox Fellowship Program, the largest scholarship program in the University's history, to support academically promising students with financial need. Additional opportunities made possible through the efforts of the Advancement Division in collaboration with faculty and staff are as follows: \$10M in endowed scholarships, the vast majority of which support students with demonstrated financial need; the S-STEM grant that provides funding for academically promising students from low income backgrounds; grant funding for TRIO-Student Support Services for First-Generation, PELL-eligible students; the National Science Foundation-funded Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) which provides research and career development for under-represented

minority students in the sciences; and a DOJ OVM grant that has a focus on providing services to our LGBTIA+ students.

Ongoing professional development has been available to campus leadership, faculty, staff, and students on topics related to DEI, and Utica University was included as a case study in equitable assessment practices in the publication *Reframing Assessment to Center Equity: Theories, Models, and Practices*¹.

Administration and Leadership

In addition to the Office of the President, the administration at Utica University is organized into eight divisions: Academic Affairs; Enrollment Management; Financial Affairs; Advancement; Integrated Information Technology Services; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions; Marketing and Communications; and Emergency Management and Facilities.

Since the previous accreditation, two vice president positions were added to the institution's structure, one in Emergency Management and another in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. The Vice President for Planning/Senior Executive Assistant to the President position was eliminated, and other positions were combined or restructured to avoid duplication of efforts and to keep operations organized around mission.

The President is assisted in his leadership by his Cabinet, nine key advisors who oversee the University's operations and have responsibility for implementing the Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Members of the President's Cabinet are the

- Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Senior Associate Provost
- Vice President for Financial Affairs/Treasurer
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Advancement
- Vice President for Marketing and Communication
- Vice President for Market Innovation and New Ventures
- Vice President for Emergency Management and Facilities
- Director of Athletics

The Provost's Cabinet is assembled by the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs to advise her on academic matters and assist with strategic planning for Academic Affairs. Members of the Provost's Cabinet include the Registrar, the Dean of Student Success, the Dean of the Library, the Dean of Students, the Senior Associate Provost, and the four school deans. A

¹ Henning, Gavin, and Gianna R. Baker, Natasha A. Jankowski, Anne E. Lundquist, and Erick Montenegro, editors. *Reframing Assessment to Center Equity: Theories, Models, and Practices*. Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2022.

Deans' Council functions in a similar capacity, but this body consists solely of the Provost, the four school deans, and the Senior Associate Provost. The Council focuses primarily on academic policies and procedures.

On a monthly basis, the President's and Provost's Cabinets meet as a Joint Cabinet. These meetings allow members of the Provost's Cabinet to hear directly from the University President about important institutional issues and strategic priorities, and they provide an opportunity for the institution's academic leaders to participate in institutional planning and decision-making.

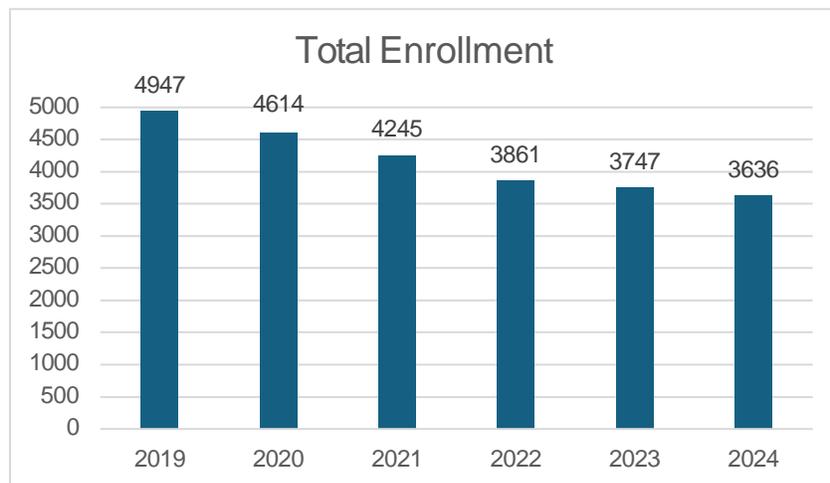
Challenges

Utica University has faced and is facing the challenges common to many smaller, private, regional institutions. Currently, the most pressing challenges are enrollment, limited fiscal resources, inequities in student achievement, and campus climate.

Enrollment:

Utica University began experiencing declining enrollments even before the forecasted demographic cliff. These declines are largely attributable to the Covid pandemic, an aversion to student loan debt, and an increase in public distrust of higher education.

Since the previous accreditation, total enrollments at the University decreased by slightly over 1,300 students.



Enrollments on the main campus are the lowest in 2024 they have been in two decades.

Likewise, retention rates have declined, from 77.9% in the 2019 cohort to 70.8% in the 2023 cohort. Most recently, traditional undergraduates who withdrew from the University prior to completing their degrees cited financial circumstances as the major reason contributing to their decision followed by academic performance, medical or mental health issues, and social life on campus. Undergraduates in distance programs indicated work/family/personal responsibilities mostly influenced their decision to withdraw followed by financial reasons.

Retention has likely been influenced by students' increased lack of academic preparedness and diminished abilities to cope with stress and manage conflict, all of which has been documented in annual assessment reports from academic departments and in the research on the effects of the Covid pandemic on student learning.

To address these challenges, the University has taken the following measures:

- The Provost assembled a standing committee for retention, co-chaired by the Dean of Student Success and the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- The newly hired Vice President for Enrollment Management is drafting an evidence-based, detailed enrollment management plan that includes targets and goals by location, points of entry, international students, and student-athletes.
- The University introduced the Pioneer Passport Program in fall 2024, which assures academically qualified, first-time-in-college New York State residents with an Adjusted Gross Income of \$65,000 or less free tuition and fees to attend Utica University.

Additionally, the University established partnerships with Upgrad, ApplyBoard, Global Study Partners, and New Mind Education Partners to recruit and enroll international students in its graduate programs, specifically the M.B.A., M.S. Cybersecurity, and M.S. Computer Science. These partnerships have already yielded results: in Fall 2024, the University enrolled 159 international students, compared to 90 in Fall 2023. Thirty-nine new international students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in the Spring 2025 term, and the institution projects 180 new students in August 2025.

Limited fiscal resources

The declining undergraduate enrollments on all of its campuses has had an unfavorable impact on Utica University's finances. The fiscal year ending May 31, 2024 saw diminished results with a total net asset decrease, a debt-service coverage ratio below the 1.2 requirement, and a Department of Education Composite Financial Responsibility score of 0.5.

The Fiscal Year 2024 cash-based operating budget resulted in a \$10.1M budget deficit. As per a Board resolution, the University committed to achieving a balanced cash-based operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025, which necessitated significant reductions in operating and payroll and related expenses.

To achieve a balanced budget and address the fiscal challenges, the University's President and members of his leadership team have taken clear and definitive actions, as outlined below:

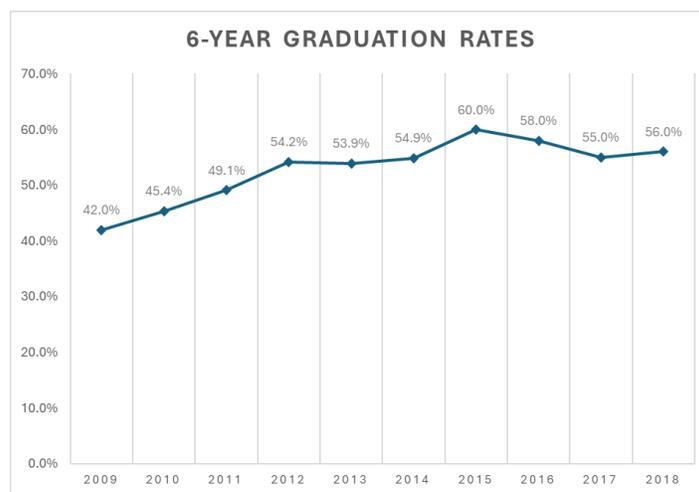
- The University reduced payroll and related expenses by restructuring or eliminating staff positions and not filling all open positions. Additionally, a salary reduction was imposed on staff earning over \$60,450.00 per year.
- The University's retirement contribution for staff has been frozen.

- The Provost enforced controls on instructional costs by enhancing course load efficiencies, ensuring courses run at maximum capacity, and reviewing the rotation of course offerings.
- The Office of Financial Affairs instituted ongoing budget review meetings with budget managers to monitor prudent use of budget resources and responsible stewardship of funds.
- The additional location in Miramar, Florida closed on May 31, 2024 due to low enrollment, and for the same reason, the St. Petersburg site is scheduled to close in May 2026, once all currently enrolled students complete their program of study.
- The institution is evaluating the return-on-investment of athletics programs to determine whether the current offering of 25 sports is commensurate with those at other schools in the same athletic conference and appropriate for the Utica’s size and resources.
- Negotiations with the faculty collective bargaining unit resulted in a faculty sacrifice of a through a combination of wage reductions and a freeze in employer retirement contributions commensurate with those previously enacted within the staff.
- The President is developing a plan to “right-size” the faculty and staff to serve current and projected student populations.

Fortunately, in Fiscal Year 2024, positive returns in the financial markets partially offset unfavorable operational results. Additionally, the University experienced another remarkable year of fund-raising and grant procurement by the Division for Advancement. Efforts at private philanthropy raised \$5,944,365, an increase of \$940,138 over FY23. Grant procurement raised \$6,906,669, with \$2,009,086 pending.

Inequities in Student Outcomes

Utica University has made progress in its 6-year graduation rates, from 42.0% in 2015 to 56.0% in 2024. The following graph shows the 6-year year graduation rates by cohort.



However, graduation rates for students who identify as Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, and multiple races remain lower than for those students who identify as White or Asian. In the 2018 cohort, 62% of students who identified as White graduated within 6 years and 58% who identified as Asian/Asian American completed their degrees within 6 years. In contrast, 31% of students who identified as Hispanic/Latinx and 39% who reported they were Black/African American graduated within 6 years. This trend is consistent with previous cohorts.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan included a goal to close the graduation gap between White students and students of color. The University's continued commitment to addressing inequitable outcomes is evidenced in its Institutional Effectiveness Plan that includes an objective related to addressing these inequities.

Proposed tactics to address inequities that impact student success include the following:

- Re-establish alumni mentors for students of color, particularly Black/African American and Latinx.
- Provide faculty development opportunities in inclusive, student-centered pedagogy.
- Develop a system and criteria to award course-enhancement grants to faculty to develop courses that reflect diversity and that utilize anti-racist, student-centered pedagogy.
- Where possible, provide incentives to departments that have increased the engagement of historically marginalized student groups.
- Using data from first year courses, improve the course schedule to ensure that students, particularly first-year students, are enrolled in a selection and combination of courses where they can be successful.

Some of the proposed actions require resources that are currently unavailable, but others, such as faculty development in inclusive pedagogies and being more strategic about scheduling, are budget neutral.

Campus Climate

Survey data suggest that the University has made progress towards creating an inclusive environment for its students. In the most recent climate survey (2022-2023), slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents reported being generally or very satisfied with the overall campus climate, and the majority reported they were generally or very satisfied with the extent to which they feel all members experience a sense of belonging.

Disaggregated survey findings, however, indicated that some students perceive the University as less welcoming than others. Specifically, students who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community and as persons with a permanent disability indicated less satisfaction with the overall campus climate than their peers.

Numerous University offices and departments addressed and continue to address the concerns about campus climate and the student experience, as outlined below:

- In addition to organizing a significant of extra and co-curricular campus events, the Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging promotes awareness of all cultures and cultural events on its website, electronic message boards, in the daily publication of *Morning Mention*, and in its programming efforts.
- The Office of Learning Services received grant funding from the New York State Education Department to support a peer mentor program for incoming new students who identify as having a disability.
- The University’s Provost serves as the advisor to the student group, the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and co-sponsors the annual Coming Out Day celebration.
- Academic departments initiate activities and events to promote belonging, including pizza parties for new majors, book clubs and discussions, and outings.
- The New Student Orientation Program was re-envisioned to include topics such as Title IX training and campus resources, DEI forums and peer sessions, and domestic/sexual violence workshops.
- The Office of Campus Engagement developed a committee to create a support space for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The University’s financial challenges have had an adverse effect on faculty and staff, who continue to support the institution’s mission and goals despite salary cuts, staff reductions, and limited fiscal resources to do so. To address matters of campus climate while having to make difficult decisions to sustain the institution remains an enormous challenge for University leadership.

Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

Guided by the University’s mission and goals, the self-study co-chairs articulated a set of institutional priorities during Week II of the Self-Study Institute. These priorities were shared with the University’s President and Provost, who, because of challenges regarding retention, inequitable outcomes, and campus climate, opted to make student success the focus of the institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study report.

The institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study were presented to the faculty at a Faculty Senate meeting and with professional staff on two occasions in October 2024.

Institutional Priority	Description
Relevance and distinctiveness of academic programs and experiences	The majority of the University’s students are enrolled in professional or pre-professional programs, the content of which must remain current and relevant if the institution aims to attract students and graduate students with the knowledge, skills, and qualifications to be successful professionally. This priority aligns with the Institutional Effectiveness Plan’s objective, “Evaluate the compatibility and currency of academic offerings with regional market demands.” Quality academic programs will not only attract students, but may improve the institution’s current yield rates, especially in those majors where there is high interest.

	<p>Systematic, ongoing assessments of educational effectiveness that are focused on continuous improvement should help ensure that the University’s academic offerings are relevant and provide insight into what makes each program distinct. This will support the work of the Vice President for Enrollment Management who is developing an evidence-based enrollment management plan in support of the academic plan (IEP Goal 3).</p>
Institutional Priority	Description
<p>Equitable outcomes and improved student success</p>	<p>While the University has made gradual improvements to its graduation rates, both retention and degree-completion rates fail to meet the institution’s desired targets indicated in the previous strategic plan. Further, the retention and graduation rates for students of color, particularly Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African American students, are substantially lower than those of White and Asian students, indicating inequitable outcomes.</p> <p>As per the Institutional Effectiveness Plan, the University will take a student-focused approach in all of its operations and ensure that policies, processes, and information sources do not create inequities for students. Further, an action plan to address documented inequities that impact student success was developed and shared with a sub-committee of the Provost’s Retention Committee.</p>
<p>Quality of student life and the student experience</p>	<p>Utica University aspires to be an institution where all students feel as if they belong. The University recognizes the relationship between student life and academic success. Ensuring the quality of student life and the student experience will most likely result in improved retention and perhaps improve yield rates.</p> <p>Continued assessments of programs, services, policies, procedures, student satisfaction, and campus climate will help identify areas the quality of student life might improve. Disaggregating data will further highlight areas of concern for specific student types.</p> <p>This priority reflects the commitment to student success in the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.</p>

The institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study map to the University’s mission, as outlined in the following table:

Elements of the Mission Statement	Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences	Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success	Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience
Empowering learners to achieve their career goals	X	X	
Offering learners diverse, enriching experiences	X	X	X
Providing learners with outstanding educational opportunities	X	X	

Since student success is central to the Middle States Accreditation Standards, 14th edition, it follows that the three institutional priorities which focus on student success align with nearly all of the standards.

Standards for Accreditation	Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences	Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success	Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience
I. Mission & Goals	x	x	x
II. Ethics & Integrity	x	x	x
III. Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	x	x	x
IV. Support of the Student Experience	x	x	x
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	x	x	
VI. Planning, Resources, & Institutional Improvement	x	x	x
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration	x	x	x

Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

Utica University has identified the following as desired outcomes from the self-study process:

1. Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission’s *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Fourteenth Edition)* and provides evidence by Standard alignment with the *Evidence Expectations by Standard*.

2. Leverage periodic assessment through each standard, using assessment results for continuous improvement and innovation to ensure levels of quality for constituents and the attainment of the institution's priorities, mission, and goals.
3. Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process, including analysis of a range of data, including disaggregated data, to ensure students are appropriately served and institutional mission and goals are met.
4. Enhance educational quality and the student experience based on reliable data and best practices.

Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

The nine-person Steering Committee consists of the two co-chairs and the seven individuals who chair the seven working groups, each group dedicated to a specific accreditation standard.

The co-chairs are responsible for leading the self-study process, which includes monitoring progress on the self-study draft, communicating to the various constituent groups (Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni), finalizing the self-study report, and arranging for the accreditation team visit.

The co-chairs for the 2026-2027 self-study are Dr. Rachel Wolfe, Associate Professor of Theater and Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate (2024-2025) and Dr. Ann Damiano, Accreditation Liaison Officer and Senior Associate Provost.

General Charge for the Steering Committee

1. Become familiar with the Middle States Standards for Accreditation (14th ed.), the Requirements of Affiliation, and the criteria aligned with the Standards, most especially the Standard of the respective working group.
2. Understand the institutional priorities of self-study and the desired outcomes of the self-study process.
3. Assemble a working group of individuals who have the expertise and knowledge related to the Standard of the working group and its individual criterion.
4. Serve as chair of the working group assembled to address the assigned standard.
5. Become familiar with the institution's evidence and assessment information to ensure that the various elements required in the self-study are adequately addressed.
6. Meet regularly (at least monthly, more if needed) with members of the working group.
7. Meet monthly as Steering Committee to ensure there is no duplication of efforts, to report on progress with respect to the individual chapters, to review drafts of the self-study, and to receive updated communications from the co-chairs.
8. Maintain minutes of all meetings with the working group.
9. Ensure the timely completion of individual drafts for each standard.
10. Share drafts of each standard with the University community and solicit feedback.

Steering Committee Members

In addition to the self-study co-chairs, the following persons constitute the membership of the Steering Committee:

Ms. Amy Lindner, Vice President for Advancement

Mr. James Telhia, Dean, Library and Learning Commons

Dr. Terri Provost, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Chair, Biology Department, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Ms. Bethany Samuels, Dean of Student Success

Ms. Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice in Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Ms. Danielle Dellerba, Comptroller and Assistant Treasurer

Dr. Laurence Zoekler, Professor of Education; Chair, Educator Preparation, School of Health Professions and Education

General Charge for All Working Groups

1. Become familiar with the Middle States Standards for Accreditation (14th ed.), the Requirements of Affiliation, and the criteria aligned with the Standards, most especially the standard of the working group.
2. Understand the institutional priorities for the self-study and the desired outcomes of the self-study process.
3. Articulate 3 to 5 Lines of Inquiry for each accreditation standard.
4. Become familiar with the institutional evidence and the required evidence for the standard to which they are assigned.
5. Identify any additional resources or information needed to address the standards.
6. Collaborate and confer with various offices or individuals relevant to the standard to which they have been assigned.
7. If necessary, administer surveys, formulate focus groups, conduct interviews, etc.
8. Formulate a draft (10 -15 pages) that
 - describes how the working group addressed criteria with respect to the institutional priorities;
 - provides an analysis of how well the evidence indicates the University has met the standard;
 - responds to the lines of inquiry;
 - identifies where the institution is strong with respect to the standard and where it needs to improve;
 - make recommendations for improvement based on the criteria and related to the institutional priorities.

9. Submit preliminary outline by April 25, 2025; an initial draft by October 10, 2025; a revised draft by February 20, 2026; and a final draft by April 24, 2026.
10. Participate in the team visit in Fall 2026.

Working groups must understand that the draft they complete will be edited in order to create a coherent self-study report that clearly addresses the standards, Requirements of Affiliation, institutional priorities, Line of Inquiry, and the outcomes of the self-study. Final edits will be made by the self-study co-chairs in consultation with the Steering Committee.

Specific Charges and Membership of the Working Groups

Working Group 1: Mission and Goals

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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership

Chair: Ms. Amy Lindner, Vice President for Advancement

Members:

Dr. Kelly Minerva, Associate Professor of English; Chair, Department of English, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Mr. Kyle Riecker, Coordinator of Education Partnerships and Clinical Practice, Office of Educator Prep, School of Health Professions and Education

Mr. Christopher Specht, Coordinator of Technical Support Services; Professional Staff Advisory Council President

Ms. Sukeena Stephens, Assistant Supervisory Air Marshal in Charge; Member of Alumni Council, Class of 1995

Specific Lines of Inquiry:

1. How well do the University’s various constituents know the institution’s mission?

2. What are the processes for the development, approval, implementation, and assessment of the institution's mission and goals? To what extent are the processes regular, collaborative, and inclusive?
3. To what extent are Utica University's mission and goals focused on student success?
4. How effectively do the mission and goals of Utica University guide decision-making processes in areas such as resource allocation, program development, and strategic planning?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report:

Examples include

- Membership of the Strategic Planning Committee (2019)
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (June 2020 to May 2023)
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommendation to Board of Trustees (May 2023)
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan (2024-2025)
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan project tracker
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan Executive Summaries (December 2024 & May 2025)
- President's Presentation on the Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Departmental and divisional maps to mission and strategic and/or institutional goals
- Board and Faculty Senate minutes indicating approval of mission statement
- Utica University's Institutional Learning Goals
- University Fact Book
- University Student Right to Know website
- Peer and aspirant institutions
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee's Reports to the President (2020-2024)
- Economic impact report (CICU)
- Recent Board resolutions
- Board of Trustee minutes
- University's definition of "student success" and metrics to measure it
- Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) Enrollment data
- Budget support for academic programs and programs supporting student success and student achievement

Anticipated collaborations

- Board of Trustees Members
- President's Cabinet
- Alumni Council
- Faculty Senate Executive Council
- Professional Staff Advisory Committee
- Student Government Association representatives

Working Group 2: Ethics and Integrity

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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership

Chair: Mr. James Telhia, Dean of the Library and Learning Commons

Members:

Ms. Susan Johnson, Director of TRIO Student Support

Dr. Adam Pack, Distinguished Professor of Biology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Mr. Brian Picente, Director of Operations for Academic Affairs

Trustee (TBD)

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How effective is the University’s process to assess systematically its policies and procedures?
2. How well does the institution strategically address concerns related to campus climate?
3. How successful are the vetting processes used to ensure honesty and truthfulness in publications, advertisements, recruitment and admissions materials and practices?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Statement of Principles Regarding Expression on Campus
- University Stance Statement
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Trustees Code of Ethics

- Copyright policy
- *Employee Handbook* (sections 306,501, 502, & 507)
- *Employee Code of Conduct*
- Title IX Compliance Documentation
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (May 2020 – May 2023)
- Sexual Assault Campus Climate survey results (2022 & 2024)
- Campus Climate Survey reports (2019 & 2023)
- Undergraduate and Graduate Withdrawals Survey Reports (2021 – 2024)
- Trend reports: Student Complaints, Bias Response Network, grievances
- Mandatory training on workplace behaviors
- Student satisfaction survey results (2021 & 2025)
- Report from the Task Force on Student Complaints (2023)
- Policies and procedures for Conflicts of Interest
- Policies and procedures for search committees
- Equal Opportunity Employment/Affirmative Action Statement
- Tenure and promotion procedures for faculty
- Employee exit survey data
- Employee Performance Review Template
- Calendar of Events: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Sections from self-study reports (administrative, academic, and co-curricular departments) related to support for diversity
- Faculty Diversity Plan (NYSED)
- Survey findings on institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (NSSE, Climate Surveys)
- DEI-designated courses-General Education
- Student learning assessment results-DEI goal
- Policy and procedures related to requesting accommodations (students, faculty, and staff)
- Student Right to Know web page
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Program-level handbooks
- Admissions information (undergraduate and graduate)
- Financial Aid information (web pages and catalogs)
- University Charter
- Statement of Accreditation
- Minutes from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee re committee reviews, policy and procedures review
- Minutes from the President's and Joint Cabinet re policy and procedure reviews
- Email communications from Senior Associate Provost re policy and procedure reviews

- Student headcounts at additional locations (Liverpool, NY; Latham, NY; and St. Petersburg, FL)
- Completed substantive changes for Miramar and St. Petersburg closures
- University Fact Book
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Human Resources
- Senior Associate Provost/Accreditation Liaison Officer
- AAUP-Utica (grievance officers)
- Dean of Students
- Office of the President
- Provost
- Faculty Affairs Committee
- School Deans
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Marketing and Communication
- Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Student Transitions
- Office of the Registrar
- Director of Instructional Design

Working Group 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

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

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership

Chair: Dr. Terri Provost, Distinguished Professor of Biology; Chair, Department of Biology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Members:

M. Sam Berry-Sullivan, Librarian, Frank E. Gannett Memorial Library

Dr. Laurah Klepinger, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Doreen Rogers, Associate Professor of Nursing; Chair, Department of Nursing, School of Health Professions and Education

Ms. Lillian Shafer-Lahnum, Instructional Designer, Center for Faculty Excellence

Dr. Rob Swenszkowski, Professor of Practice, Criminal Justice, School of Business and Justice Studies

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. To what extent does Utica University design and deliver rigorous academic offerings at all levels to promote learning and developing essential skills and knowledge in line with the University's mission?
2. How well does the University support faculty in the design and delivery of the student learning experience?
3. To what extent does our new General Education program improve equity, the student experience, and student success as compared with the old Core program?
4. How effective are the processes that are used to design and deliver the educational experience?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Curriculum maps
- Time on task templates
- Template for curriculum proposals
- Process for curriculum review and approval
- 4-year plans of study (2020 – 2024)
- Enrollment data by program
- Trends analysis of data on academic progress by program
- Template for program reviews
- Program review schedule
- Self-study reports from academic departments/section(s) related to faculty and curriculum
- Standards from specialized accreditors
- Common Data Set—Faculty Information
- Human Resource data—faculty

- Faculty/instructional staff qualifications (titles, advanced degrees, teaching load, percentage with tenure, percentage tenure-track, percentage with terminal degrees)
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Program handbooks
- Syllabus requirements
- Samples of syllabi
- Summaries of Professional Activity (SOPAs)
- Student Opinion of Teaching template
- Survey data related to teaching effectiveness (NSSE, satisfaction surveys, climate surveys, withdrawing student surveys, alumni surveys)
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Promotion and tenure requirements and procedures
- Faculty *Curriculum Vitae*
- Faculty job postings
- Record of allocated funds from Faculty Resource Committee
- Utilization rates-Center for Faculty Excellence/ Instructional Design and Technology
- Listings of clinical and practicum placements and internships
- Assessments of fieldwork experiences
- Library resources: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System—Academic Libraries Survey)
- Template for the annual assessment report
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Annual assessment reports: Academic departments and co-curricular/student support operations
- Annual assessment report-Library
- Annual assessment reports from student support operations: Athletics, Registrar, Division of Student Success, Learning Services, and Peer Tutoring
- Institutional Learning Goals
- General Education plan of study
- General Education Assessment Plan
- General Education rubrics
- Direct assessments of student learning/General Education
- Indirect assessments of student learning/General Education (NSSE, alumni survey, graduates' perceptions of educational gains)
- Analysis of student performance in General Education classes (percentage of failures, withdrawals)
- Student outcomes
- Alumni Survey (2023)
- Learning goals/Graduate programs
- Graduate capstone projects and research courses

- MOUs from Third-Party Providers
- Student satisfaction surveys (2021 & 2025)
- *Guide to institutional Effectiveness*
- *Resource Guide for Assessment Plans & Annual Reports*
- *Guide to Academic Assessment*
- *Guide to Annual Assessment & Program Reviews: Co-Curricular and Non-Academic Departments*
- Reports from the Academic Assessment Committee to the Faculty Senate (2020-2024)
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Office of Student Success
- Office of the Registrar
- School Offices
- Human Resources
- Office of the Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Academic Assessment Committee
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee
- Faculty Resource Committee
- General Education Committee

Working Group 4: Support of the Student Experience

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 professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.”

Related Institutional Priorities:

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership:

Chair: Ms. Bethany Samuels, Dean of Student Success

Members:

Mr. Greg Caloia, Director of the Center for Student Success

Ms. Marissa Hall, Executive Director of Student Living

Ms. Lauryn Moore, Associate Dean of Students & Campus Engagement

Ms. Jessica Nelson, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management

Ms. Dorothy Obernesser, Associate Professor of English, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Ms. Kristin St. Hilaire, Head Women's Lacrosse Coach; Assistant Director of Athletics

Ms. Sam Vincent, Success Coach, Center for Student Success

Ms. Mariah Kane, Director Transfer Services

Student rep (TBD)

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How effective are the processes in place to identify and support at-risk students?
2. How well does the institution monitor student retention rates and use this information to make improvements in processes, programs, and services to retain students and foster student success?
3. How well do transfer policies foster student success for our transfer population?
4. How effectively does the institution provide opportunities for students outside of the classroom to promote student engagement?
5. How well does the University foster the development of all its students, particularly those from historically marginalized groups?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Admissions information (undergraduate and graduate)
- Admissions trends: Applicants, yield rates, enrollments
- Financial Aid information (web pages and catalogs)
- Eligibility requirements for TRIO, C-STEP, and the Higher Education Opportunity Program
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs
- Registrar policies and procedures (e.g., FERPA, records retention, transcripts)

- Information Technology Policies and Procedures
- Student Support Questionnaire
- Annual assessment reports: Co-Curricular and Student Support Operations
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Surveys on assessment processes/culture
- Annual assessment report: Registrar
- External review report: Registrar
- Program review template: Co-Curricular and Student Support Operations
- Program review schedule
- Self-study reports from Co-curricular and Student Support Operations
- Template for the annual assessment report
- Rubric used for annual assessment reports
- Annual reports from the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee (2018 – 2024)
- Student success metrics: GPA, retention rates, graduation rates
- Placement rates: developmental English and mathematics
- Data on student performance and progress in developmental math and English courses
- Survey findings regarding advisement and counseling (satisfaction surveys, withdrawing student survey, NSSE)
- Description of orientation program and post-assessment
- Policies related to registration, grading, graduation, academic standing, tuition refunds
- Appeals Process
- Student Right to Know web page
- University Fact Book
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan: 2024-2025
- Strategic Plan: Department of Athletics
- Athletics Policies and Procedures
- Student Athlete Handbook
- Student headcount and average GPA by athletic team
- Student Handbook
- Student Code of Conduct
- Constitution, Student Government Association
- Student Government Association Organizational Structure
- *Guide to institutional Effectiveness*
- *Resource Guide for Assessment Plans & Annual Reports*
- *Guide to Annual Assessment & Program Reviews: Co-Curricular and Non-Academic Departments*
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics
- Contracts and MOUs from Third-Party providers of student support services

Anticipated collaborations

- Office of Student Living and Campus Engagement

- Transfer Services
- Center for Student Success
- Office of Admission/Enrollment Operations
- Retention Committee
- Department of Athletics
- Vice President of Division for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, & Student Transitions/Chief Diversity Officer
- Director, Office of Learning Services & Associate Dean for Student Success
- Director, TRIO Student Support Services
- Director of Opportunity Programs
- Financial Aid
- Director of Tutoring
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee

Working Group 5: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership

Chair: Ms. Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice in Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Members:

Ms. Amy Haver, Assistant Professor of Nursing, School of Health Professions and Education

Ms. Laura Salvaggio, Faculty Theater Director, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Kaylee Seddio, Associate Professor of Psychology, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Specific Lines of Inquiry:

1. To what extent are student learning goals articulated, observable, and measurable, and congruent with the department and institution’s respective missions?

2. To what degree are the institution's assessment processes effective, useful, and sustainable?
3. How well do the institution's assessment processes identify inequities within the curriculum?
4. To what extent are assessment analysis and results used to improve educational effectiveness through informed changes to curriculum, instruction and delivery of degree programs?
5. To what extent do our assessment results demonstrate the value of a Utica University degree?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Template for annual assessment reports
- Rubric for annual assessment reports
- Annual assessment reports from academic departments
- Curriculum maps
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs (academic programs)
- Syllabus requirements
- Samples of course syllabi
- Institutional learning goals
- Academic departmental web pages
- Reports from the Academic Assessment Committee to the Faculty Senate (2020-2024)
- Template for program reviews
- Self-study reports from academic departments
- Responses from the Academic Assessment Committee re self-study reports
- MOU from Provost completing program review process
- Assessments of program review process
- Surveys on assessment processes/culture
- Self-study reports for specialized accrediting bodies
- Academic Assessment web page
- *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness*
- *Guide to Academic Assessment*
- *Academic Assessment Committee Handbook*
- Assessment blog and reels
- Program dashboards: enrollment, retention, degree-completion
- Alumni surveys by programs
- Graduate-to-Be survey report
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Academic Assessment Committee
- School Deans
- Program directors & Department Chairs
- Co-Curricular Assessment Committee

Working Group 6: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

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 missions and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.”

Membership

Chair: Ms. Danielle Dellerba, Comptroller and Assistant Treasurer

Members:

Ms. Carol Bates, Associate Director of Financial Planning and Analysis

Dr. Michelle Boucher, Professor of Chemistry, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Ms. Kristin Phelps, Director of Human Resources

Trustee (TBD)

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How well integrated are the University’s planning processes?
2. How effective is the use of constituent expertise in the planning process?
3. How effectively does the institution align its strategic planning with resource allocation (both fiscal and human resources) to support continuous improvement and achieve its mission?
4. How effective are communication processes between the University’s decision-makers and the University’s constituents?

5. How does the University measure sufficiency and institutional improvement with respect to DEI?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Annual assessment reports from administrative and other non-academic departments
- Minutes from President’s and Joint Cabinet meetings
- Town Hall presentations
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan: 2024 - 2025
- Institutional Effectiveness Committee’s Reports to the President (2020-2024)
- Strategic Plan Status Reports (2020-2023)
- Executive Summary Report: Institutional Effectiveness Plan (December 2024 and May 2025)
- Budget process
- Annual assessment report and plan: Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging and Student Transitions
- Amount of grant and budget support for DEI initiatives
- Departmental self-study reports (sections on resources)
- Proposals to the New York State Education Department
- Annual financial audits
- Budget reports to the Board of Trustees
- Endowment, grant procurement, gifts, and annual fund figures
- Organizational charts
- Organizational charts for Board of Trustees committees
- Facilities Campus Master Plan
- Capital Projects
- University Fact Book
- Enrollment data by academic program
- Financial data and analysis
- Human Resources Data
- Enrollment Management Plan
- Facilities and floor plans of additional locations
- Expense analysis
- Board resolutions
- Utica University Report to Bondholders
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- University President

- Provost
- Senior Associate Provost
- Vice President for Financial Affairs/Treasurer
- Human Resources staff
- Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Vice President for Facilities and Emergency Management
- Vice President for Integrated Information Technology Services
- Members, Board of Trustees

Working Group 7: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Standard 7: 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.”

Related Institutional Priorities

Priority 1: Academic Programs & Experiences

Priority 2: Equitable Outcomes & Student Success

Priority 3: Quality of Student Life/Student Experience

Membership

Chair: Dr. Laurence Zoeckler, Professor of Education; Chair, Educator Preparation, School of Health Professions and Education

Members:

Dr. Thomas Crist, Distinguished Professor of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions and Education

Dr. Jason Denman, Professor of English, Dean Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Deanna Errico, Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions and Education

Mr. Mark Pilpczuk '88, Trustee

Dr. Xiao Xiao, Professor of Mathematics; Chair, Department of Mathematics, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Specific Lines of Inquiry

1. How well does the governing body engage in policy-level oversight of academic quality, fiscal management, and institutional planning?
2. How well do the University's governance structures and procedures support/advance institutional improvement?
3. How effectively do administrative units use assessment data to drive operational enhancements?
4. How well does the Faculty Senate collaborate with other governance bodies to advance institutional goals?
5. How well is shared governance understood at the institution?

Relevant assessment information, institutional processes, documents, and procedures to support analyses, recommendations, and conclusions in the self-study Report

Examples include

- Organizational charts
- Faculty Senate Bylaws
- Professional Staff Advisory Council Bylaws
- Board of Trustees Bylaws
- Agreement between Utica University and the American Association of University Professors-Utica
- Student Government Association Constitution
- December 2021 Strategic Plan Status Report
- Organizational structure of Board of Trustees
- Board committee minutes
- Conflict of interest policy and procedures for Trustees
- Trustee qualifications
- Trustee selection process
- Trustee self-assessments (2021 & 2024)
- List of current Board members
- Curriculum *vitae* or biographies of Board members
- Assessments of faculty governance/Faculty Senate (2021 & 2023)
- Policies and procedures related to Presidential search and appointment
- Policies and procedures for Board evaluation of President
- Job descriptions: President, Provost, administrative leaders
- Curriculum *vitae*: President, Provost, administrative leaders
- Survey on assessment processes/culture: administrative units
- Annual assessment reports from administrative units
- Rubric for annual assessment reports from administrative units
- Program reviews from administrative units
- Institutional Effectiveness Reports to the President (2020 – 2024)

- University committees: Purpose and membership
- Annual Institutional Updates Indicators and Metrics

Anticipated collaborations

- University President
- University Provost
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chair, Board of Trustees
- Members, Trusteeship Committee
- University vice-presidents
- President’s Cabinet
- School deans
- President of the AAUP-Utica
- Executive Officers of the Faculty Senate
- AAUP-Utica Grievance Officer
- Office of the Registrar
- Professional Staff Advisory Committee
- Student Government Association

Working Group 8: Evidence Inventory

Working Group 8 is responsible for organizing and managing the evidence needed for the self-study report. This includes uploading the required evidence to the Middle States portal for review by the visiting team.

Membership

Ann E. Damiano, Accreditation Liaison Officer and Senior Associate Provost

Donna Dolansky, Professor of Practice, Accounting; Director of Online BBA Programs and Accreditation, School of Business and Justice Studies

Kathleen Novak, Institutional Research Associate

Annamarie Kinsella, Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, School of Health Professions and Education

Guidelines for Reporting

Each Working Group is responsible for ultimately completing a draft that addresses the Lines of Inquiry and criteria associated with the accreditation standard assigned to that group. This final draft should be no more than 15 pages. The draft should be double-spaced, using the Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins.

Prior to completing the final draft, each Working Group is expected to produce the following deliverables:

Deliverable	Due Date
Outline of content for assigned standard	April 25, 2025
Initial draft	October 10, 2025
Revised draft	February 20, 2026
Final draft	April 24, 2026

The outline does not have to be formal, but it should include the following details:

- How the working group will address the institutional priorities with respect to the accreditation criteria
- Evidence that indicates the extent to which the University adheres to each criterion related to the standard
- Evidence relevant to the Lines of Inquiry
- Identification of evidence still needed

The following guidelines are recommended for each draft:

- **Overview:** Provide a brief description of how the Working Group addressed the institutional priorities with respect to the standard and its individual criterion
- **Analysis:** Develop a descriptive analysis that illustrates how well Utica University meets each criterion associated with the respective accreditation Standard. This section constitutes the bulk of the draft. It must reference appropriate evidence that substantiates any and all claims made.
- **Observations:** Based on the descriptive analysis, enumerate the institution’s strengths with respect to the Standard and identify areas for continuous improvement.
- **Recommendations:** Identify recommendations for how the University might address areas for improvement.

Each document should be uploaded by the Working Group’s Chair into the Steering Committee’s shared Google drive for review by the full Steering Committee. Final edits will be made by the self-study Co-Chairs. Working Groups must understand that portions of the content in their drafts may be edited out of the final self-study report. Likewise, not all recommendations made by the Working Groups will be included in the final self-study report. However, these recommendations will be compiled and referred to the appropriate operation or governance body for appropriate review and consideration. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will be responsible for facilitating that process.

Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

Utica University’s final self-study report will be organized into chapters by the individual Standards of Accreditation. The report will be organized using the following structure:

1. Table of Contents
2. Executive Summary
3. Institutional Overview
4. Standard I: Mission and Goals
5. Standard II: Ethics and Integrity
6. Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
7. Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience
8. Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment
9. Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
10. Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration
11. Looking Forward: Continuous Improvement

Self-Study Timeline (as of February 15, 2025)

Date	Activity/Task
September 2024-November 2024	Self-study co-chairs attend the 2024 Self-Study Institute.
October 2024-December 2024	Steering Committee is formed; Working Groups are assembled
December 4, 2024	Dr. Ryan Hartnett, Utica University's MSCHE liaison, hosts a post-SSI conference call to discuss next steps.
January – September 2025	Evidence Inventory is assembled and organized.
January 27 – February 3, 2025	Self-study design is shared with the University community for feedback and comment.
February 14, 2025	Self-study design is submitted to the Middle States Commission
February – April 2025	Working Groups meet, review evidence, and outline a response for their respective standard
April 8, 2025	The University hosts Dr. Ryan Hartnett for a self-study preparation visit.
April 25, 2025	Preliminary outlines due from each Working Group.
May 30, 2025	Revised self-study design submitted to the Commission.
June 30, 2025	Assuming the self-study design is accepted, Dr. Hartnett sends an approval letter to the University.
October 10, 2025	The initial draft of each chapter is due from each Working Group.
October – November, 2025	Drafts are posted for review and feedback; Working Groups hold in-person sessions to solicit feedback on drafts.
November 28, 2025	Dr. Harnett sends the University nominations of team chairs.
February 16, 2026	The Commission contacts institutions to confirm team chair appointments.
February 20, 2026	Revised drafts are due from each Working Group.
March 16, 2026	The Commission identifies vice chairs and confirms no conflicts of interest with the University.
March 31, 2026	The Commission sends the University the evaluation team roster.
April 24, 2026	Working Groups submit final drafts.
April 30, 2026	The University hosts the Team Chair's preliminary visit <i>by this date</i> .
April – June 2026	Final edits made to the self-study report.
Summer 2026	Upload final self-study report and all evidence 10 weeks prior to evaluation team visit.
Fall 2026	Visiting team meets with University personnel to verify contents of self-study report; Team chair uploads final report to MSCHE portal; University uploads response to the team report.

Date	Activity/Task
March 2027	Commission meets to determine action.

Communication Plan

Utica University is committed to ensuring that the University community remains well informed of the progress with and expectations regarding the self-study process. Further, the institution supports a process that is as inclusive and participatory as possible.

There are four main vehicles the University will use to communicate with the larger University community:

- Meetings with governance groups
- Self-Study website
- Open Forums
- Mixed media

Meetings with governance groups

Co-chair of the self-study, Dr. Rachel Wolfe, serves as the Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate. She includes a progress report on the self-study in her monthly reports to the Senate. Similarly, the School Deans agreed to dedicate time at monthly school meetings for faculty members to share feedback on the Self-Study Design and subsequent drafts of the self-study.

Self-Study Co-Chair and Accreditation Liaison Officer, Dr. Ann Damiano, reports progress to the University’s leadership team at meetings of the Joint Cabinet. Likewise, she meets periodically with members of the Professional Staff Advisory Council to keep staff personnel informed and to solicit input. Assessment workshops for co-curricular and student support operations provide an additional opportunity to keep staff well informed.

Both Co-Chairs are responsible for informing the Board of Trustees on the accreditation process and progress being made by the institution. The Board will be kept updated through presentations and consent agendas. The first presentation to the Board of Trustees occurred on January 16, 2025.

In Spring 2026, as the self-study nears completion, the Co-Chairs will meet with the Student Government Association regarding the accreditation process and report.

Self-Study Website

In January 2025, the University launched a website dedicated to the Middle States Self-Study. The website includes the priorities to be addressed in the self-study, the intended outcomes of the self-study, the list of Steering Committee members, and an abbreviated timeline for the self-study.



The draft of the Self-Study Design and drafts of the self-study report will be posted on the website, making them accessible to members of the University community. The website directs reviewers to a comment submission form, should they wish to give immediate written feedback. The Steering Committee Co-Chairs will monitor the feedback and share it with the appropriate members of the Steering Committee.

Open Forums

As noted on the self-study timeline, the Steering Committee will host a series of Open Forums where community members may provide feedback and input on the initial drafts of the self-study report. University members may also contact one or both of the Co-Chairs directly to share comments.

Following a review of the initial drafts, feedback can be given via the comment submission form on the website.

Mixed Media

Members of the Utica University community, particularly its students and alumni, will remain informed about the self-study process through multiple media methods. The student newspaper, the *Tangerine*, published a front-page article in October 2024 describing what accreditation is, why it is important, and what is required for reaccreditation. The Self-Study Co-Chairs will keep the *Tangerine's* editors up to date on progress with the self-study Report.

The Accreditation Liaison Officer will collaborate with members of the Marketing and Communications Division to ensure that through newsletters, social media, and other forms of communication, alumni will be apprised of the process.

Evaluation Team Profile

Team Chair

The team chair should come from a tuition-dependent institution of a size similar to Utica University. This person should have experience at a college or university that primarily serves first generation students, where approximately one-third of its traditional students are student-athletes, and where roughly 40% are Pell-eligible.

Further, the team chair should be familiar with a comprehensive university that offers both liberal arts and professional/pre-professional degree programs; that awards both undergraduate and graduate degrees; and that has extension sites and distance education offerings.

Utica University prefers that the team chair is currently serving as a President.

Team Members

Ideally, team members would come from institutions similar to Utica University with respect to size and academic offerings. Team members should have expertise in the following areas:

student success, especially with respect to students from marginalized groups; distance education and off-site education; programmatic accreditation; enrollment; academic portfolios; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and governance.

Peer Institutions

Utica University currently has twenty-one schools it identified as “peer institutions.” These schools were approved by the Board of Trustees in 2015, prior to the previous self-study.

Significant changes have occurred at the University since 2015, warranting an assessment of the current peer group. The University’s Institutional Effectiveness Committee, in collaboration with the Vice President for Enrollment Management, is currently identifying the metrics that will be used to determine two peer groups: peers and aspirants. The committee will propose to the Board of Trustees a revised list of peer institutions.

At this time, using IPEDS data such as enrollment, race/ethnicity of enrolled students, retention and graduation rates, number of Pell Grant recipients, net price, educational and athletic offerings, and faculty and staff resources, the institution is presenting the following colleges and universities as possible institutions from which team members might be selected.

Alfred University

Carlow University

Fairleigh Dickinson University (Florham Campus)

Gregorian Court University

Ithaca College

LeMoyne College

Manhattanville College

Monmouth University

Nazareth University

Roberts Wesleyan University

Sage College

Stevenson University

Annual Institutional Update Indicators and Metrics

Institutional data included in the self-study report will come from Institutional Research. This is to ensure the reliability of the data as well as to preserve the integrity of the data. The Annual

Institutional Update Indicators and Metrics will be shared with each Working Group as part of the evidence they will review with respect to their standards.

Managing the Evidence Inventory

Even prior to preparing for the self-study, Utica University’s three assessment committees managed the evidence inventory for the accreditation standards relevant to their work. For example, the Academic Assessment Committee identified the evidence for specific criteria related to Standard III and for all the criteria associated with Standard V. The Co-Curricular Assessment Committee monitored the evidence related to Standard IV and some of the criteria under Standard V. Each committee provided an updated evidence inventory periodically through its annual report.

For the self-study, the evidence inventory will be managed by the Senior Associate Provost, the Institutional Research Associate, a member of the Academic Assessment Committee, and a member of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

The evidence will be stored in a shared Google drive labeled “Middle States Evidence Inventory.” Within this shared drive are individual folders for each of the seven accreditation standards.

Middle States Evidence I... ▾
2 people

Type ▾ People ▾ Modified ▾ Source ▾

Name ↑

- Middle States Self-Study STD I
- Middle States Self-Study STD II
- Middle States Self-Study STD III
- Middle States Self-Study STD IV
- Middle States Self-Study STD V**
- Middle States Self-Study STD VI
- Middle States Self-Study STD VII

The *required* evidence will be organized by individual criterion; additional evidence identified by an assessment committee or the Working Group will be uploaded into a folder named “Other Evidence.”

Middle States Evidence... > Middle States Self-Stud... ▾

Type ▾ People ▾ Modified ▾ Source ▾

Name ↑

Criteria 1 a & b
Criteria 2 a - e
Criteria 3
Criteria 4
Criteria 5 a - c
Criteria 6
Criteria 7
Criteria 8
Other Evidence

A Master Evidence Inventory Listing is uploaded to the shared drive. Each accreditation standard will have a designated worksheet that lists the name of the document and the criteria it aligns to. Each document title will be linked to the specific document in the evidence inventory. Once a document is uploaded to the evidence folder, the title needs to be added to the Master Evidence Inventory List and linked to the uploaded document.

As the self-study is being prepared, the contents of the Evidence Inventory will be reviewed, curated, and updated as appropriate.