

# College of the Muscogee Nation

## Assurance Argument prepared for the Higher Learning Commission

### January 29, 2016

TREATY WITH THE CREEKS, 1832.

Mar. 24, 1832. | 7 Stat., 366. | Proclamation, Apr. 4, 1832.

Articles of a treaty made at the City of Washington between Lewis Cass, thereto specially authorized by the President of the United States, and the Creek tribe of Indians.

ARTICLE 1.

The Creek tribe of Indians cede to the United States all their land, East of the Mississippi river.

ARTICLE 2.

The United States engage to survey the said land as soon as the same can be conveniently done, after the ratification of this treaty, and when the same is surveyed to allow ninety principal Chiefs of the Creek tribe to select one section each, and every other head of a Creek family to select one half section each, which tracts shall be reserved from sale for their use for the term of five years, unless sooner disposed of by them. A census of these persons shall be taken under the direction of the President and the selections shall be made so as to include the improvements of each person within his selection, if the same can be so made, and if not, then all the persons belonging to the same town, entitled to selections, and who cannot make the same, so as to include their improvements, shall take them in one body in a proper manner.



ARTICLE 9.

For the purpose of paying certain debts due by the Creeks, and to relieve them in their present distressed condition, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, shall be paid to the Creek tribe as soon as may be after the ratification hereof, to be applied to the payment of their just debts, and then to their own relief, and to be distributed as they may direct, and which shall be in full consideration of all improvements.



ARTICLE 14.

The Creek country west of the Mississippi shall be solemnly guaranteed to the Creek Indians, nor shall any State or Territory ever have a right to pass laws for the government of such Indians, but they shall be allowed to govern themselves, so far as may be compatible with the general jurisdiction which Congress may think proper to exercise over them. And the United States will also defend them from the unjust hostilities of other Indians, and will also as soon as the boundaries of the Creek country West of the Mississippi are ascertained, cause a patent or grant to be executed to the Creek tribe, agreeably to the 3d section of the act of Congress of May 24, [28.] 1830, entitled "An act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the States, or Territories, and for their removal West of the Mississippi."

ARTICLE 15.

This treaty shall be obligatory on the contracting parties, as soon as the same shall be ratified by the United States. In testimony whereof, the said Lewis Cass, and the undersigned chiefs of the said tribe, have hereunto set their hands at the city of Washington, this 24th day of March, A. D. 1832.

Lewis Cass,  
Opohleholo, his x mark,  
Tuchebatcheehadgo, his x mark,  
Efiematla, his x mark,  
Tuchebatche Micco, his x mark,  
Tomack Micco, his x mark,  
William McGilversy, his x mark,

Benjamin Marshall,  
In the presence of  
Samuel Bell,  
William R. King,  
John Tipton,  
William Wilkins,  
C. C. Clay.

J. Spright,  
Samuel W. Mardis,  
J. C. Isacks,  
John Crowell, J. A.  
Benjamin Marshall,  
Thomas Carr,  
John H. Brodnax,

Hensci (Hello),

In planning for our Comprehensive Evaluation for Initial Accreditation, the College of the Muscogee Nation has been fully involved in the process of self-assessment, evaluating our programs and systems to determine consistency with our mission and in meeting the Higher Learning Commission's standards. The narratives of our Assurance Argument supported by documentation in the Evidence File represent our work during this period of candidacy.

As with most higher education institutions, The College of the Muscogee Nation began with limited funding and facilities, few faculty and staff and degree programs with low student enrollment. However, since recently opening our doors in 2004, a short 12 years ago, the college has experienced steady growth and development including increased enrollment, more funding, construction of new facilities, growth in traditional student enrollment, and achievement of the Higher Learning Commission's Candidacy for Accreditation.

Initial Accreditation is a primary goal for CMN and represents the pinnacle of our journey to build this college. Leading up to this point, CMN has completed: an Eligibility Study (2008), a successful interview to establish Accreditation Eligibility (2009), and a Preliminary Information Form (PIF Document, 2011) to prepare for Candidacy. A Self-Study and Comprehensive visit were completed and a successful interview by the Institutional Actions Council prior to the granting of Candidacy by the HLC Board of Trustees in 2012. In 2014, a Self-Study and Comprehensive Early Initial Accreditation site visit were successfully completed, as well as the Institutional Actions Council interview, with the HLC Board of Trustees recommending continuation of Candidacy.

Since then, we have continued to upgrade of our systems, improve academically, and expand our campus. Initiation of new systems has included the CampusVue Student Information System, on line course management system Desire to Learn (D2L), and Accuplacer which is being installed for academic placement of our students.

Of significant note is that our faculty and staff have been involved in extensive planning and implementation for the assessment of student learning, completion of program reviews for degree programs and upgrading of faculty credentials. Further development includes refining our student retention strategies, conducting a SWOT analysis for our Strategic Plan, establishing a financial framework for the future and completing the Student Success Report. In general, the number of faculty and staff has increased, more credit hours generated, improved retention rate and we have more fulltime students.

The campus has been enlarged from 15 to 32 acres, involving construction of the Student Center which expanded the library and offered more student services (Bookstore, Café, Fitness Area), completion of Student Success Center, and a Maintenance Building.

More co-curricular activities have been offered to support student holistic development, development of the Mvskoke Cultural Community Garden, and new grants to support student

wellness, student research, and to support campus development; grant initiatives has been enhanced through addition of a grant coordinator.

As we build our college we know anything is possible—remembering that many institutions of higher education, including those colleges and universities now highly respected, had similar beginnings to ours. Some started with a single frame building having now evolved into campuses with many buildings to support quality teaching and learning; thousands of students pursuing degrees, staff and faculty to support programs and services; and numerous degree programs of excellence. These same institutions began with a handful of students and a faculty member that may have also served as president. This tribal college is at the threshold of that kind of advancement, working to build an institution that offers a quality higher education to tribal and non-tribal students who choose to come to us.

We are advancing down a similar path that other institutions chose, some tribal colleges and some mainstream, while pursuing our dream of higher education for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Understanding that accomplishments of others took decades or perhaps hundreds of years and we know that issues will come before us, but they will be minor in comparison to what our ancestors faced during forced removal from our homeland. Like our ancestors we will be attentive to our future and the needs of generations to come.

### **FORMAL REQUEST FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION**

The College of the Muscogee Nation Assurance Argument and Evidence File provides specific evidence documented in our history, growth and development in relation to the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation and the CMN institutional mission and goals, and serves as our response to the HLC requirements for initial accreditation. The Assurance Argument is the product of the work of all CMN faculty and staff and demonstrates the commitment of the college, Muscogee Nation and its leaders to building a quality institution of higher education.

The process for developing the Assurance Argument resulted in an excellent opportunity for faculty and staff throughout the College to discuss their specific responsibilities within the major functions of the institution and to reflect the character of CMN. Based on evidence that is presented in this Assurance Argument and Site Review, the College of the Muscogee Nation requests initial accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission.

Mvto (Thank-You)



## Criterion One - Mission



## 1 - Mission

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

### 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.  
(This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

### Argument

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#### 1.A.1.

The College of the Muscogee Nation's (CMN) [Mission Statement](#) has served as the *em pvtakv* (foundation) of the college since its formal adoption by the Board of Regents (BoR) at their [April 2005 meeting](#). Developed through a process that included input from CMN staff, students, Board of Regents, and stakeholders, the mission development process created a culture of community. It provides guidance for the implementation of the college's goals, vision, and planning; all of which are aligned with the mission statement to focus on native culture, values, and language. While the mission has served CMN well in providing guidance for our foundation, the statement is up for review in 2018 as stated in the [Strategic Plan](#).

#### 1.A.2.

Academic programs offered at the college are steeped in native culture and values, offering four associate degrees and two certificate programs. [Gaming](#), [Native American Studies](#), [Police Science](#), and [Tribal Services](#) are degree programs which are consistent with CMN's stated mission. Certificate programs in [Gaming and Mvskoke Language Studies](#) further demonstrate the mission of CMN in programs offered to students. Specifically, courses such as Indian Land Issues, Native American History, Native American Tribal Courts, and Native American Tribal Government are examples of further consistency of the mission throughout degree programs. In addition, a requirement of all degree programs is the Beginning Mvskoke Language course. Students not only learn basic phrases and communications, but the essence of Mvskoke Life: *em liketv* (clan), *em etvlwv* (Tribal Town), *cuko-rakko* (ceremonial ground), and *mekusvkv-cuko* (church).

The college's student support services are consistent with its mission of encouraging life-long learners for personal growth and professional development. These services include the newly renovated [Student Success Center](#) (SSC), which provides first time and transfer student academic advisement, counseling, community outreach, orientation, and student involvement. Also housed in the SSC are the Admissions office, Bursar, Financial Aid, and Registrar. Other services designed to enhance the mission and support students are available in the Health and Wellness office. The Case Manager facilitates services for students as necessary for behavioral health, health clinics, social services, and domestic violence. Also providing assistance to the Case Manager, mental health and substance abuse counseling is available on campus three times per week. In addition, tutoring services to support academics are available through the library.

To foster a community of intellectual advancement, as stated in the mission, CMN has allocated \$900,000 for scholarships and tuition waivers for students. By providing 17.6% of the CMN budget for academic financial assistance to students, the college is making a priority of serving a traditionally under served population. With this availability of student funding a greater number of tribal students are provided with the opportunity to become contributing members of the broader community.

Further demonstrating commitment to the mission, CMN is focused on providing greater access to higher education for Native Americans. In the 2013-14 [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#), the college reported a 12 Month Enrollment of 282 unduplicated headcount, with 280 being American Indian or Alaska Natives, indicating that CMN's enrollment profile is reflective of the mission. Of the 282 students, 168 were female and 114 were male, with a full time equivalency (FTE) of 174. Although a majority of students are tribal members, the college provides a positive learning environment for tribal and non-tribal students in a global society. The [enrollment profile](#) for Fall 2015 indicates that the Tribal Services degree has the highest number of students enrolled, most students are female, and a majority are full time, with the greatest number of students are Muscogee (Creek) Tribal members.

Underscoring the college's mission to provide higher education opportunities for tribal citizens, CMN's enrollment count continually reflects a majority of Muscogee (Creek) citizens as students. The culturally focused setting geared toward Native Americans is emphasized by the number of students enrolled representing the Cherokee Nation, Seminole Nation, Choctaw Nation, Chickasaw Nation, and other Indian tribes. The benefits from college planning and support of our external constituencies are evident in the community and the tribally diverse student body.

#### 1.A.3.

The [budget](#) for the college is based on historical costs and functional activities planned for the future fiscal year, and to ensure consistency with the mission. Upon completion, the College budget is reviewed and approved by the Board of Regents before it is submitted through the tribal government budget process. The President presents a proposed budget each year to the Board, with detailed discussion on each line item and how the budget carries out mission goals.

Offering exemplary academic programs through quality instruction is emphasized in the mission, and to fulfill that aspect of the mission, the instruction and academic affairs functions have steadily increased. Since 2011, the allocation for instruction has increased by \$167,305 from \$482,492 to \$649,797 in 2015, a 34.7% increase. The budget for Academic Affairs, which complements Instruction, for 2015 is \$801,787, an increase of \$368,236 from the 2011 allowance of \$433,551, an increase of 84.9%.

To support the positive learning environment, Student Affairs has shown a large budget increase as more student service programs are offered. Since 2011, allocation for Student Affairs has increased by \$803,707 from \$414,680 to \$1,218,387 in 2015, a 193.8% increase.

Visionary leadership is a critical aspect of the Mission Statement and is reflected in the budget function of Business Affairs and Operations. This particular function represents the provision of current technology, implementation of the Strategic Plan and the capacity of the institution to effectively operate on a daily basis. Since 2011, the allocation for Business Affairs and Operations has increased by \$1,685,538 from \$1,085,192 to \$2,770,730 in 2015, a 155.3% increase.

Scholarships are provided in the budget to uphold the mission by encouraging life-long learners. Students receiving scholarships are provided financial aid that encourages them to pursue further education and career opportunities. Since 2011, the allocation for Scholarships has decreased by \$12,931 from \$912,931 to \$900,000 in 2015, a 1.42% decrease. While this is a decrease in scholarship allocations, it is critical to note that CMN increased scholarship funds until the college became Title IV eligible in 2014. The availability of Pell Grant funding for students has decreased the need for student reliance solely on the CMN Scholarship. By combining the CMN Scholarship line item and Federal financial aid, eligible Native students with demonstrated need are not denied funding.

These examples indicate that the College aligns budgeting priorities with the Mission Statement, and CMN is ensuring that all aspects of the college are properly equipped and generously support the continued achievement of the mission.

## Sources

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- BoR By-Laws (Amended)
- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 7)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 35)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 36)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 37)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 38)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 39)
- CMN Budget Overview 2009-2015
- Fall 2015 Student Characteristics Chart
- IPEDS

- Strategic Plan
- Student Success Center Brochure

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Argument

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#### 1.B.1.

Recognizing the importance of articulating the mission to students, the abstract nature of this guiding statement is translated into the daily activities of faculty, staff, and students. The Mission Statement is publicly displayed in several locations:

- Outdoor Marquee
- Posters in Hallways
- Classrooms
- College Promotions
- Website
- Catalog
- Consumer Information Guide
- Student Handbook

After formally adopting the Mission Statement, it was used as the foundation by which the college established the Vision Statement, Core Values, and Goals. The [Vision Statement](#) encourages students to learn about their 'sem ekerkv (identity) and participation in the tribal and global society. The statement provides guidance in all aspects of the college curriculum, degree programs, and the concepts are found in the following documents: College Catalog, Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook, and Board of Regents Manual.

Along with the Mission, the college emphasizes its [Core Values](#). Because CMN has clearly articulated its goals, students understand that they are expected to comply with its ideals and demonstrate the core values in their actions. The core values are traditional for Muscogee people, and in turn shape the cultural context of the college. The implications of this are extended into the greater society, as CMN students embody these values and will be aware of them throughout their future experiences.

The college has developed five [Goals](#) that are consistent with the Mission, Vision, and Core Values. One goal is to develop quality educational programs that give students a scholastic foundation. CMN helps accomplish this goal with faculty meetings that are geared toward critical thinking, discussions, and program updates. Another goal is developing co-curricular activities that respect tribal traditions and culture. This fall CMN's [co-curricular assessment](#) committee organized a student and staff social stickball game. Additionally, in recognition of Vhaky Em Pvtakv Nettv (Constitution Day), CMN staff presented the History of the Muscogee (Creek) Constitution.

To ensure students continue displaying the values demonstrated in the mission, the college recognizes the importance of instilling the desire for personal growth and life-long learning. In an effort to achieve this, CMN offers a one credit hour College Cornerstone course for incoming freshmen to acclimate students to the demands of the collegiate environment. This mandatory course introduces effective study tips, time management, the importance of faculty/student communication, and other skills to facilitate student success. Additionally, the college has also initiated co-curricular educational programs (Raven Ready, Computer SOS, Citation for Research Papers, Healthy Lifestyle Challenge, Student Portal workshops) to promote success outside the classroom.

The College upholds great respect toward Mvskoke culture and religion. CMN has offered courses in Mvskoke (Creek) Hymns, Basket weaving, Flute Making, Shell Carving, and 'Tokonhe (Stickball Stick) making. Mvskoke hymn singing, social stickball games, and stomp dance demonstrations are routinely held throughout the year on campus. In addition, student organizations have performed demonstrations at the local schools. Faculty and students are encouraged to participate in cultural activities on and off campus in order to maintain Mvskoke culture as an institutional priority.

#### 1.B.2.

The CMN Publications Committee works to ensure that mission documents remain current and uphold a standard message. In an ongoing process of update, CMN handbooks and public statements are reviewed by the Publications Committee in an effort to maintain a clear and constant depiction of the mission. While this process ensures a current message of the institution's mission, the college emphasizes the following constructs in daily practice.

Mission tenets teaching excellence and instructional quality have been embedded into instructional effort and endeavors through faculty development and assessment. Paired with curricular and co-curricular assessment, these opportunities ensure that the faculty is supported in quality teaching. Faculty meet on a regular basis to collaborate on outcomes for the institution, program, course, and student. In addition, the Academic Dean regularly [updates faculty](#) on activities and events (ie. accreditation, assessment) relating to the college.

An important aspect of the mission is to be of service to the community, both tribal and local. For example, great emphasis is placed on faculty, staff, and student involvement in service learning and volunteer experiences in the community. CMN facilities are open for community and tribal activities and events, and are toured regularly by international groups and the public.

As an institution of higher education for a federally recognized tribe, it is critical that the culture be presented, practiced, and conveyed in all aspects of the college's operation. From classes to co-curricular activities, the essence of Muscogee culture is recognized at every opportunity. The mission guides the institution's operations and will be revised as the college evolves.

### 1.B.3.

Beginning with the [1866 Creek Treaty](#) the United States has recognized the right of, "The Muscogee (Creek) Nation to erect buildings within Creek Country for educational purposes...". The college was created to be an institution of higher education for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, a federally recognized Indian tribe. Our mission clearly identifies the nature, scope, and constituents of the institution.

Students are encouraged to become lifelong learners, and develop personally, professionally, and intellectually. CMN offers students, programs designed to address cultural values, language, and self-determination. These classes are integral to the growth and development of tribal and non-tribal students.

## Sources

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- Academic Dean communication to Faculty
- Assessment Plan
- Assessment Plan (page number 12)
- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 7)
- Treaty of 1866

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Argument

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#### 1.C.1.

The College of the Muscogee Nation addresses its role in a multicultural society by embracing its unique position to provide educational opportunities to a variety of students in the heart of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. In particular, CMN recognizes its responsibility as an institution of higher education and a tribal college to fulfill the aspect of the mission to offer exemplary academic programs. In doing so, CMN actively engages a multicultural curriculum that incorporates a comprehensive educational approach of culture, tradition, and perspectives to enhance student performance. The *History of the Mvskoke* (sample table of contents) course is one example of integrating native culture and knowledge as a component of an academic program that transcends mainstream curriculum. This course presents the significance of Native historical perspectives in multicultural curriculum.

The college provides a positive learning environment for students to contribute in a multicultural society. The Mvskoke Language courses and Mvskoke Language certificate program implore students of CMN to actively seek knowledge by producing a balance of multicultural curriculum, cultural identity, Native American perspective, and communication. Within our current, diverse society, the need for a multicultural education is eminent. In turn, CMN affirms the concept of multiculturalism in education from the perspective that a student's experiences and environment are a culmination of their education.

#### 1.C.2.

As a tribal college, the College of the Muscogee Nation fully recognizes the importance of incorporating a native approach to education; reflective of the mission to emphasize native culture, values, language and self-determination. CMN supports a culture rich environment to welcome the expression of Native American diversities as an opportunity to educate the student population and institution as a whole. During November, CMN celebrates [Native American Heritage month](#) by observing a number of events significant to Mvskoke tradition as well as other Native American influences. Incorporated into the academic program, this month-long celebration encompasses a traditional hymn singing, cedar blessing ceremony, and a stompdance demonstration performed by the students, faculty, and community. The annual celebration concluded with a traditional food tasting, highlighting foods inherent to Muscogee people.

The recognition of Native American Heritage month is merely one illustration of how CMN satisfies the need for a diversified educational curriculum, incorporating cultural influences. CMN students are very active participants in organizations that demonstrate personal growth and leadership. In February 2015, student representatives from the College of the Muscogee Nation attended the AIHEC 2015 Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. and visited with Senators and Congress members about the benefits of attending a tribal college. CMN served as a hosting institution of the AIHEC 2015 Spring Student Conference in Albuquerque, NM in March 2015. CMN sponsored a Stickball Game and Demonstration where conference attendees were joined by students from an area Native American charter school. During the conference, students and sponsors networked with representatives of the other tribal colleges from around North America, reinforcing CMN's mission of encouraging lifelong learners, for personal growth, professional development, and intellectual advancement within a multicultural society.

## Sources

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- Native American Heritage Month Calendar

## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Argument

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#### 1.D.1.

Before the college was founded in 2004, a survey was completed to gauge the needs of the community. The responses were used to determine and establish priorities that were used in developing the college. By surveying Muscogee (Creek) citizens, degree programs were developed to meet the public need as determined through this [Needs Assessment](#). Since its inception, CMN has been active in the pursuit of serving the public good. A public need is fulfilled by providing culturally enriched educational opportunities to a traditionally under served population.

CMN understands its role in serving the public good by participating in a wide range of local, community, and tribal activities that encompass the interest of the student body as a whole. Area functions in which the college participated: Earth Day recognition by participating in a massive clean-up of University Boulevard (S.H. 56 Loop) with M(C)N Office of Environmental Services and the Okmulgee County Conservation District; and a ground-breaking for the Cultural Community Garden with Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for the USDA. These events showcase CMN's dedication to the public around it by taking pride in the environment and collaborating with local affiliates to clean up the area.

Other examples of serving the public include providing facilities to groups conducting seminars, workshops, classes, and making presentations for the Muscogee Nation's Community Development program. The college hosts the annual Creek Nation Challenge Bowl, in which approximately 500 elementary and secondary students compete in a Muscogee history, culture, and language competition. This event is attended by more than 15 area schools, with over 40 teams competing. Additionally, the library is open to the public, and provides numerous Native American materials, including: books, magazines, newspapers, journals, CDs, and movies.

The [Muscogee \(Creek\) Nation](#) encompasses eight counties of varying size, with both rural and urban populations. In serving the nation, CMN's public service reaches far beyond its campus. By participating in and hosting community events, providing public forums, and working in

partnership with the communities, a cultural perspective is provided to outside groups by demonstrating the college's core values.

1.D.2.

While CMN is dedicated to serving the community and Muscogee (Creek) Nation, educational responsibilities take precedent over financial gain and external interests. The college generates no financial returns for investors, makes no contributions to a related or parent organization, and does not support external interests. Article VI of the MCN [Charter](#) indicates that "no part of the net earnings of the College will inure to the benefit of, nor be distributed to its regents, administrative officers, or any other entity." Under BoR Bylaws [Article XVII](#), no stock can be issued. Funding for the college is received from tribal appropriations and federal grants and is used in maintaining operations at CMN.

1.D.3.

The College engages and responds to the needs of our external constituencies and communities at the local, state, national, and tribal level. Faculty, staff, and students are committed to giving back to identified constituencies by collaborating on various activities throughout the year. As demonstrated, the college recognizes the diversity of its learners and relevant constituencies. By participating in tribal, local, regional, and global activities, CMN responds to the needs of our community.

The college's Mission is clearly articulated publically, it is the foundation for the governing documents, and it guides CMN to maintain a cultural context in an academic setting. The College of the Muscogee Nation will further develop and strengthen its initiative to develop lifelong learners.

### **Muscogee (Creek) Nation**

Division of Health and Behavioral Health Department– CMN's relationship with the Division of Health and Behavioral Health Department allows in-service training and professional development to be held on campus. Special arrangements are made for classes in Medical Terminology and Community Health, and are provided online and in class. Additionally, BHS provides on-campus counseling services for students and employees.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Departments - Our goal is to welcome departments as a part of the college community by providing available space for events and training. CMN hosted the Employment and Training Summer Youth program during the 2015 summer. Students were presented information on higher education opportunities, and encouraged to consider college as an option after high school. An estimated 1,000 students were hosted over the course of the summer. The College also facilitated the development of a Creek Curriculum, which will be used to teach employees of the tribe about the history of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

## **Okmulgee Region**

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Communities and Tribal Members - Library services and resources are available to the Muscogee (Creek) community, the students, faculty and staff of the college, and to interested researchers from outside the community. Tutoring services are also available in the library to CMN students and all Muscogee (Creek) students in K-12 at no cost. Although tutoring was initially funded through a grant opportunity, the College has chosen to fund the tutoring program since the conclusion of grant funding.

Public Schools - Representatives of the College travel to Creek communities such as Eufaula, Okmulgee, Morris, and Tulsa, providing information about college offerings. Additionally, CMN groups have visited schools including Okmulgee, Henryetta, Ryal, and Preston, demonstrating stickball and stompdances to educate younger students about Native American and Mvskoke cultural ways. College students use these opportunities to represent the Mission Statement by sharing their experiences on campus and encouraging younger students to become life-long learners.

Local Communities - Activities in which the college extends its commitment of the Mission to the local community by participation in: Leadership Okmulgee, Relay for Life, Red Ribbon Week, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, Domestic Violence Prevention, Canned Food Drive, and the Pink Party. Other events the college has participated in through the Tribal Leadership Circle (TLC) are pumpkin painting at the Okmulgee Chili Festival and supported the Okemah community Fall Fest by participating in their parade. These opportunities provide a positive learning experience outside the classroom, and encourage personal growth and giving back to the community.

## **State of Oklahoma**

OSUIT– Through our former partnership with the Oklahoma State University system, CMN has brought about an awareness of Native issues and a diverse perspective. The college and OSUIT continue to hold Steering Committee meetings on a quarterly basis to remain in close contact with our peer institution. Students and employees of the OSU system are able to take classes in Mvskoke language, flute making, hymn singing and other classes specifically aimed to increase cultural knowledge and awareness.

State Agencies–While CMN has tribal sovereignty, it recognizes the importance of establishing relationships with the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#) to build an awareness of our unique status and historical perspective. Because of this acknowledgement of OSHRE, they have become more aware of Tribal Colleges and Indian education as a whole. In addition, the Chancellor appointed the CMN President to the Oklahoma Advisory Board for Indian Education. This participation allows CMN to be involved in policy making for the state, which effects Indian education and Native students at all levels. Tribal College personnel are involved in a variety of other state committees, including: EPSCoR, Oklahoma Diversity Officers/Practitioners, Oklahoma Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers. In addition, faculty participated in the following: Indian Education Parent Committees, OLA Tribal Libraries Committee, ONASHE, Workforce Oklahoma ASPIRE Officer (Assisting Single

Parents Reaching Education) and Native Language Revitalization Committee. The Tribal College perspective is represented when CMN staff serves on these committees and boards.

## **National**

Higher Learning Commission – In 2013, CMN was invited by the Higher Learning Commission to present at its annual conference in Chicago. CMN presented from a Tribal College point of view “Reflections on Moving through the Eligibility Process for Accreditation” to institutions of higher education that were preparing for Candidacy. Also, CMN was asked to host a table explaining our Self-Study process to conferees. These invitations were another way for CMN to fulfill the Mission by sharing the visionary leadership to other institutions of higher education. Further recognizing our achievements, HLC has recommended other tribal colleges seek our assistance in modeling their processes as they seek Candidacy and Initial Accreditation.

AIHEC –The College of the Muscogee Nation is an active member in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, participating in all activities that are offered. The President attends all meetings and serves as a member of the Membership and Accreditation Committee. Through CMN’s participation, the voice of AIHEC is expanded to Oklahoma and its tribal colleges. This increases the political impact that AIHEC can have on federal policy.

## **Sources**

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- 42nd Annual AIHEC Spring Conference
- BoR By-Laws (Amended)
- BoR By-Laws (Amended) (page number 13)
- College of the Muscogee Nation Location Map
- Needs Assessment- Summary, Conclusions and Findings
- OSRHE Chancellor Letter
- Signed Charter 7-19-2006

## **1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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The mission for the college was developed collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students during the early years, and has been revised and adopted by the Board of Regents. The mission is articulated publically through the website, primary documents such as the Catalog, Faculty and Student Handbooks, and is posted throughout college buildings. With emphasis to the mission, the budget has steadily increased areas related to the mission, such as the positive learning environment, offering exemplary academic programs, and providing instructional quality.

As a tribal college for a federally-recognized Indian tribe, the college acknowledges its unique status, both as a public tribal college and as a tribal Land Grant institution. This standing supports the mission in that it educates tribal and non-tribal students as citizens of a tribal and global society. In addition, CMN upholds its commitment to the public good as we encourage our faculty, staff, and students to demonstrate their support of the community through service projects and volunteering.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*



**Criterion Two - Integrity:  
Ethical and Responsible Conduct**



## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

#### Argument

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The College of the Muscogee Nation has established policies and procedures for the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff to ensure adherence to our mission, and to fulfill legal and public standards for ethical conduct and disclosure. CMN's policies and processes are communicated through public documents, which are revised, as necessary, annually prior to March 1 to ensure institutional integrity.

Board approved policies and processes demonstrate CMN's intent to model integrity and accountability. They also outline the goals, policies, benefits, and expectations for CMN employees. Integrity of the institution begins with the employees; therefore every employee must pass a background check and drug test before they are hired. CMN has recently begun ensuring all employees are in compliance with their student financial aid loans to comply with Title IV regulations. All policy documents can be provided in paper form upon request or accessed electronically.

#### Financial

The Board of Regents and the administrative staff are responsible for upholding and monitoring the established ethical financial policies and procedures for the College of the Muscogee Nation. As set forth in the [NCA 11-040](#), "The books and records of the Board shall be audited each year by an independent Certified Public Accountant in accordance with generally accepted auditing procedures." The independent auditor's reports state that audits are conducted in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

To inform the public of our financial functions, and the integrity with which we operate, the audit results are provided as public knowledge. Paper copies are distributed to the Board of Regents and stake holders. Electronic copies are provided to US Government Agencies and CMN faculty and staff. The audit report is also made available upon request to the general public. The [audits](#) have reflected the adherence to tribal college policies and procedures regarding procurement, inventory, travel, contractual procedures, and grant management.

While audits are a verification of overall financial transactions, there are specific cases where faculty and staff are required to travel on college related business or purchase equipment and supplies for their classes. The results from the audit indicate that college employees follow established policies and procedures, and that internal controls are in place.

### **Academic**

The Board of Regents has the authority to award degrees, which is based on the academics of the institution, thus the responsibility to sustain this institution of higher education is at the pinnacle of the Board's academic responsibility. Under their governance, the college takes its lead from actions that the Board takes in its formal role to uphold the institution. Since the very beginning of the college, the Board has supported the administration, faculty, and staff in their duty to maintain academic integrity, instructional excellence, and quality degrees.

The Dean of Academic Affairs is the administrative head for instruction and curriculum, who in turn, is accountable to the President. This structure reinforces integrity, reliability, oversight, and concerns regarding academic operations. The Dean of Academic Affairs and faculty members ensure that academic best practices are developed and implemented.

Consistent with guidance from the administrative leaders, CMN faculty and academic affairs maintain integrity in their actions. The foundation for academic integrity is based in established policies and procedures regulating the development of curriculum and the instruction of students. The [Faculty Handbook](#) is the guiding document outlining faculty policies and processes. Faculty responsibilities cited in the handbook include honesty, leadership, academic freedom, and integrity. To support faculty in its role at the college, a [Faculty Council](#) was established and bylaws adopted in 2010. This council provides a general forum for faculty involvement in policy formation, implementation, and encourage communication between faculty, staff, and administration. Further consideration and recommendation from the council involve critical areas such as curriculum, academic standards, and academic support activities.

The Academic Affairs/Curriculum Committee is a main component in the integrity incorporated into our academic programs. Specific contributions that this committee makes to the integrity of academic affairs are as follows:

- ensure CMN maintains current academic policies;
- review academic programs and services;
- approve course and degree revisions;
- evaluate new courses and degree programs;
- submit above list to the Board of Regents and external entities.

Members include: Dean of Academic Affairs (Chair), Regents Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Faculty Representative, and the Librarian.

The leadership of Academic Affairs is vested in the Dean, who sets the stage for integrity by planning, developing, and implementing the academic functions of the college. Consequently,

the Dean provides oversight of policies that support instructional quality, procedures, and assembling resources that supports effective teaching, by being responsible for:

- accuracy of academic program reporting;
- program development integrity;
- faculty engagement;
- program curriculum oversight;
- student learning assessment.

Assessment enhances faculty integrity by measuring student learning as compared to the intended outcomes. This process increases the validity of academic programs by providing guidelines which are followed by faculty. As outlined in the CMN [Assessment Plan](#), student learning is linked to institutional, general education, program, and course learning outcomes. These formative assessment methods incrementally measure student learning, which allows faculty to assess student learning and make necessary adjustments of teaching strategies to impact overall summative assessments, conducted at the end of the trimester. Instructors' oversight of student learning is increased, and aids in the collection of assessment data for future program evaluation. The entire process lends itself to integrity in teaching effectiveness and ensuring that student learning is taking place.

## **Personnel**

Fair and ethical policies start with selection of the five member Board of Regents, which must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. Members of the Board are appointed by the Principal Chief with the approval of the Muscogee National Council, and serve five-year terms. No Regent may be seated until the National Council confirms the Principal Chief's appointment. All terms are staggered, which ensures stability within the Board and College. The Board determines management policy, employs the President, has responsibility for general governance, and possesses the authority to make decisions affecting institutional integrity.

The Board of Regents is governed by their Bylaws which outline their specific responsibilities to the college. To further enhance their integrity, duties of the Board officers are clarified in [Article XI](#). Additionally, the enabling legislation and bylaws protect the Board from external influences. In [Section 4-111.A](#), the Board is granted the responsibility for fiscal affairs which includes:

- management ventures
- oversight
- financial affairs

Should conflicts arise for the Board or College, there are remedies within the laws, policies and precedents in the tribal courts to ensure that the Board and the College administration are able to act ethically and responsibly in the best interest of the College. The integrity of the institution is enhanced with NCA 11-040 Legislation and Policies which address *Conflict of Interest* in sections 113.E.2. (*prevention of nepotism*) and 113.F. (*procurement policies and procedures*). In addition these are also addressed in the Personnel Policies and Procedures, Section 403 Chapter C Title 2, and apply to all Administrators.

Fair and clear policies and procedures are followed in personnel matters regarding integrity, ethical conduct, grievance, and the absence of harassment and discrimination. These are outlined in Employee Policies, Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, and annual training sessions. Faculty and staff are provided access to the [organizational chart](#), their position description, and handbooks appropriate to their classification, which outlines CMN expectations.

CMN is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer, giving preference to Native Americans, which is specified in job postings. Vacant positions are advertised and posted to ensure fair and ethical hiring practices. Applications are screened and interviews are conducted by a committee who then makes a recommendation to the President for final approval. A new faculty/staff orientation is required upon being hired and an annual employee meeting is held to review institutional policies and procedures.

The administration adopts policies and procedures which comply with federal, state, and tribal laws that ensure compliance and meets appropriate regulations for the institution's benefit. By implementing this practice the institution abides by our mission to uphold integrity with fair and ethical behavior in all of our processes.

The administration communicates with staff to enhance the understanding of CMN's mission, goals, and objectives. The Board of Regents is informed monthly regarding initiatives and progress by hearing college administrative reports, which enables them to make educated decisions regarding CMN operations.

The Faculty Handbook is distributed to all instructional staff at the beginning of their employment. The handbook is a training tool and reference guide ensuring consistency among faculty. Some of the information provided is: faculty service, employment, academic classifications, academic freedom, faculty evaluation, leave and absences, fringe benefits, travel policies, college services, student related responsibilities, academic and administrative support, purchasing procedures, fire regulations, security, and emergencies.

Student privacy is protected by CMN's adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All faculty, staff, and student workers are required to sign a statement of confidentiality before starting work. FERPA training is provided annually.

All staff at CMN undergoes annual performance evaluations to determine whether position goals are being met, and to facilitate communication between employees and supervisors. Recognizing the importance of communication in responsible conduct, CMN maintains an open door policy at all levels.

CMN has several standing committees and ad hoc committees to plan and implement policies, projects, and events that allow employees to have a voice in decisions. This committee approach promotes employee ownership and institutional transparency, which in turn increases an employee's commitment to the success of the College.

## **Auxiliary Functions**

Auxiliary services available to CMN students include student housing, Raven's Nest Bookstore, Core Values Café, and the fitness center. Hours of operation for each of the auxiliary services are posted on the website and in the catalog, as well as outside the location.

CMN has an ethical responsibility to provide safe and suitable housing, as defined in the [Student Housing Handbook](#) which outlines policies and clarifies student rights and responsibilities. The student residence units are a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded project, which requires residents to sign a HUD contract, comply with income requirements, and pass a background check. These services are reviewed each trimester and changes are made as student needs are identified. The price of student housing is published on the CMN website, and on the Bursar's page under the heading Room and Board. Laundry facilities are located in the student housing area, with affordable prices for students. Along with recreational activities for student residents to utilize, internet connection and phone service is available.

The Raven's Nest Bookstore provides books, course materials, school apparel, and small personal necessity items. Additionally, the bookstore provides a list of textbooks required for courses, and respective prices, each trimester to be published on the CMN website. Federal compliance requires this information be readily available to students through the [Consumer Information Guide](#). CMN has an ethical responsibility to provide students textbook prices for their courses, allowing them to search for more affordable options. Recognizing the high price of books and supplies, CMN provides institutional scholarships that help cover the costs of textbooks and basic school supplies.

The Core Values Café provides reasonably priced meals for residents, commuters, employees, and the general public. With service three times a day except Sunday, the monthly menus for breakfast, lunch, and dinner are posted outside the café. Nutritious meals are supplemented with drinks, unlimited salad bar, and soup available for lunch and dinner. In line with our mission to act with integrity, when students submit menu or café suggestions in the publically displayed suggestion box, the items are incorporated into the service.

A Fitness Center is available at no cost to students and employees. The exercise area is equipped with treadmills, free weights, multi-exercise station, and a stair master. Lockers are available for personal items to be secured. In continuing our obligation to student health, this fitness facility will complement the healthy lifestyles, fitness, and wellness grant which has been awarded to the tribal college through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

In our commitment to having a safe and secure campus, all areas are monitored by CMN security. The campus is patrolled with a security vehicle, with backup from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthouse police department available. Four call-boxes are located in the student housing area in case of emergency. By using these boxes, students are automatically put in contact with CMN security to report the situation and request assistance. The Rave Alert Notification System referred to as Raven Alert has been installed to provide messaging services (Via phone, text and email) to all students and college personnel.

## Sources

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- 2014 Single Audit Report
- 2015-16 CMN Consumer Info Guide
- Assessment Plan
- BoR By-Laws (Amended)
- BoR By-Laws (Amended) (page number 8)
- Faculty Council Bylaws
- Faculty Handbook
- NCA 11-040 Enabling Legislation
- NCA 11-040 Enabling Legislation (page number 8)
- NCA 11-040 Enabling Legislation (page number 10)
- Organizational Chart 1.06.16
- Student Housing Handbook

## **2.B - Core Component 2.B**

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The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

### **Argument**

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The College of the Muscogee Nation presents itself clearly by maintaining accurate, accessible, and direct communication with our students, faculty, staff, and public. The CMN website, Catalog, Consumer Information, Employee, Faculty, and Student Handbooks are primary sources utilized to seek information regarding CMN's programs, requirements, student costs, control, and external relationships. All materials are produced, updated, reviewed, and submitted for approval to the Website/Publications Committee prior to publishing.

Information regarding the college's programs and requirements are available on the CMN website, and in various college handbooks and publications. The College Catalog is the primary document that the college relies on for clear and complete presentation of information relevant to students and the public. It is available on the website and as a reference document in offices throughout the college. The CMN website is also a source of abundant information regarding all aspects of the college, and is available to the public at all times. The website is available to students, prospective students, public, external constituents, and is compliant with federal laws and regulations as required by the Higher Learning Commission, Department of Education, and other applicable agencies.

The Student Handbook is provided to students on the website, available to students upon request through the Student Affairs office and is available in the library. The intent is to make policies and procedures that affect students widely available at all times during the academic year. The Consumer Information Guide has a dedicated section of the CMN website including all federally mandated disclosures that must be included in the guide. While this is not a printed document, it is publically available at all times.

Other documents have been published to assist faculty, staff, and students on campus as they pursue their institutional goals. These documents can be found in the Evidence File and further discussed in various sections of the Assurance Argument.

### **Programs**

Academic programs are presented to the public through the CMN website, admissions documents, and Catalog as well as academic policies, general education, degree requirements, program learning outcomes, and degree program descriptions. Degree program outcomes are clearly posted in the catalog to ensure consistency between learning concepts and outcomes. Degree programs are subject to periodic review and findings. These are translated to faculty, administration, and adjusted accordingly to stay aligned with the CMN Mission.

## **Requirements**

The College of the Muscogee Nation follows policies and procedures of two primary entities, Higher Learning Commission and the United States Government. It is the institution's responsibility to provide information that assists students to make informed decisions relating to their education, future, and to present ourselves honestly to the public.

Title IV, HEA Aid and FERPA are major federal initiatives for which CMN demonstrates compliance and presents information accurately and ethically. The Consumer Information Guide is distributed to staff, faculty, administration, and students annually. In order for all faculty and staff to be cognizant of the application and use of FERPA, mandatory training is provided annually.

As an institution of higher education for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the College is required to comply with tribal legislation that enabled the institution to be established. The requirements include quarterly reports, annual financial audits, and the Board of Regents governance responsibilities. Tribal sovereignty is important to CMN; however, it does not prohibit the College from complying with Federal guidelines and requirements set forth by external constituencies.

Academic requirements for an Associate Degree, Admission, Tuition/Fees, Net Price Calculator, Satisfactory Academic Progress, Refund Policy, and Graduation Requirements are all presented in the Consumer Information Guide, Catalog, and/or website. These resources are accessible to students and the public.

## **Faculty and Staff**

The College of the Muscogee Nation presents updated faculty and staff information via:

- Website Directory – photograph of each faculty and staff, name, title, email address, college address, and phone number;
- College Catalog – titles and degree credentials of faculty;
- Student Handbook – name, degree, and title of all faculty and staff;
- Student Information System (CampusVue) – faculty contact information;
- Class Schedule – instructor name;
- Syllabi – instructor name, contact information, office location, office hours.

This allows students and the public to identify and locate faculty and staff offices or contact information.

## **Costs to Students**

The cost of tuition, fees, and housing is available in the College Catalog and on the CMN website. Located on the Bursar's information page, a clear and complete indication of the cost of attendance is available to the public. Additionally, as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act, a net price calculator is located on the CMN website.

## **Control**

CMN is a public tribal college, as defined in Muscogee (Creek) Nation legislation NCA 11-040. As mentioned previously, the Board is made up of five individuals nominated by the Principal Chief, and confirmed by the MCN National Council. Their monthly meetings are open to the public, posted five days in advance, and provide opportunities for questions and discussions. Minutes of meetings are kept by a Recording Secretary, and are available for review upon request from the President's Executive Assistant.

Board members are paid a monthly stipend as defined in the legislation. The College is a public institution and has no shareholders benefiting financially.

## **Accreditation Relationships**

Publically available information regarding the accreditation status of CMN is found on the website with the Mark of Affiliation and in the Catalog. The Higher Learning Commission awarded Candidacy to CMN in November 2012. No other accrediting agencies have a relationship with the College of the Muscogee Nation.

## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Argument

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The Board of Regents is identified in [Article XIII](#) of the Muscogee (Creek) Constitution, and in Tribal Legislation NCA 11-040 as the governing body of the College of the Muscogee Nation. This enables the Board to act independently and in concert with all of the MCN branches of government. Only the citizens, through an appropriate referendum, can amend that authority in the Muscogee (Creek) Constitution. The primary source for the relationship with the Principal Chief and National Council is through the nomination and confirmation of the Board of Regents. The Board reserves the legal authority to confer degrees granted by the tribal college.

Additionally, bylaws and policies protect the Board from external influences, which authorizes them to act in the best interest of the College, and refrain from micromanagement of CMN daily operations. Title 31, Chapter 1 under the heading, "Removal of Officers" protects the College from unlawful action of board members. This status insulates the college from external political influence and coercion, which ensures the integrity of the college.

#### 2.C.1.

As the governing body of the College, priorities of Regents are to ensure the institution is adhering to its Mission, to make decisions in the best interest of the institution, and to assure its integrity. Utilizing the Strategic Plan, the Board provides direction for the college's development by approving goals, objectives, and priorities that focus on the future.

The Regents review and approve the [annual audit](#), [evaluate the President](#), and oversee policies and procedures. The Board approves management policy, employs the President and has responsibility for general governance, which includes the authority to make decisions affecting institutional integrity.

### **2.C.2.**

The Regents hold public meetings monthly to act on policy items for the College. Reports may also be presented to the Board by student organizations, employees, administrative departments, and the public. All new policy and procedures, revisions, and review of reasonable and relevant internal and external constituencies are considered.

The Board of Regents maintains integrity with internal and external groups by publicly posting all meetings in accordance with NCA 11-040 §4-108 B. Regents recognize the ethical responsibility of acting with integrity in all actions pertaining to the interests of the College, which ensures that all business considered is responsive to the needs of students, faculty, staff, and the community.

### **2.C.3.**

The Board of Regents is at the head of the college, and their decisions must be in accordance with the following primary sources:

- Article XIII
- Muscogee Nation Constitution
- College Charter
- College Legislation
- Board of Regents By-laws
- Board Manual
- College Mission
- Laws of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation
- CMN Strategic Plan

These documents clarify powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Board. Establishing the framework for decision-making protects the College from undue internal and external influence. Whether a request comes from tribal, state or independent interests, the established checks and balances enable the integrity of the college be maintained.

### **2.C.4.**

In Section 4-107, B. 16 of the bylaws, it specifically states that the Board “will abstain from the involvement in day to day operations,” which effectively prevents micromanagement. The Bylaws Sections 4-107, B. 7 and 4-111 D delegate authority to the President for expenditure of funds and hiring.

The governing structure of the College, approved by the Board of Regents, affords all academic responsibilities to the Academic Dean and faculty, with support from the President. Recognizing that the faculty needed a venue through which academic affairs could be advanced, the Board approved the Faculty Council Bylaws. Through this Faculty Council, faculty has a mechanism by which instructional policy items can be proposed and adopted by the Board. Faculty also

utilizes curriculum, assessment committees, and data from the Institutional Review Board to further ensure academic integrity.

## **Sources**

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- MCN Constitution Article XIII
- Regents Agenda 03.09.15
- Regents Agenda 8.10.15

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

### Argument

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The college is dedicated to providing a tribal experience that promotes life-long learners and produces leaders within the community. Freedom of expression, along with the pursuit of truth is an integral part of this process due to its significance in developing broad, integrative, and diverse perspectives. At CMN, the expression and pursuit of distinctive viewpoints are encouraged; however, the institution recognizes the duty in ensuring these are obtained with ethical and equitable practices.

### Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right that students, staff, and faculty enjoy not only as citizens of tribal nations and America, but also as active participants within the realm of higher education. For example, students are guaranteed the freedom to speak their Native languages, share their culture, and participate in traditions while attending CMN. This freedom adheres to the CMN mission in developing personal growth, professional development, intellectual advancement, and is stated in the Faculty and Student Handbooks.

Instructors have responsibilities to their students and actively use multiple instructional formats such as but not limited to individual, small group, and lecture in order to research, communicate, and acquire information. This exposure to knowledge, information, and dedicated practice supports the College's core value of Hoporenkv (*Wisdom*). Co-curricular sponsors and student services are accountable to their student organizations, students, and events to provide opportunities for free expression. They encourage unrestricted communication through face-to-face interactions, suggestions, student support services, student surveys, and meetings. This extra-curricular opportunity for free expression supports the CMN mission to develop students professionally and intellectually outside of the classroom. To ensure free expression is maintained, co-curricular activities are subject to assessment.

Although CMN welcomes expressive freedom, it must be obtained and utilized with the College's core value Fvtcety (*Integrity*). To ensure students are aware of the ethical constraints associated with using information, workshops and materials are provided to students throughout the year covering database research, plagiarism, and ethical use of information. Students are informed of the consequences of not following academic honesty, integrity, and abuse with freedom of expression in Consumer Information Guide, Course Syllabi, Student Handbook, Catalog, and Website.

## **Pursuit of Truth**

The pursuit of truth and freedom of expression coincide to accomplish CMN's mission to provide a positive learning environment for our students. Faculty members compel students to pursue truth through information received in the classroom and in co-curricular activities. That is why CMN employs a number of scholarly events to highlight this such as writing research papers, presenting speeches, giving presentations, utilizing critical thinking skills, classroom, and co-curricular activities. The element of research, in particular, is essential at CMN; however, students must convey their research, thoughts, words, and actions responsibly and ethically. The consequences of irresponsible and unethical conveyance are posted in the Consumer Information Guide, Course Syllabi, and student plagiarism systems such as *Turn It In*.

By creating an environment that encourages the pursuit of truth, CMN students are free to undertake observation, theory, cognitive meaning, objective reference, and build upon grounds of knowledge. This atmosphere provides students with opportunities to express their thoughts and ideals with enthusiasm. This responsibility falls on the student and organization as a whole to ensure ethical accountability and integrity are maintained. At CMN, the pursuit of truth is always approached with the Mission, Goals, and Core Values in mind.

## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Argument

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#### 2.E.1.

The College of the Muscogee Nation was established to provide exemplary academic programs that meet student, tribal, and societal needs. With that concept in mind, CMN follows the design of the [College Charter](#), which enables the College to establish the academic curriculum, academic programs, award degrees, and certificates.

The Academic Affairs department reviews course syllabi, holds curriculum committee reviews to ensure the quality and accuracy of instruction, and course information. Each trimester, Academic Affairs surveys students, holds weekly faculty development meetings, and assesses courses and programs to ensure scholarly practices. The College encourages academic development of faculty by budgeting funds for conferences and seminars to keep faculty abreast of current research within their respective fields, and promote professional development.

CMN participates in internal and external research. To ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by faculty, staff, and students, an [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) was established in 2010. Incoming requests must have IRB approval before beginning any research, either on or off campus, and all research findings must be reported to the IRB for final review. This ensures proper protocols protect the rights of the subjects and an accurate representation is reflected within the research.

Students acquire and discover knowledge through hands-on learning opportunities guided by faculty who remain current in their field of study. This faculty experience ensures that students are utilizing practices that maintain the integrity of research and scholarly practice within the subject they are studying.

#### 2.E.2.

Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources via educational sessions during orientation programs and syllabi overview. The library provides instructional handouts, hosts database research, and style guide workshops each trimester that includes information on plagiarism. Several courses require at least one research paper calling for the students to research

and properly cite sources. In addition, the research paper must properly demonstrate the students' acquisition of knowledge throughout the entirety of the paper.

Class instructional sessions cover topics on, and relating to, the ethical use of research. Specifically, instructors provide materials for citation formats to avoid intentional and accidental plagiarism, as well as information on the reasoning behind citations. The librarian also hosts an MLA workshop in each of the orientation courses every trimester. After the workshop, students are instructed to write a short paper, which include citations.

CMN responsibly promotes academic honesty through the core value *Fvtcety (Integrity)*. Procedures are in place to effectively address academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, appropriate citation of sources, and respect of others' academic endeavors.

2.E.3. -

CMN provides a positive learning environment for students by establishing and enforcing policies on academic honesty and integrity through standards of student conduct. To ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice by students, there are policies in the Student Handbook addressing academic integrity. The Standards of Student Conduct defines and outlines academic misconduct, and consequences for violating this policy.

Through CMN's online learning management system, faculty are able to use tools designed to detect plagiarism. If there is no question that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred, the instructor has the authority to not accept the assignment or test in question and record a "zero" for the assignment or test, require the student to redo the assignment or test or require the student to complete a substitute assignment or test.

CMN students are expected to be honest in their endeavors to attain a college education. If and when an occurrence of academic dishonesty presents itself, CMN follows the process in place for addressing it fairly, allowing due process. In keeping with the spirit of the institution, students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which is a credit to themselves, the College of the Muscogee Nation, their families and communities.

## Sources

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- IRB Handbook
- Signed Charter 7-19-2006

## **2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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The College of the Muscogee Nation has established policies and procedures for the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff to ensure adherence to our mission, and to fulfill legal and public standards for ethical conduct and disclosure. It is with these ethical responsibilities in mind that the college strives to present itself in an honest, transparent manner to students and the public.

In accordance with tribal legislation, the college is required to have an audit conducted each year by an independent Certified Public Accountant in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Procedures. These audits reflect adherence of the tribal college to policies and procedures regarding procurement, inventory, travel, contractual procedures, and grant management.

The Board of Regents is identified in Article XIII of the Muscogee (Creek) Constitution and in tribal legislation NCA 11-040 as the governing body of the college. In addition to these laws, the bylaws and policies protect the Board from external influences and refrain from micromanagement of CMN daily operations. The Charter for the college details that there will be no financial gain of board members from funds received by the college.

Freedom of expression and pursuit of truth are fundamental rights that students, staff, and faculty enjoy, not only as citizens of tribal nations and America, but also as active participants within the realm of higher education. Students are guaranteed the freedom to speak their native languages, share their culture, and participate in traditions while attending CMN. To ensure students are aware of the ethical constraints associated with using information, workshops, and materials are provided to students throughout the year covering database research, plagiarism, and ethical use of information. Students are informed of the consequences of not following academic honesty, integrity, and abuse with freedom of expression.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*



**Criterion Three - Teaching and Learning :  
Quality, Resources, and Support**

## 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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

### 3.A - Core Component 3.A

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The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

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

### Argument

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#### 3.A.1.

Courses in all degree and certificate programs have appropriate and relevant resources for teaching and learning related to the content of the subject matter. CMN maintains updated materials in courses/degree programs by using current edition textbooks, SMART board technology, online research databases, and a wide range of Native American periodicals. The College also provides a computer lab, laptops available for checkout at the library, as well as the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). A critical part of the formula for courses and programs to remain relevant involves continued professional development by CMN faculty. Seminars, training, webinars, and involvement with professional groups associated within their field of study are utilized in sustaining existing and cultivating new ideas and concepts. Examples of faculty professional organizations include, National Council of Teachers of English, American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma, Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, and Kappa Delta Pi.

CMN degree programs remain current through a scheduled process of program review to ensure the faculty qualifications, teaching loads, coursework, learning outcomes, and resources are relevant and maintain the standards expected in programs of higher education. All four CMN degree programs have a one year (2014-15 academic year) program review in accordance with the [Program Review Handbook](#). The degree programs will ultimately be on a five year cycle.

The findings from the program review were presented to the CMN community, President, and Office of Institutional Effectiveness for reference during the planning process.

Student performance appropriate to the degree awarded is addressed in the design of each degree program's learning outcomes. Each degree program's outcomes correspond with the learning outcomes identified in each course. The learning outcomes for general education courses relate to the mid-level learning of the degree program, while programs' specialization courses are designed for exit level learning. The program review uses assessment data gathered from institutional learning to determine performance by students at the Associate Degree level.

Academic courses at the institution provide quality instruction that correlates with student performance. It presents students with opportunities for intellectual advancement as specified in the course syllabi. Instructors challenge students with rigorous course work such as research projects, presentations, and portfolios to develop and use critical thinking skills, which results in a higher level of performance with significant meaning and implications for all students.

Quality instruction and high levels of student performance is reflected in the number of graduates, the highest number of graduates is represented by the Tribal Services program, which has 87 graduates, followed by the Gaming degree (31), Mvskoke Language Certificate (26), Native American Studies (20), Gaming Certificate (15), and then Police Science (12). These numbers reflect the cumulative number of graduates from each degree and certificate program since CMN's inception.

### **3.A.2**

The College offers programs for Associate Degrees and Certificates. The learning outcomes for the institution are appropriate for the degrees/certificates awarded. Each of the four-degree program coordinators (e.g., Gaming, Native American Studies, Police Science, and Tribal Service) shares in the responsibility of developing learning outcomes. Faculty members collaborate to discuss institution goals and learning outcomes, solve issues and concerns that involve student learning, and prepare achievable course objectives for students in the classes they teach. Additionally, faculty members ensure the inclusion of traditional cultural aspects in the learning outcomes.

The institutional and general education learning outcomes are posted in each classroom. Faculty members develop measurable course objectives included in the syllabi, which are an integral part of the assessments for student learning in the course. Faculty members collaborate in assessment and clarification of student learning outcomes. Subsequently, faculty distinguishes and differentiates learning outcomes specific to the degree program, with the intent of reinforcing student learning. The instructional focus is to create a positive learning environment.

To demonstrate the articulation and differentiation in the various degree programs, a list of learning outcomes are presented for each:

## Tribal Services

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of Native American governments, including tribal commerce, service programs, and Native American cultural relevance.
- Recognize administrative and organizational principles within a tribal context.
- Exhibit knowledge of health care systems, external healthcare agencies, and an awareness of consumer health care issues within tribal healthcare environment.
- Identify fundamentals of human services and community resources that promote welfare in tribal family and community environments.

## Gaming

- Understand the industry's foundation of laws, rules, and regulations as it pertains to the Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS), State Tribal Compact, and Title 31.
- Illustrate the relationship between customer service and employee relations.
- Use customer-related data within casino operations.
- Demonstrate the knowledge and basic concepts of the industry's administrative needs and processes.
- Recognize unique elements and culture of the tribal casino environment.
- Identify the importance of public relations and marketing as it pertains to customer service.
- Identify the overall functions of the casino and its relationship to tribal government.

## Native American Studies

- Exhibit cross-cultural competence through the living legacy of tribal people.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Mvskoke history, culture, and contemporary Mvskoke life or other tribal perspectives.
- Demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking the Mvskoke Language within the Mvskoke cultural context or other tribal perspectives.

## Police Science

- Apply current federal, state, and tribal laws and explain the U.S. and tribal justice system.
- Apply current ethical standards.
- Utilize current law enforcement procedures.
- Exhibit knowledge of the organization of police departments, with an emphasis on tribal police.

Outcomes for certificate programs offered at CMN are:

## Gaming Certificate

- Demonstrate the fundamentals of the organizational and administrative processes involved within the gaming industry.

### Mvskoke Language Studies Certificate

- Exhibit fluency in reading, writing, and speaking the Mvskoke language.

Included in the course catalog is a [description](#) of each degree and certificate program. Within these descriptions is an articulation of broad goals for the respective degree, which is measured by the objectives listed for each.

#### **3.A.3.**

The College of the Muscogee Nation, through its institutional goals, ensures program quality and learning outcomes are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations. The college is located on a single campus in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, and does not offer off-site or online courses. However, previously, courses were offered at different locations and a limited number of online format courses, but have been discontinued until further planning and preparation have been completed. The College offers a majority of its classes in the traditional face-to-face format.

Faculty has participated in training for our online course management system Desire2Learn (D2L). Faculty utilizes D2L to blend an online learning environment into their instruction and to engage students further outside of class. For example, instructors use D2L to involve students in discussion boards, as well as adding additional outside content. Some learners may find online delivery more challenging, however, instructors work to support their needs by providing individual assistance.

With only course offerings at our only campus, CMN works to ensure program quality and learning goals are met with students. As future plans for expansion of course offerings emerge, our experience with previous off-campus and online classes will ensure that consistency will be maintained.

### **Sources**

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- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 28)
- Program Review Handbook

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

## Argument

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### 3.B.1.

The purpose of the [General Education](#) component of all CMN degrees is to prepare students to be lifelong learners and gain a broad, interrelated appreciation of cultural, economic, political, tribal, and social context. The CMN program provides students broad experiences and rich cultural knowledge, both of which prepare students for living in a tribal and democratic society. In compliance with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's general education standards, CMN requires 27-39 general education credit hours for an associate level degree. These general education requirements in conjunction with degree-specific requirements exceed the commonly accepted minimum program length of 60 credit hours for an Associate Degree.

General education courses are foundational and prepare the students for degree-specific courses. The rationale for general education fundamentals is to foster intellectual growth through informed understanding and critical thinking skills. In addition, the faculty and Dean of Academic Affairs have implemented an [Assessment Plan](#) to ensure effective student learning and to confirm students remain engaged in the learning process. Taken as a whole, they provide the opportunity for the development of individual talents and a satisfying education experience at the College of the Muscogee Nation.

### **3.B.2.**

Students are made aware of CMN's [General Education Outcomes](#) through the Catalog, and the Website. They are also posted in classrooms. All students participate in common academic experiences, defined as the general education requirements. The outcomes were developed by faculty with the mission goals and education philosophy in mind.

The CMN general education courses are dedicated to an academic program that reflects the core values based in rich tribal culture, language, and history. Students, community, and the Muscogee (Creek) people are the true foundation for every class taught and every degree offered at CMN. Faculty has knowledge of Muscogee culture, which is blended into their instruction.

CMN fosters the spirit of enthusiasm for learning as well as identity embedded in culture and appreciation for tradition that will serve our students well into the future, thus benefiting the interests of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and enhancing greater participation with tribal, local, and global communities.

### **3.B.3.**

The [service learning](#) component of the Native American Studies and Tribal Services program is designed to encourage students to give back and improve their community. It is also structured to give students real world experience in managing community programs, which is excellent preparation for adapting to environments they will experience in their future career.

The methodology of the [service learning course](#) dictates that a clear link exists between the service experience and course objectives. The processes in which students are involved include, identifying community service needs, developing a plan to fulfill those needs, implementing, completing, effectively managing a community service project, and documenting the effect of the project on community life. At the conclusion of the project, the student plans, compiles, and prepares a portfolio that describes the details of the project from beginning to end. Students provide photographs, anecdotal evidence, personal reflections, and significant evaluative findings that are submitted to the instructor for assessment. Faculty designed a portfolio rubric to be used in the assessment of cumulative service learning projects.

The college integrates general education learning outcomes across all programs. The communication learning outcome encourages students to collect, analyze, organize information, and then present to their peers in a variety of formats. In addition to the previously mentioned degree programs, Gaming and Police Science students present information and research relating to the following subjects: Speech, History, Native American History, Mvskoke Language, and Humanities.

### **3.B.4**

As stated in the mission, an emphasis is placed on exposing students to the global community. The Native worldview is a significant part of our Mission and Core Values. The college has a reputation for welcoming international visitors to our campus. CMN had visitors from Australia,

including indigenous peoples. The college provided the visitors with insight on the development of tribal specific courses and the relationship between Native people and the U.S. Government. In the spring of 2015, CMN served as one of seven host colleges for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) 2015 Student Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. CMN students engaged in activities, competitions, and presentations with representatives and students from the 37 tribal colleges and universities of AIHEC. The College hosted staff from the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and members of the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education.

Students attended the White House Initiative First Annual Tribal Youth Gathering. The Initiative had keynote sessions as well as the opportunity for students to engage White House Staff, where students were able to express their concerns about the lack of diversity in education. Each year students attend the AIHEC annual conference, where they interact with a variety of other tribal cultures. The conference provides students with leadership opportunities, which strengthens global awareness and understanding.

Human diversity is promoted through involvement with various youth, women's, and men's groups. The Mvskoke Women's Leadership Initiative has held events on campus, inviting CMN students and staff to participate and gain a better understanding of the impact women have on tribal and global societies.

The Muscogee Nation has a great tradition of providing its people with a solid foundation of cultural values of integrity and responsibility that transcend cultural borders. The Mvskoke language or Tribal Language classes introduce students to the complexity of the Mvskoke and Tribal cultures through the subtle nuances of Native American languages.

### **3.B.5.**

Students collaborate with faculty on a daily basis, such as when conducting research papers, conversing in a Native language, carving flutes from cedar, or conducting scientific experiments. These examples demonstrate curricula that intertwine academic scholarship with cultural based inquiry, a natural characteristic of a tribal college academic program.

The Native American Studies Mvskoke language students presented at Northeastern State University's Symposium on the American Indian. In preparation for the symposium, students created presentations, participated in storytelling, and translated their narrative into the Mvskoke language.

Our students participate in scientific research through grants received by the College which involve the study of water quality and soil health taken from communities within the tribal boundaries. This research accents the positive learning environment of students who will be citizens of the tribal and global communities. Specific research has involved the taking of samples from streams and tribal lands that are analyzed and presented as poster presentations at research conferences. CMN's AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society) organization presented their research at the college level as well as for environmentalists at the Oklahoma State Capital.

Further examples involving the discovery of knowledge includes Physical Science students developing model car prototypes powered by various alternative fuels, showcasing their knowledge of motion and force principles. Other research will involve students studying the velocity of vehicles and its effect on the vehicle and road in which it is traveling.

Students and faculty collaborate regularly. For example, faculty may apply traditional ways of thinking and indigenous knowledge of culture and language to solve important problems in their communities. Students in turn use the traditional ways of thinking, such as the execution of a service learning project. In summary, students participate in forums, attend conferences, workshops, symposiums, and enter the workforce by gaining hands on knowledge from instructors serving as mentors and colleagues.

## Sources

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- Assessment Plan
- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 26)
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 27)
- MVSK2333-MvskokeLiteracyProjectServiceLearning
- Service Learning Packet

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

## Argument

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### 3.C.1.

The institution has one full-time, permanent faculty member per degree program and five additional full-time, permanent faculty members for General Education/Core subjects, totaling nine full-time faculty members. The average tenure of faculty is four years. The longest length of service is nine years and the shortest is one year. In the previous academic year, CMN employed 11 adjuncts as well as five affiliated instructors.

Teaching excellence is an essential component to achieving the mission at CMN. In order to stimulate and sustain teaching excellence, several procedures have been enacted. Recent program reviews demonstrated appropriate levels of faculty to student ratios, thus indicating instructors are able to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty. Effective curricula enhance student academic performance. CMN instructors teach their classes under the principles of updating pedagogy, staying current in technology, and recognizing changing student demographics; each of which enhances student academic performance through effective teaching.

The involvement of faculty members in non-classroom responsibilities is critical to the effectiveness they experience in their classroom roles. A non-classroom role is faculty participation on the Curriculum Committee, which is composed of a faculty member (chair), Dean of Academic Affairs, the librarian, registrar, and the Regents Director of Institutional

Effectiveness. This Committee is responsible for review of the curricula of new and modified courses and programs, as well as curriculum evaluation of the four-degree programs, and syllabi review.

Courses taught across all modes of delivery require qualified faculty. The Philosophy of the College is to provide the proper support of student learning, which starts with a faculty of excellence. This begins with a position description that requires full-time faculty with a masters degree preferred and at least a bachelors. Faculty that teach in general education are required to have eighteen credit hours in the discipline in which they teach.

Selected course assignments that are formative assessments provide data to instructors which gives timely feedback on students' level of understanding for a particular topic. That data is then used to assess the need for changes to teaching methods. Collectively, both the formative and summative assessments respectively allow students to track their progress in classes and in completing their degrees.

Each faculty member exercises academic freedom of expression in their instruction; however, they must focus on student-learning outcomes and assess the performance of students in relation to the objectives in each course syllabus. Student assessment and evaluation are key components faculty members address regularly. The faculty members at CMN have developed a college wide [Assessment Plan](#) and a [Philosophy of Assessment](#). The plan is a basis of each degree program's assessment process. The faculty at CMN understands assessment drives instruction; therefore, they are responsive to the assessment data. When benchmarks are not met, instructors adjust teaching methods to improve student learning. In order to facilitate learning, faculty involve students in the process of assessment by making students aware of institutional and program outcomes. Faculty developed rubrics are one example of an instrument used to determine student learning competencies of course objectives.

An important responsibility of faculty members is to participate in the Assessment Committee. The Assessment Committee's primary function is to analyze data and report findings in order to close the assessment loop. Recommendations made by the Assessment Committee are implemented through a process of Faculty Development meetings. These development sessions are designed to encourage scholarship, improve curriculum, and the overall organization. Faculty utilizes this general forum to share teaching experiences and identify common needs that can be incorporated into curriculum changes.

### **3.C.2.**

The College of the Muscogee Nation strives to foster a faculty body of the highest credentials. CMN requires faculty to have a Master's degree, or be making significant progress toward a Master's. Within the current faculty, six have a Master's degree, and three have a Bachelor's degree and are currently enrolled in Master's programs in order to meet the requirements set by CMN. For those faculty teaching general education courses, who have not met the 18 hours of graduate work requirement, CMN has convened a Faculty Credentials Committee, which developed a plan for completing courses that fulfills the requirements.

In the Early Initial Accreditation site visit, the review team cited concerns regarding faculty credentials. CMN meets the requirement of faculty possessing one degree above the level at which they teach; however, it was noted that some general education faculty did not have 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which they were teaching. As a result, the college adopted a [policy](#) to upgrade faculty credentials and provide faculty support; the Faculty Credentials Committee devised a plan of development for these faculty lacking graduate hours. Since the creation of this committee, which specifically addresses concerns previously noted, general education faculty have begun completing the courses identified to meet the CMN plan requirements.

### **3.C.3.**

Performance of faculty is evaluated by the Dean of Academic Affairs for the purpose of encouraging and assisting all faculty members to develop and perform to the best of their ability. The Dean of Academic Affairs conducts classroom observations as part of the performance evaluation. In addition, the [Faculty Evaluation Report](#) is completed by each faculty member, documenting specific evidence of teaching, contributions to the institution, and professional development.

Students have the opportunity to electronically evaluate instructors with the [Instructor/Course Evaluations](#). These were developed to provide administrators and faculty members with data to determine the perception of students regarding the instructor and effectiveness in which the course is taught. Upon completion of the surveys, the results are tabulated and a report is generated for faculty on each class.

### **3.C.4.**

In order to ensure that CMN faculty are current in their discipline, the Faculty Credentials Committee reviews the transcripts for instructors teaching general education to ensure they have 18 credit hours in the area which they teach. For faculty members short of the 18 credit hours, an individual development plan is established and implemented with financial support from CMN. It was determined that four (4) faculty teaching general education courses were in need of credit hours in their discipline, while 2 had met the 18 credit hour requirement. Beginning in the Summer of 2012 selected faculty began enrolling in graduate courses related to their discipline. As of Fall 2015, one (1) of general education faculty members lacking the course work has completed her 18 graduate hours in their discipline and three (3) general education faculty are working toward completing their course work in academic year 2016-17. For the individual faculty records, the Academic Dean maintains transcripts and individual development plans in his office.

Professional development available to faculty and staff includes traveling to conferences and training, continuing education classes, webinars, course and degree completion, and sabbatical leave. Two groups of faculty members have attended the Assessment Workshop hosted by the Higher Learning Commission in order to strengthen the assessment program at CMN. Additionally, based on the recommendation of the Early Initial Accreditation site review team,

three faculty members attended the Assessment Institute at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), in 2014.

Faculty Development includes program reviews, assessment training, scholarship development, curriculum development, and instructional pedagogy. Full-time faculty members are supported in a variety of discipline specific associations with a yearly stipend available for membership dues. In addition to these offerings, CMN employees enjoy a fringe benefit allowing [Career Development](#) through tuition reimbursement if they wish to seek further educational opportunities.

All adjunct instructors are invited to participate in faculty development activities. Training for adjunct faculty has also been implemented to include information on assessment, the new student information system, administrative duties, and instructional strategies. CMN is committed to supporting all adjunct and full-time faculty in their professional development in order to retain high-quality programs.

### **3.C.5**

Faculty members are required to publish their office hours and course schedule each trimester outside their classroom and/or office locations. Faculty are expected to remain in their offices at scheduled times for student consultations and to answer any questions that students may have. Syllabi are used for all course offerings and include instructor contact information. This information consists of email addresses, office locations, and office hours. Students are able to communicate with faculty members by phone, mail, e-mail, D2L, and occasionally through text messaging.

### **3.C.6**

The College provides tutoring service for CMN students as well as members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Two of the tutors have a Master's degree, while two hold a Bachelor's degree. Per the [Retention Strategy](#) faculty refer students directly to the tutors and provide tutors with information to assist students. Tutoring is also available as a walk-in service for more immediate needs. The library and its private study rooms are utilized by the tutors to assist students.

Financial aid advising is primarily handled within the Financial Aid Office under the administrative responsibility of the Coordinator, who has a Bachelor's degree and experience in financial aid processing and advising. His experience allows him to provide information on loan counseling, awards, aid packaging, scholarships, FAFSA, and verification. The Financial Aid Coordinator stays current with federal, state, and tribal regulations, laws, and government policy that could affect policies and procedures. Open dialogue is maintained with faculty and advisors, speaking to them regarding their role in Title IV, HEA regulations, Satisfactory Academic Progress standards, attendance, and Return of Title IV funds. Regular communication with the faculty ensures degree program advisors are conveying accurate information to students as regulations may necessitate.

Faculty members provide support to students pursuing degrees in their respective academic areas. To support the advisement process, the diverse academic experiences of the Student Success Center (SSC) staff provides quality advisement and follow-up services to all entering freshmen and transfer students with fewer than 30 hours. The SSC Coordinator has a Master's degree in counseling, with the Academic Counselor possessing a Bachelor's degree. The purpose of academic advisement is to assist students in completing official degree plans that will lead to graduation. An Advisement and Enrollment Handbook has been developed as a resource for advisors. Moreover, the advisement system emphasizes one-to-one interaction between faculty advisors and individual advisees to help students engage in planning that meets their academic needs and interests.

While co-curricular activities are primarily sponsored through the Student Affairs office, event coordinators are appropriately qualified and supported in this extra-curricular role. Staff members are encouraged to participate in co-curricular program activities, giving them an opportunity to interact with students outside the academic setting. Faculty and staff have an appreciation for the core value *vrakkueckv* (*respect*) and incorporate this value into these events. As an emerging institution with limited faculty and staff, all employees are adequately qualified and perform their jobs at the highest level.

## Sources

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- Assessment Plan
- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 26)
- CMN Retention Strategy 2015-16
- Faculty Credentials Approved Policy
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 58)
- HR Policies and Procedures
- HR Policies and Procedures (page number 102)
- Instructor Course Evaluation Sample

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

## Argument

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### 3.D.1

CMN serves a student population with a wide range of life experiences and academic backgrounds, including significant numbers of non-traditional, first generation, and low-income students. Student support services include the Student Success Center, Health and Wellness, Student Services, and the Student Center.

The [Student Success Center](#) was designed to be a centrally located suite of services for students needing assistance with admissions, registration, the bursar, financial aid, and advisement. These offices are located in the Education/Administration building for ease of access to incoming students, and students needing assistance with multiple services. Advisement for freshman students and transfer students with less than 30 credit hours is conducted through the Student Success Center (SSC). The SSC also has counseling services for students needing assistance with academic matters, and performs outreach to local high schools to encourage students to consider higher education after graduation. The center also provides testing services, including the ACT Residual and academic placement; the academic placement services are being implemented to create a more comprehensive testing center.

In supporting student success, if a student is failing to meet class requirements or class attendance, instructors will initiate the [Early Alert](#) process as described in the Retention Strategy. When an instructor issues an Early Alert, it is forwarded to the SSC staff, the student's advisor, and the Dean of Academic Affairs. Faculty and staff are made aware that attendance is commonly the first indicator that a student needs more learning support, and this notification alerts staff to assist students in making progress towards graduation.

An integral part of our student support services involves independent and group counseling. Through the SAMHSA grant, a Health and Wellness Initiative addresses the needs of CMN's tribal population by providing student counseling services relating to suicide prevention, drug and alcohol awareness, and personal issues. Cultural activities, which support student engagement, are emphasized. Through a partnership with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Behavioral Health department, Counselors are present on campus with scheduled office hours three days a week. Confidential referrals to external services are available through the CMN Health and Wellness Case Manager as necessary.

The department of Student Affairs is the administrative branch of the college that provides Student Services. This function is guided by its unique mission in providing quality services suited to the needs of CMN's student body. For example, during the spring 2015 semester the Student Affairs Office held American Indian College Fund workshops as well as a reception for recipients of the scholarship. In addition, for a service learning project, in the summer of 2015, a Tribal Services student held a job fair with ten informational booths and 75 attendees. In the fall of 2015, the college introduced Raven Ready, which was designed to give new students an overview of the support services CMN offers. This workshop featured presentations from each of the major student service departments (i.e., food service, bookstore, registrar, financial aid) for information on services provided, and where these services are located on campus. Also, a computer workshop was offered to assist students with minimal computer skills to ensure students are able to utilize D2L, student email, and the student portal. The need for this computer skills workshop was a direct reflection of the high number of non-traditional students, and students with lack of access to technology attending classes at CMN.

The recently constructed Student Center provides services for students which complete the CMN campus. Designed as a student gathering place, the center provides auxiliary services (fitness area, bookstore, food service) as well as faculty offices, a science lab, library, and classrooms. Also located in the Student Center is a safe shelter for students living on-campus in the event of inclement weather.

### **3.D.2**

This college is dedicated to building an institution that provides students access to a high quality and culturally sensitive education. The library, tutoring program, disability accommodations, entrance testing, Retention Strategy, and Student Success Center all assure students have the necessary tools for advancing their education.

The library supports its educational programs by providing students, faculty, and staff with access to books, periodicals, electronic resources, and audio/visual materials. The library provides students with access to resources on-site, as well as many more materials available through the school's [Inter-Library Loan](#) capabilities. Also crucial in learning support, is information literacy and library instruction.

Continuing collaboration between faculty, administration, and the librarian help ensure the collection retains the materials necessary for full academic support. The librarian is on campus

ten hours each day classes are held to assist with the reference needs of students, faculty, staff, and Muscogee (Creek) community members.

The college recently purchased access to two electronic databases specific to Native American studies. In the summer of 2014, the library moved into its new facility in the Student Center. The new library is larger and contains three times the shelving space, a SMART board for information literacy sessions, two private study rooms that are also used for tutoring, as well as dedicated archival storage. This expansion of library space was a priority for supporting quality instruction by providing students with greater capacity to research and study for their academic courses.

The purpose of the tutoring program focuses on providing academic support to students. Students may access tutoring services through a personal request or referral by faculty and/or staff. The academic department encourages faculty to have a significant role in students accessing tutoring necessary for their success. If a student is deficient in testing, assignments, or other class work, the faculty use professional judgement to arrange tutoring or other services to improve student performance.

Academic and physical accommodations are provided to students with disabilities to promote individual independence and maintain academic progress. Assistance is based on each student's individual need and is designed to remove barriers that hinder learning and campus access, thereby providing an equal opportunity for educational and individual freedom. Students are encouraged to complete the requests for [academic accommodations](#) in accordance with ADA through their respective Deans. Academic accommodations to which a student may be titled include changes in the length of time allowed to complete course requirements, and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses or examinations are conducted. Students are encouraged to make requests for accommodations at the beginning of the trimester for each class in which he/she is enrolled. The college has undergone site visits from the USDA to ensure compliance with the ADA, as required by funding agency assurances.

To ensure adequate preparation for future courses, remedial/developmental courses offered at CMN include Reading, English, and Science. Students do not receive degree credit for these remedial courses; however, the intent of these preparatory courses is to allow students to be more capable of succeeding in higher level courses. Deficiencies are removed when students pass the remedial class with a grade of 70% or higher. The Science deficiency can be remediated with a passing grade in both the Reading Fundamentals and Math Fundamentals classes.

The process of entering students to courses and programs for which they are adequately prepared begins with entry-level assessment. COMPASS testing is provided for all students with a score lower than 19 on each area of the ACT test. The COMPASS assessment determines one's academic proficiency in the areas of reading, science, math, and writing. The results of these are utilized in advising students to appropriate class levels. If the student scores below the accepted standard, they will be placed in remediation class(es.) As an open-enrollment institution, it is critical that CMN offers testing services for academic placement in appropriately leveled courses, which further enhances a student's likelihood of degree achievement. The COMPASS test and ACT residual test, offered bi-monthly, are both used to assess incoming students. The

COMPASS test is in the process of being phased out by the company; therefore, the college has made preparation to utilize ACCUPLACER as an entrance assessment.

Each of the mentioned support and preparation functions contributes to an effective Retention Strategy. With the purpose of this strategy, CMN has established priorities that will increase the continued enrollment of our students in the near and immediate future. This strategy provides tools such as learning styles, time management, and study tips, which helps students to be adequately prepared.

### **3.D.3**

At CMN, the SSC and faculty play a critical role in the academic advisement of students. The SSC advises all new and transfer students during their first two trimesters at CMN. After students have been advised by the SSC for their first two trimesters, students are transferred to the appropriate degree program coordinators/faculty for continued advisement during completion of coursework at the college.

The faculty's role as academic advisors is an essential part of their commitment to the College, and is consistent with college's core value *Mecvlke* (Responsibility). Faculty is given an [Advisement and Enrollment Handbook](#) that guides advisement and answers any questions that may arise during the advisement process. As academic advisors, faculty is responsible for meeting with students to review degree plans, comparing transcripts with the upcoming class schedule and selecting proper courses, and aiding in the transfer to a four-year institution. Furthermore, faculty discusses with students program residency, financial aid, successful academic progress, and student academic requirements as set forth in the CMN Catalog. Faculty also address academic problems as they arise, ensuring the students' satisfactory academic progress toward completing their degree. Finally, as degree-program coordinators, faculty members review the five-year course rotation, which ensures students meet Associate Degree program requirements within a two-year time-period.

As mentors, faculty is responsible for assisting students with defining career goals, encouraging cultural awareness, inspiring lifelong learning, and achieving intellectual advancement. Academic advisement occurs continuously throughout each trimester, as the SSC and faculty monitor student progress. Students are required to meet with an advisor prior to enrolling each trimester. This required advisement allows the SSC and faculty to facilitate students' progress toward a degree or certificate.

### **3.D.4**

An important aspect of the campus is student housing. Residence units have access to Internet support, which allows for access to multiple databases for research to complete assignments and have closer contact with instructors. The units are adequately furnished to provide comfortable living and designated study space for each student to encourage a positive learning environment.

The new Student Center, completed in the summer of 2014, provides resources for the college to support effective teaching and learning. The building contains a larger library space, science lab,

bookstore, cafeteria, fitness center, and three adjoining classrooms with retractable walls which can be converted to a conference room. The new library provides a dedicated information literacy instruction area, complete with a SMART board. The library offers 16 computers to accommodate increased student usage and enrollment.

The college is served by a 10 GB fiber connection with a 10 MB internet line. Support services such as the computer lab and help-desk are available to students and faculty. Each classroom is equipped with SMART boards to accommodate effective classroom learning. The college utilizes D2L as its classroom management software. Critical data is replicated off-site nightly to a data center located at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribal headquarters.

Students have access to computers within the computer lab and library. Currently there are 48 computers available to the students, which all include the Microsoft Office Suite. In fiscal year 2016, the college will be purchasing an additional 35 laptop computers to be available to students through a check-out program. There is also a stand-alone computer in the library that has been dedicated solely to the library catalog.

The available circulating laptop computers are essential to commuting students and those who lack access to a computer at home. The majority of the campus is equipped with Wi-Fi technology allowing students to utilize the laptops in convenient locations. The laptop computers and Wi-Fi technology help reduce the digital divide faced by many of CMN's students.

Through EPSCoR grant funding, the college maintains a science lab with the necessary equipment for courses in biology, anatomy, and physical science. The lab offers students and faculty access to specimens, skeletons, anatomic models, microscopes, secure chemical storage unit, sink, autoclave, and other science lab materials. Safety precautions such as an eyewash station, natural gas shut-off, and a shower for chemical exposure are also included in the lab. This dedicated science space allows for effective teaching and learning through hands-on projects and lab experiments.

The college is fully committed to providing the resources necessary to support student learning and effective teaching by making a wide range of materials available to students, faculty, staff, community members, and Muscogee (Creek) citizens. The library utilizes a [Collection Policy](#) as well as feedback from faculty and students ensuring that books, periodicals, electronic resources, and audio/visual materials that complement the curriculum and support research needs of the college.

Collection holdings are related to the four degree programs and two certificate programs that are offered, and include an extensive collection of Native American resources, course specific academic journals, a copy of all current textbooks (course reserves), electronic resources, reference materials, and audio/visual materials. The library also houses an extensive collection of tribal newspapers, as well as the CMN archives.

Open 51 hours weekly, the library serves approximately 10,500 patrons a year. Library usage patterns are tracked and led to the library staying open an additional three hours on Fridays beginning in the Fall 2015 trimester. Two private study areas, 16 fully equipped computers, six

circulating laptop computers, an on-line catalog, a high-resolution scanner, a mobile television/DVD player, and a cost-free printer/copier are available for student use.

*Library Service Statistics*

| Academic Year                          | 2012/2013 | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Public Service Hours                   | 48        | 48        | 48/51     |
| Electronic Databases                   | 28        | 28        | 30        |
| Number of Group Workshops              | 20        | 25        | 27        |
| Number of Students Attending Workshops | 157       | 237       | 403       |
| Circulation Transactions               | 2009      | 1353      | 1667      |
| General Collection Transactions        | 1529      | 1003      | 1317      |
| Reserve Transactions                   | 480       | 350       | 350       |
| Library Space (square feet)            | 2200      | 2200      | 3000      |
| Library Committee                      | No        | Yes       | Yes       |

*Source: Librarian 08/2015*

Providing library tours, electronic database workshops, style guide workshops, and reference help assures the library provides CMN students with academic support. The library continually evaluates the effectiveness of its information literacy instruction by having students anonymously rate how helpful the sessions are and provide feedback. Utilizing the evaluations allows the librarian to make timely changes in the information literacy sessions. The library also provides opportunities for feedback in the form of a prominently placed suggestions box. Suggestions are reviewed on a regular basis and addressed as necessary. The librarian also informally surveys students regarding library services. A library committee comprised of the librarian, a faculty member, a staff member, and a student has been instituted to assist in providing targeted resources to support student learning and effective teaching.

The Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) supports academics by allowing students the ability to search the CMN Library holdings while on campus as well as off-site via the College's website. Students are also able to access high-quality online academic databases through CMN's website. A few of the relevant academic databases include: Academic Search Premiere, MEDLINE, Topic Search, Bibliography of Native North Americans, Newspaper Source Plus, and ERIC. The College purchased access to American Indian Experience and American Indian History Online.

The librarian is a member of the Faculty Council, as well as other CMN committees. She also serves as the President of the Tribal College and University Libraries Association as well as Secretary and Public Relations Officer for the Oklahoma Library Association's Tribal Libraries Committee. Due to the librarian's expanded hours, she is in the unique position to interact on a daily basis with part-time adjunct faculty who often teach during the evening. This interaction

also strengthens the library’s ability to support its educational needs. The librarian communicates with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Library and the Okmulgee Public Library Director to create greater community involvement. The budget for the Library over a three-year period has averaged 6.4% of the total general education expenses.

*Library Expenditures*

| <b>Year</b>                                                                        | <b>FY 2012</b> | <b>FY 2013</b> | <b>FY 2014</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Library Expenditures                                                               | 87,186         | 95,366         | 159,964        |
| Salaries for Library Staff                                                         | 80,805         | 82,291         | 79,318         |
| Materials Expenditures                                                             | 4,234          | 5,283          | 7,249          |
| Other Library Expenditures                                                         | 2,147          | 7,792          | 73,397*        |
| Total Educational and General Expenditures                                         | 1,795,850      | 1,673,236      | 1,852,093      |
| Total Library Expenditures as Percentage of Total Educational and General Expenses | 4.85%          | 5.70%          | 8.64%          |

*Source: Business Affairs 2015 \*costs associated with moving Library to new building*

CMN’s technological resources strengthen educational programs both in the classroom and throughout the campus. Faculty has access to wireless networks to be able to gather resources on iPads, desktop computers, and the classroom computers to which the SMART Boards are connected. The college website has become interfaced with the CampusVue system and D2L. Providing students and instructors access to current technology and educational resources in a variety of methods is a priority of the college in order to maintain high quality teaching and learning.

**3.D.5.**

Students have access to quality resources, and are counseled in their use during information literacy instruction, provided for classes in each of the degree programs. Faculty require students to conduct research during the coursework for each of the four degree programs. The librarian, in conjunction with faculty, works to ensure students are effectively guided in their research and

information needs, which helps support their learning goals. To gauge student research capabilities, the librarian administers a short survey to all freshmen in the ORIE 1011 College Cornerstone class. The survey helps the librarian determine areas of focus for information literacy instruction, which is taught to all Freshman Composition classes, Reading, and English Fundamentals classes, as well as Native American and U.S. History classes. The librarian also provides research instruction, as requested, in other classes.

In information literacy sessions, the librarian discusses how to find, analyze, and ethically use information. The information literacy sessions also include instruction on how to navigate academic databases available to our students, as well as information on style guidelines and plagiarism. The librarian also provides research instruction on an individual basis, as requested by students. In addition to assisting students with their learning needs, the librarian ensures faculty have the necessary resources for effective teaching, such as academic journals, books, and audio/visual materials. Four tutors work with students in using information effectively as well.

Further providing guidance to students in the ethical use of resources is the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) (p14 Student HB). The college informs students of its academic misconduct policy in several ways. Students are able to access a digital copy of the policy in the student handbook, in addition to the student handbook, the Academic Misconduct Policy can be found on each syllabus. The college's emphasis on *fv̄t̄c̄et̄v̄* (integrity) in all assignments is impressed upon students through the publishing of this policy in several resources.

## Sources

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- Academic Advisement and Enrollment Handbook 2016
- CMN Library Handbook
- CMN Library Handbook (page number 5)
- CMN Library Handbook (page number 11)
- CMN Retention Strategy 2015-16
- CMN Retention Strategy 2015-16 (page number 6)
- Student Handbook
- Student Handbook (page number 14)
- Student Handbook (page number 19)
- Student Success Center Information Guide

## 3.E - Core Component 3.E

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The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

### Argument

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#### 3.E.1.

Co-curricular programs at CMN emphasize culture and values, which complement academics to promote learning inside the classroom as well as outside. As stated in the [Student Handbook](#), individual students and student organizations shall be free to examine, to discuss all questions of interest to them, and to express opinions publicly and privately. Students have the right to assemble, to select speakers, and to discuss issues of their choice. However, CMN Faculty/Staff will ensure that restrictions are set for a reasonable time, place, and manner in order to maintain the regular class schedules and the rights of other students on campus.

Students have embraced the opportunities of college life by being involved with the [Student Senate](#), Tribal Leadership Circle, Student Housing Organization, and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society. Individuals who participate and are involved in college activities impact other students and the campus community. These organizations are involved within the campus community, the local community, and Muscogee (Creek) Nation activities. Students exhibit *vrakkueckv* (respect) for the college and themselves as they participate in activities such as the annual Muscogee (Creek) Nation Festival Parade, Health and Wellness events, and the White House Tribal Youth Gathering in Washington D.C. Respect is also demonstrated through community service such as participation in Earth Day activities and volunteering at the Iron Gate Grocery Pantry in Tulsa, OK. CMN student organizations also hold activities that give back to the community, such as a Coat Drive for local children, and card decorating for Muscogee Elders and Veterans.

The month of November is Native American Heritage month and is filled with events aimed at culture. Students learn about heritage and provide other students knowledge of their own traditions and culture. Students participate in events such as traditional stomp dances, hymn singing, cultural and historical presentations, and student forums. A student veteran was asked to give a presentation in a ceremony held to honor Native American Veterans. In addition, a traditional food tasting is held every year in which food is prepared and provided by the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative.

Student Affairs offers student-centered services necessary to provide an environment that supports positive individual growth while encouraging participation of our students through social, recreational, cultural, and wellness activities. Examples include, presentations and events open to the public, Health and Wellness HIV/Hepatitis C testing, alcohol awareness events, Suicide Prevention Week activities, College Connection Day, and a presentation made by Yuchi-Mvskoke Creek actor Richard Ray Whitman of the movie *Barking Waters*. A talent show was also hosted by CMN and Behavioral Health Services in which students displayed various talents and cultural interests such as playing the hand drum and singing Mvskoke hymns.

Student organizations at CMN enhance scholarly development by providing opportunities for students to share cultural experiences with peers that have common interests. Off-campus and co-curricular activities such as the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education (ONASHE) conferences provide students with leadership opportunities. Students attending these conferences also participate in the annual hand game competition. At both conferences students attend sessions on a variety of leadership and education topics.

Students are encouraged to accept leadership positions within outside organizations, CMN student organizations, and within the community. Recently, a CMN alumna was selected as Miss Muscogee Creek Nation. She is serving as an ambassador for the tribe as well as for CMN. This past year, students attended the White House Tribal Youth gathering in Washington D. C., which is a part of President Obama's Generation-I initiative. This event gave students the opportunity to interact with White House Administration officials and the White House Council on Native American Affairs. This experience provided an excellent opportunity for students to practice and strengthen their civic responsibilities and leadership skills.

Recognizing the importance of co-curricular activities on the overall educational experience of students, CMN has established a co-curricular assessment committee to assess the effectiveness of activities held on campus. This committee has assessed selected fitness and cultural activities held with students, and looks to expand their focus in future events.

### **3.E.2.**

One of CMN's core curricula is the Mvskoke language, which is directly linked to its mission and is evident by our learning outcomes through the Core Values written in the Mvskoke language. Claims that a positive learning environment is provided for tribal and non-tribal students is demonstrated through the service learning component. Service learning is conducted in, and meets the needs of the community; it is coordinated by CMN and participating communities.

It is CMN's intent to foster civic responsibility through the service learning course, which is integrated into the academic curriculum of the students. Examples of recent service learning projects in the Tribal Services program include a Mvskoke language program at a local school, a clothing closet for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's (MCN) job placement program, creating a food pantry in a tribal community church, and a voter registration campaign. Several examples of the Native American Studies service learning projects include a Mvskoke language program at

the MCN's childcare, the translation of Mvskoke words on maps for the MCN's Cultural Preservation office, and assisting with the MCN archives. Students are able to address the many challenges associated with the duties of these workplaces as well as gain experience that addresses local needs, documents civic responsibility, and highlights project achievements.

Students have indicated that their desire to enhance their knowledge and personal development were reasons for participating in the service learning project. Upon completion of their experience, students indicated they had a more positive attitude toward CMN and it enhanced their ability to work and learn independently. Students reported a sense of achievement and an increased sense of social responsibility.

Experiential learning in this format gives students the opportunity to plan, implement, and participate in a service learning project. The course culminates with students developing a portfolio of their service learning activities in relation to their educational experience.

The college envisions experiential learning as a process which will involve student participation in community activities and serve as a capstone for their Associate of Art and Sciences degree studies. By virtue of aspects of the Mission such as emphasizing native culture, community engagement, professional development, and intellectual advancement, service learning brings a unique approach to students' educational experience.

## Sources

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- Student Handbook
- Student Handbook (page number 8)
- Student Senate Constitution

## **3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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Courses in all degree and certificate programs offered at the college have suitable and relevant resources for teaching and learning to enhance the content of the subject matter, and are appropriate to higher education. Each of the degree programs is assessed utilizing unique learning goals created specifically for the degree or certificate. Student performance appropriate to the degree awarded is addressed in the design of each degree program's learning outcomes. The learning outcomes for general education courses are designed to assess the learning of students in relation to a broad, interrelated appreciation of cultural, economic, political, and social knowledge.

The college integrates general education learning outcomes across all programs, which encourages students to collect, analyze, organize information, and present to their peers in a variety of formats. Students collaborate with faculty on course projects, such as writing research papers, conversing in a Native language, carving flutes from cedar, and conducting scientific experiments. An emphasis is placed on exposing students to the global community. The Native worldview is a significant part of our Mission and Core Values, thus, the college has welcomed numerous international groups to campus. In addition, human diversity is promoted through student involvement with various youth, women's, and men's initiatives.

The institution has adequate full-time, permanent faculty members to teach courses in the degree programs and general education/core subjects. For those faculty members that teach general education and have not met the 18 graduate hour requirement in the discipline, are currently fulfilling that obligation to the college. Instructors are evaluated annually, using performance evaluation forms and classroom observations, by the Dean of Academic Affairs in order to obtain useful feedback on classroom practices. In each class, instructor/course evaluations are conducted with results provided to the faculty after course grades are submitted. Faculty members are required to post their office hours and course schedules on their offices and course syllabi. Also, students are able to communicate to faculty members by phone, mail, email, D2L, and text messaging.

To support students in their academic pursuits, a variety of services are provided throughout the college. Tutoring is provided for students through self or faculty referral under the direction of Academic Affairs. Financial aid advising is administered through the Financial Aid Coordinator, who meets regularly with students and parents. Academic advising is required for first year students through the Student Success Center, and is transferred to faculty degree coordinators for a student's second year. Student activities planned on campus as a co-curricular component of education are coordinated through the Dean of Student Affairs.

CMN serves a student population with a wide range of life experiences and academic backgrounds, including significant numbers of non-traditional, first generation, and low-income students. Student support services include the Student Success Center, Health and Wellness, Student Services, and the Student Center.

This college is dedicated to building an institution that provides students access to a high quality and culturally sensitive education. The library, tutoring program, disability accommodations, entrance testing, Retention Strategy, and Student Success Center all assure students have the necessary tools for advancing their education.

CMN's technological resources strengthen educational programs both in the classroom and throughout the campus. Providing students and instructors access to current technology and educational resources in a variety of methods is a priority of the college in order to maintain high quality teaching and learning. Students have access to quality resources, and are counseled in their use during information literacy instruction, provided for classes in each of the degree programs.

Co-curricular programs at CMN emphasize culture and values, which complement academics to promote learning inside the classroom as well as outside. Recognizing the importance of co-curricular activities on the overall educational experience of students, CMN has established a co-curricular assessment committee to assess the effectiveness of activities held on campus. This committee has assessed selected fitness and cultural activities held with students, and looks to expand their focus in future events.

A core curricula at CMN is the Mvskoke language, which is directly linked to its mission and the value of the language is evident by our learning outcomes through the Core Values, written in the Mvskoke language. Claims that a positive learning environment is provided for tribal and non-tribal students is demonstrated through the service learning component. Service learning is conducted in, and meets the needs of the community; it is coordinated by CMN and participating communities.

## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*



**Criterion Four - Teaching and Learning :  
Evaluation and Improvement**



## **4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement**

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

### **4.A - Core Component 4.A**

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

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

### **Argument**

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#### **4.A.1.**

As noted in the Early Initial Accreditation Site Review Report, the college has performed program reviews on the Gaming degree as part of a regular review cycle. With recommendations to expand this review process to all degree programs, CMN adapted the framework of program review from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSHRE) to fit the needs of the college's unique degree programs.

In 2015, CMN completed program reviews on all four degree programs offered. The program review consists of the following components:

- Mission and Progress
- Faculty Characteristics and Qualifications
- Quality of Curriculum and Student Learning
- Student Enrollment and Success
- Class Size
- Student and Constituent Feedback
- Resources and Institutional Capacities
- Summary Conclusions, Program Goals, and Recommendations

The department of Academic Affairs has an organized process that involves the faculty, academic administration, and institutional administration in the completion of each program review. Under the leadership of the Dean of Academic Affairs and the involvement of the curriculum committee, program reviews were conducted by the degree program coordinators.

The Program Review process is a five year cycle. Each degree, certificate, and general education program will be evaluated in accordance with the five year cycle presented in the succeeding table.

### Program Review Cycle

| <b>Academic Programs and Certificates</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2018-19</b> | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2020-21</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Tribal Services                           | X              |                |                |                |                | X              |
| Gaming                                    |                | X              |                |                |                |                |
| Gaming Certificate                        |                |                |                |                | X              |                |
| Native American Studies                   |                |                | X              |                |                |                |
| Mvskoke Language Studies Certificate      |                |                |                |                | X              |                |
| Police Science                            |                |                |                | X              |                |                |
| <b>General Education</b>                  | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2018-19</b> | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2020-21</b> |
| Communications                            | X              |                |                |                |                | X              |
| Social Sciences                           |                | X              |                |                |                |                |
| Critical Thinking                         |                |                | X              |                |                |                |
| Natural Sciences                          |                |                |                | X              |                |                |

The review process was initiated with all degree programs in 2014-15; the 2015-16 academic year begins the five year review cycle, starting with the [Tribal Services](#) program and communications general education focus. Although these will be reviewed in consecutive years, the information generated will begin the cycle of quantitative and qualitative data collection. As

a new institution of higher education, the program review process is beginning at the appropriate stage in CMN's development, with the establishment of data and information trends.

As discussed, CMN has taken the responsibility for the quality of its educational programs by involving each degree program in a systematic review process that is conducted on a regular basis. This program review allows one to determine its feasibility by identifying faculty qualifications, student enrollment, graduates, and available resources. An important part of this process is the involvement of an Academic Department Curriculum Committee, which provides input for improving the quality of the degree program. This committee provides leadership in developing and reviewing curriculum philosophy, and implementing changes as the program review indicates. The committee also makes recommendations to the academic and institutional leadership concerning policy and regulations relating to the degree program.

#### **4.A.2.**

Acceptable transfer credit is evaluated on a course-by-course basis for college-level credits earned at institutions that are fully accredited. The evaluation is based on course content as described in the catalog of the institution. Evaluation of transfer credits may require documentation such as program requirements and course syllabi to determine acceptable transfer credit courses. International transcripts, submitted for transfer, must be evaluated by a member agency of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). Students must request and receive both the official college transcript and the evaluation summary prepared by the Evaluation Services Committee to the Registrar's Office. Advanced standing credit awarded to a student must be validated by successful completion of twelve or more credit hours of academic work at CMN. All credit earned through advanced standing shall be so designated the neutral grade of pass (P) on the transcript following the course entry. All advanced standing credit evaluated institutions awarding credit for extra institutional learning must validate credit on a course-by course basis.

All credit transcribed at CMN is evaluated and awarded based on the CMN credit hour policy. Policies assure that courses meet the minimum contact minutes per credit hour regardless of whether the course is offered in a standard 15-week term or through an alternate format. All credits that are received for courses taken at CMN are recorded on official transcripts to document the successful or unsuccessful completion of coursework. Faculty is responsible for evaluating student performance in courses, determining the criteria for grading, and assigning grades. Grades are then submitted in the CampusVue Student Information System and verified by the registrar. The official transcript of the college is a complete academic record for all students who have taken coursework at CMN. The Registrar is responsible for assuring the integrity of all credit that CMN transcripts. Students may transfer up to 30 credits for college-level courses completed at other institutions.

#### **4.A.3.**

CMN accepts transfer credits earned at other accredited institutions. Students must submit official transcripts from all previous institutions attended. Once the official transcripts are received and verified by the Registrar, courses and grades are keyed into the CampusVue

Student Information System. Students receive credit for courses that are successfully completed. Transfer students that have a cumulative GPA below 2.0 are admitted on probation.

For Oklahoma colleges and universities, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Course Equivalency Tables are used to approve transfer credits. If a course is not listed in the tables, transfer credits are evaluated on a course-by-course basis. The evaluation is based on course description, as presented in the college catalog of the respective institution. Evaluation of transfer credit may require documentation such as program requirements and course syllabi to determine acceptable transfer credit courses.

#### **4.A.4.**

In the enabling legislation and Charter, the Board of Regents maintains and exercises authority over all courses offered by CMN. Every degree/certificate program must be approved by the Regents before being offered as an official degree/certificate program of the college. Prior to submission to the Regents, the college Curriculum Committee will ensure the rigor of courses, prerequisites, and expectations of student learning by reviewing the degree program curriculum and course content. While CMN does not offer any dual-enrollment courses or programs, the institution does allow high school students to enroll in concurrent courses, and holds the same expectations for high-school and college students.

The courses included in each of the degree plans are designated as general education, core, and specialization classes. Students are advised to complete general education courses prior to enrolling in the more advanced courses of their degree program, to ensure proper academic sequencing. Prefixes for courses are controlled by the registrar, and are used to determine the order in which students would enroll in classes, also detailing the pre-requisites required for each. It is a critical responsibility of the advisor to direct students into courses that will satisfy pre-requisites and build academic skills that will help to ensure academic success as students complete their degree programs.

The Academic Dean recognizes the importance of course and degree rigor, and has convened faculty to meet on a regular basis, sharing information about their courses, such as assignments, grading, and course scheduling. Additionally, these sessions allow faculty to establish a consistency of how courses can be taught throughout the trimester, and discuss implementation of the most effective pedagogy. By collaborating with one another, the rigor of courses is maintained and developed to ensure that student learning is effectively assessed. The curriculum committee further reinforces course rigor by reviewing and approving new courses and existing course modifications.

The expectations for CMN's student learning are based in the college's core values. Hoporenkv (*wisdom*), which encourages students to gain insight from scholarly learning and the knowledge and experience of elders, is incorporated into the curriculum and instruction provided by faculty. Classroom instruction is supplemented with academic support services, and the appropriate resources to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Another important component of this support is the communication of expectations to students. The learning outcomes for institution and program are posted prominently in each classroom.

Accessibility has been a vital need of the CMN student body since the Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2003. The college ensures this accessibility to learning resources through several avenues, both on and off campus. The CMN Library allows students to access online databases for research available through the website and EBSCO Database. Evening courses are offered each trimester, in order to increase access of courses to non-traditional students who may be working or have family obligations during the day. Tutors are scheduled throughout the day and evening for students to have access to enhanced learning resources as necessary. Additionally, most CMN classes utilize the D2L program, which allows students another method of instructor contact when they are off campus.

When hiring an instructor for the college, administration issues a job announcement that clearly describes the principle duties, functions, educational qualifications, experience, and job requirements for applicants to consider. These announcements are publicly posted with an invitation to complete an application and submit a resume. Applicants are screened and interviewed through a committee process, with recommendations based on a point system. The President has the sole authority to hire faculty and staff.

#### **4.A.5.**

The College of the Muscogee Nation does not currently offer any programs requiring specialized accreditation. In the event that CMN creates a program that requires discipline specific accreditation, CMN will apply for accreditation through the appropriate agency.

#### **4.A.6.**

The college has held eight graduation ceremonies, totaling 182 graduates. A Graduate Survey was conducted in [2013](#), [2014](#), and 2015 to obtain feedback about the impact of students' CMN experience and future plans. The survey was created by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and has evolved to a yearly survey of graduates, given on the day of graduation. The surveys are gathered and analyzed, and followed by a report, which is distributed to faculty and staff to help with campus wide focus on continuous improvement.

Another important measure of graduate success is the graduate [Follow-Up Survey](#), most recently conducted in 2014 among CMN alumni. The intent of this survey was to obtain information about employment, income, current pursuit of another degree, highest level of education, benefits of CMN experience, and recommendations for improvement. After compiling the data, a report was created and shared with faculty and staff so that the results could be incorporated into other aspects of college development. Conclusions from the data, such as; *“Respondents indicated that they are more confident in their ability to contribute to society because of the skills they obtained while pursuing their degree(s), indicating that they recognize the benefit of their CMN experience in obtaining employment and learning skills, which enhanced their ability to become upwardly mobile contributors,”* indicate that CMN is fulfilling aspects of its mission through the experience of graduates as they enter the workforce.

Future plans for this survey are to be electronically incorporated into Survey Monkey for ease of use and distribution. This information is intended to help assess the impact CMN has on students' lives and possible changes for ensuring CMN students are successful after graduation.

## **Sources**

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- Graduate Follow Up Survey Report
- Graduate Survey Report 2013
- Graduate Survey Report 2014
- Tribal Services Program Review 2015-16

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

### Argument

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#### 4.B.1.

The creation of learning outcomes and course objectives is rooted in the CMN goals, which are consistent with the Mission, Vision Statement, and Core Values, shared in the Catalog. These institutional, general education, and degree outcomes are prominently posted in each classroom and in the Catalog. From these overarching outcomes, course learning objectives have been developed in a parallel manner and are listed in each course syllabus. The stated course objectives are measurable, direct assessments of student learning, indicating how well the college is fulfilling its mission and institutional goals through classroom practices. The Dean of Academic Affairs convened the faculty to work on learning outcomes, rubrics, and assessment measures that initiated the process consistent with the [Assessment](#) and [Strategic Plans](#).

In addition, the Early Initial Accreditation Site Review Team recommended that the college develop more effective processes for the established assessment of student learning. The college has addressed these recommendations through faculty attendance of HLC assessment workshops, developing more assessable learning outcomes, and creating standard rubrics to be used throughout the curriculum. The Strategic Plan identified as a major priority, the review of learning goals and outcomes in 2014 to be the basis on which program reviews would be conducted in 2015. These more effective assessment processes and program reviews became a critical focus in 2015, resulting in faculty collaboration and discussions across the curriculum.

In order to effectively assess how well the college is fulfilling its mission, general education learning outcomes are defined and posted in classrooms. The general education learning outcomes outline skills that CMN students are expected to possess upon graduation, and were developed through a collaborative process among the faculty. All [syllabi](#) clearly state course learning outcomes, as well as assessment of course objectives. While CMN also articulates institutional, program, and course learning outcomes, the general education outcomes provide a

broad perspective of areas in which students are assessed. Clarification of the [general education](#) learning outcomes is listed below:

**Communications:** *Students will communicate effectively through written, oral and multi-media skills.* The Communication general education outcome assessment includes the assessment of Freshman Composition I, and Introduction to Speech courses. Faculty members require multiple essays and writing samples embedded within course objectives and linked to multiple learning outcomes.

**Critical Thinking:** *Students will engage in purposeful reasoning to reach sound conclusions.* The Critical Thinking general education outcome assessment includes all mathematics courses. The key concepts in Business Math and College Algebra are assessed through course-embedded indicators in quizzes, interim exams, and final exams, which serve as the assessment of critical thinking.

**Natural Sciences:** *Students will understand scientific literacy through application of skills and knowledge necessary to understand the nature and content of science, and to evaluate scientific arguments using evidence-based reasoning.* The Natural Sciences general education outcome assessment includes all science courses. The faculty requires poster board and oral presentations embedded within course objectives and linked to multiple learning outcomes.

**Social Sciences:** *Students will understand and apply sociological, cultural, political, psychological, historical, and economic principles to effectively analyze creative works.* The Social Sciences general education outcome assessment includes the assessment of History, Government, Humanities, Psychology, and Sociology courses. Faculty members require essays and writing assignments embedded within course objectives and linked to related learning outcomes.

These clearly stated goals for general education outcomes are an example of CMN's commitment to educational achievement and improvement of student learning. In order to maintain an effective process of assessment, CMN has detailed techniques that are to be used in the assessment of student learning. When assessing students, faculty utilize different methods and tools. The assessment process is articulated by the faculty member, which will begin with a method that is determined to be most effective. Methods are strategies for assessment that faculty choose to be compatible and consistent with the course or degree program, generating results that will determine what students learned.

## Methods

**Capstone Courses:** In the curriculum MVSK 2163 Project Management and MVSK 2333 Mvskoke Literacy Project, are the culminating courses within the Tribal Services and Native American Studies degree programs respectively. These courses are designed to enable students to review, evaluate, integrate, and synthesize information and skills gained from other courses in the programs. Program goals and general education goals are assessed in these courses, since these are culminating experiences for students to integrate the knowledge and skills of the entire program. Students present through a power point and speech presentation, their course-long

project and how it brought together these skills learned throughout the program. Consistent rubrics are utilized by faculty and staff evaluating these presentations to assess communication, technology, and speech as an exit level assessment of skills.

**Authentic Assessment:** In selected courses, faculty choose opportunities to engage students in real-life problem simulations that must be solved using the knowledge and skills gained in the course. CMN faculty have found that a single project can be structured to assess both competency of course content and attainment of program goals, as well as selected general education goals; such as skills in communication, critical thinking, and social values. A specific example used by the Tribal Government instructor involves students in the role of a tribal council member who must make a decision concerning a controversial issue. Students conclude the assignment by researching both sides of the issue and delivering a persuasive speech, or writing an action plan. Through an oral presentation, students are assessed on the above skills based on a rubric evaluation, or writing skills that have evaluation criteria for the written action plan option.

**Course-Embedded Assessment:** Program or major goals and general education goals may be assessed through assignments embedded in required courses. Writing assignments, such as summaries or reports, and oral presentations are used to assess students' competency of course content as well as their writing, reading, critical thinking, or speaking skills and use of the library or other information source. Another type of assessment is used in the Computer Literacy course, where students' competency is assessed using a pre and post-test, with course embedded indicators of student learning throughout the course. With faculty planning, a single assignment or project can be designed to assess a number of different program goals as well as general education goals.

## Tools

These instruments are used with the various methods of assessment to determine the level of competence that students have reached in relation to the institution, program, general education, and course. Faculty select the most appropriate method and tool for the course in which they are assessing.

**Rubrics:** For scoring consistency with longer open-ended assignments such as essays, research papers, or performances, rubric have been developed. CMN Faculty define rubric as a criterion based scoring tool that specifies levels of competency (e.g. Advanced, Competent, Developing, and Beginning) for each dimension of the outcome. As part of the rubric, criteria are provided that describe what constitutes the different levels of competency. These rubrics are shared with students, so the levels of performance are openly communicated. For example, in Speech classes, a rubric detailing the content on which a student will be assessed (e.g., Introduction, Timing, Voice, Visual Aids, etc.) provides a standard tool to measure this course and other courses where speeches are given.

**Portfolios:** An accumulation of student-produced work, a portfolio is designed to assess a student's attainment of program or major goals. The same portfolio is used to assess general education goals such as communication skills or the development of skills to enhance life-long

learning, the ability to use the library and other appropriate sources to retrieve information. Portfolios that contain early or unrevised work as well as later or revised work can assess the growth of skill development. Portfolio rubrics are clear and shared with the student prior to compilation, and final results are communicated back to the student after assessment is complete.

**Journals:** Faculty utilize journals or learning logs in composition courses as a tool for improving student writing, increasing motivation for writing, and for assessing students' writing skills. In addition, faculty have assigned journal topics that are used in assessing achievement of general education and program goals.

**Writing Samples:** Writing assignments are used as a measure of students' competency of course content and attainment of program goals. These are used as a direct measure of the general education communication skills goal as well as an indirect assessment of critical thinking skills. Faculty assess writing in the form of essays, research or term papers, answers to essay questions on tests, book reports, summaries, and lab reports.

**Oral Presentations/ Oral Exams:** Depending on the nature and content of the course, oral presentations are tailored by faculty to assess students' competency of the subject and attainment of general education goals. Oral presentations are a direct measure of students' communication skills, both written and oral, and critical thinking skills in the course focus.

In order to achieve clarity in establishing goals for student learning and effective processes for student assessment, the Dean of Academic Affairs and faculty followed the academic assessment procedures in the Student Learning Assessment Plan. The complexity of this process requires that the faculty understand the step-by-step manner in which the order of tasks will be completed are described according to the two major processes.

**Development of the learning outcomes process.** At this stage, faculty are educated about assessment, and students are informed of the role assessment plays in their courses and completing educational goals. As the process is developed, faculty continue to identify and refine learning outcomes and develop tools to measure those outcomes. This is the stage in which faculty select courses to assess outcomes at entry, mid, and exit levels for each program. The faculty include outcomes on syllabi and articulate activities (i.e., projects, assignments) in which these outcomes will be assessed.

**Implementation of the learning outcomes process.** Upon completion of the learning outcome development process, faculty members assess students. Consistent with the previous levels of assessment, students are assessed at the established levels for determining institutional outcomes. Results are tabulated and analyzed with the entry, mid, and exit assessment data, and presented to faculty for consultation of the results. In faculty meetings, the assessment data is discussed for ways of improving and revising the curriculum. This process is documented through the creation of an assessment report, which is utilized to improve student learning.

These processes were developed by faculty as a method in which each assessment level can be effectively measured. In addition to the general education outcomes previously discussed, program outcomes are measured using the same process. Assessment of program outcomes

include service learning course assessments, portfolios, performance evaluations, and written exams as prescribed within each program. The benchmark for program success will require 80 percent of the students to reach a competency level based on the assessment tool chosen by the individual instructor.

The assessment process uses consistent instruments across programs. The institution uses a consistent rubric scale for the measurement of competency. The Assessment Committee made reporting of student outcomes a major point of emphasis and underscored the need to improve the data gathering process by collecting data for multiple assessments to create a spreadsheet system database. The assessment process for measuring student learning and achievement of learning goals is concluded at the mid-level when students are evaluated on verbal presentations and the exit level when student research papers are evaluated by an academic assessment committee. Based on these results, the faculty will revise course and program strategies for effective teaching.

#### **4.B.2.**

A focus on the achievement of curricular student learning outcomes remains an institutional priority for the tribal college. CMN faculty map course objectives to learning outcomes and use specific methods of assessment (e.g., assignments, test questions, writing samples, etc.) to determine the student's competency of course objectives. When faculty administers the appropriate instrument, the student's demonstrated performance is examined to determine how well the student is grasping the intended course objective by referencing a scoring rubric. If these direct assessments indicate student competency, then this serves as the evidence that the learning outcome is being met.

The College of the Muscogee Nation assesses the achievement of learning outcomes consistent with the Student Learning Assessment Plan. The Dean of Academic Affairs has organized the faculty into an Assessment Committee where discussions are held to address methods for planning, developing, and assessing learning outcomes. As discussed in Criterion 3, the curricular learning outcomes are to be assessed according to an assessment cycle. Progress has been made on the assessment of learning outcomes, and specific courses have been identified through which the learning outcomes are assessed. For example, MVSK 2163 Project Management (Service Learning), SPCH 1113 Introduction to Speech Communications, and outcomes for general education including communications, critical thinking, natural sciences, and social sciences are included in the current assessment cycle.

Within the Project Management Service Learning course, students' capstone presentations are assessed according to rubrics developed by the Academic Assessment Committee. A faculty and staff panel is involved in the direct assessment of the capstone presentations, which reveal the level of competence demonstrated by students for communications and speech at an exit level. Based on these analyses, the instructor for the course will determine if benchmarks are met on respective outcomes, and plan improvements for future courses.

Indirect assessment is also an important part of the assessment process. The college conducts a variety of indirect assessment surveys, including Faculty/Course Evaluations, Graduate Follow-

up Survey, and Graduate Survey. These measures indicate a student's level of perception about various aspects of their college experience, which are beneficial for the college as future plans are developed. The college is involved in [external comparisons](#) with other tribal colleges considering various subjects relating to student success, such as developmental math, developmental writing and composition, college math, and English composition.

The assessment program at the college has been developed considering recommendations from the Early Initial Accreditation Site Review Team Report. Available resources on the HLC website regarding assessment of student learning are incorporated into the Student Learning Assessment Plan, which provides a handbook for faculty and staff to follow when developing and practicing assessment across curricular and co-curricular objectives. Additionally, the recommendation of developing rubrics has resulted in faculty meeting and creating standardized scoring-type guide rubrics with which demonstrated student performance is measured across disciplines.

These initial steps taken to bolster the assessment process at CMN have created a significant amount of growth among faculty, and their understanding of how assessment is intended to improve student learning across the institution. While the faculty are focusing on specific areas in their courses, and examples provided in this argument are largely from the Project Management Service Learning course, aspects of assessment are ongoing throughout all degree programs. These first steps rely heavily on the use of rubrics, but faculty and administration recognize that this is merely one tool to assess learning, and look to implement other tools referenced in 4.B.1 as each assessment cycle progresses.

The approach for co-curricular assessment promotes accountability of CMN student services to analyze, improve, and develop learning in co-curricular activities. The Co-Curricular Assessment Committee was formed to strengthen and focus the indirect assessment efforts that are a significant part of the Assessment Plan. This ten member committee is representative of all the major college functions that have the responsibility of serving students outside the classroom. In addition, the committee adopted three institutional and four general education outcomes; three subcommittees were formed to assess the three levels.

The committee met to discuss and review potential learning outcomes appropriate for co-curricular activities. In addition, individual members provided input from research and from their professional knowledge base that would add to the outcomes statements. Intensive discussion was held before the outcomes could be agreed upon through consensus of the committee. Five learning outcome statements were agreed upon as provided below:

**Co-Curricular Program Learning Outcomes:**

*Students will engage in a healthy lifestyle.*

*Students will demonstrate a respect of culture.*

*Students will demonstrate personal growth.*

*Students will exhibit self-awareness.*

*Students will acclimate into lifelong learners.*

With the understanding that assessment for the co-curricular activities is a long term process as noted in the Assessment Cycle, the committee agreed to focus on the *healthy lifestyle* outcome for assessment in the first year and would complete the remaining outcomes in future years. Following are the remaining three outcome descriptions and accompanying objectives:

### **First Year Cycle**

**Co-Curricular Program Outcome:** *Students will engage in a healthy lifestyle.*

Objectives:

Identify the importance of engaging in physical activity.

Demonstrate a healthy lifestyle by implementing good nutrition techniques.

Describe the effects of substance abuse on themselves and others.

**Institutional Outcome- Information Literacy:** *Students will demonstrate the ability to find, evaluate, organize and use information.*

Objectives:

Apply research skills to retrieve and evaluate information.

Evaluate information resources and identify quality resources relevant to the problem or issue investigated.

**General Education Outcome- Communication:** *Students will communicate effectively through written, oral and multi-media skills.*

Objective:

Demonstrate knowledge of the CMN student portal, allowing them to communicate effectively with student services and academic affairs.

**Co-Curricular Assessment Cycle**

| <b>Co-Curricular Program Outcomes</b> | <b>2015-2016</b> | <b>2016-2017</b> | <b>2017-2018</b> | <b>2018-2019</b> | <b>2019-2020</b> | <b>2020-2021</b> | <b>2021-2022</b> | <b>2022-2023</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Healthy Lifestyle                     | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  |
| Respect of Culture                    |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |
| Personal Growth                       |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |
| Self-awareness                        |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |
| Lifelong learners                     |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |
| <b>Institutional Outcome</b>          |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Information Literacy                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  |
| Mvskoke Values                        |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |
| Global Awareness                      |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |
| <b>General Education Outcome</b>      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Communications                        | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  |
| Critical Thinking                     |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |
| Natural Sciences                      |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |
| Social Science                        |                  |                  |                  | X                |                  |                  |                  | X                |

In both curricular and co-curricular assessment, the benchmark for program success requires 80 percent of the students to achieve competency in the Program, Institutional, and General Education Learning Outcomes assessments. The co-curricular subcommittees have begun working to develop the Template for Planning and Assessing Programs and Services for assessing their Learning Outcome. The Co-Curricular Committee will close the loop on the cycle in the summer trimester and generate a Co-Curricular Assessment Report for the Learning Outcomes. This argument supports the assessment efforts of CMN to demonstrate a comprehensive and coordinated approach to curricular and co-curricular assessment, which

improves student learning and measures the effectiveness in meeting CMN's Course, Program, General Education, and Institutional Learning Outcomes.

#### **4.B.3**

The college uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning by determining the effectiveness of instructional methods, student services, and student activities. Faculty members collect student data in relation to their learning outcomes for the purpose of understanding the achievement of course competencies. Therefore, as the trimester progresses, in faculty development meetings, instructors share the results to determine what is working and suggested areas for improvement.

When faculty administers the appropriate instrument to measure designated learning outcomes, the results are used to establish the student's level of performance. As an example, faculty are able to review the results and advise individual students, or aggregate data for the class, to modify instruction or methodology for teaching more effectively. These direct assessments are valuable in not only determining student competency, but also in providing specific evidence that the learning outcome is being met or not met.

Practical application of faculty use of assessment tools to improve student learning varies across the curriculum. A CMN faculty member indicated that the use of a pre and post-test to determine students' levels of competence allowed matching instructional processes with student abilities as demonstrated on the pre-test. In addition, there was more information about the abilities of students that could be used in positive reinforcement situations. Preliminary assessment of student knowledge in relation to learning outcomes allows the instructor to be aware of the range of student abilities present in class. As the trimester progressed, the instructor modified instruction to maximize the students' comprehension of the main concepts as determined through embedded assessments. The pre and post-test assessment provided the most valuable assessment feedback, with the post-test providing data as an overview of the class that is utilized in the implementation of the next course. This instructor also reported utilizing rubrics to assess multi-media competence to determine students' level of conceptualization for a critical thinking exercise.

Student capstone presentations in the MVSK 2163 Project Management Service Learning course are assessed utilizing communications rubrics for speech and multi-media, developed by the Academic Assessment Committee. These presentations are assessed by a faculty and staff panel witnessing these presentations, which provides indicators on exit level student performance. This valuable experience enables students to put into practice such things as eye contact, transitions between power point slides, as well as obtain feedback from a panel of individuals with no previous knowledge of their projects. While this is a capstone course, it is our belief that students can use the results from this assessment in their pursuit of an advanced degree or employment. Results from previous presentations (communication assessment report) indicated that students were having difficulty with a well-developed introduction, so students were prompted on how to properly introduce their projects to the panel. The information gathered through these analyses provides assessment data for faculty to utilize as they determine competency, based on benchmarks and plan improvements for future courses.

Other examples of assessment involve recent findings of the Assessment Committee in relation to the 2014-15 [Communication Outcome](#) reported. The results revealed that 49% of CMN students assessed for the general education - communications outcome met competency; however, the benchmark for general education competency is set at 80%. The assessed components of the outcome include: [written content](#), [oral](#), and [multi-media skills](#), which provides an analytical tool to focus on student successes and deficiencies of Communication Learning. The assessment results were used in developing the [Communication Assessment Report Action Improvement Plan](#) (also noted in the bullet points below).

Although this information may reflect negatively on the performance of students in relation to the communications outcome, it has provided a catalyst for growth among faculty teaching components of the communications outcome. With the data generated on this particular assessment, goals were prioritized and developed by the CMN faculty in order to address areas of deficiency in the written content component.

- A short term goal to enhance the written content component of communications is to provide MLA in-service training. By providing faculty training on lesson planning, assignments, and composition papers, faculty are expected to introduce students with all aspects of MLA format specifically in-text citation. In addition, English instructors will adjust in class journal assignments to include the usage of MLA citation.
- A long term goal is to have a dedicated writing lab on the CMN campus that will provide students with MLA resources for writing papers and citation. This writing lab would include computers, instructional support, and tutoring assistance.

With the data generated on this communications assessment, goals were prioritized and developed by the CMN faculty in order to address areas of deficiency in the oral skills component.

- A short term goal for the improvement of oral skills is to focus on the students' introduction of topics during a presentation. From the assessment data, students were competent with the content of a speech, but had difficulty introducing the topic. Other faculty members will be asked to present to the speech classes as an example of appropriate introductions.
- A long term goal is create a student speaker forum where students will get much needed experience in public speaking before peers. This speaker's forum may also segue into a CMN debate team as students learn necessary skills to address a topic through research and persuasion.

With the data generated on this communications assessment, goals were prioritized and developed by the CMN faculty in order to address specific areas related to the multi-media component.

- A short term goal is to have more computers available for students outside class time in order to work on power point presentations.
- A long term goal is to incorporate multi-media presentations (video, power point, prezi, and social media) into the speaker forum.

Indirect assessment throughout CMN provides opportunities for improvement of student learning through avenues other than academic assessments. As recommended by the Early Initial Accreditation Site Review Team, the Dean of Academic Affairs has made a concerted effort to observe faculty in their classrooms in order to provide feedback on instructional practices that may be improved for student learning.

Another method of feedback for instructors is the Faculty/Course Evaluations completed by students each trimester. The college has implemented an electronic process of collecting these surveys through Survey Monkey in order to provide more timely feedback for instructors. This allows faculty to incorporate suggestions provided by students in their teaching strategies, providing a greater level of student learning.

Graduate and Follow-Up surveys have been administered to graduating students and alumni to gain insight into positive aspects of the institution. The findings provided through these indirect assessment measures has led to the implementation of expanded co-curricular and cultural activities held for students on campus. These activities promote retention and student learning by providing campus-wide personal interaction by allowing students to be part of the higher education community.

Finally, the process of program review for each degree has been incorporated into the improvement of degree plans. All degree programs at CMN have gone through the process of program review, and will continue to be reviewed in accordance with a five year cycle. These reviews provide information critical to degree planning, budgeting, and assessing the effectiveness of the program. By remaining focused on student learning through appropriate course design and instructional methods, CMN ensures that this process of program review contributes to the improvement of student learning.

#### **4.B.4.**

CMN administration, faculty, and staff have participated in external organizations where processes and methodologies can be shared and studied. Since the beginning of the college, personnel have been encouraged to engage in professional development organizations where best practices can be observed and replicated for the tribal college. The performance of these best practices in all areas of the college, including processes and methodologies for assessment of student learning, are a demonstration of the commitment CMN has to educational achievement and continual improvement. As a reflection of our capacity and capability as an institution of higher education, three regarded external entities have approved CMN for participation: Member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), a Candidate for Accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, and designated as a 1994 Tribal Land-Grant institution.

Through faculty driven initiatives to revise learning outcomes, a plan was followed, which is designed to evaluate courses, general education, and program assessments. CMN's eight member faculty team has worked together to create rubrics specifically within general education requirements that can be utilized across all courses (i.e. essay creation, speech development, and visual presentations). In the spring of 2015 faculty development meetings were established, and held every other Friday to collaborate on assessment plans. The teamwork approach is resulting

in the creation of consistent outcomes and benchmarks across all programs of study. This has resulted in a truly faculty driven assessment approach that is implemented throughout the curriculum.

To ensure the validity of the assessment program, input has been received from various resources relating to the assessment process and methodology. Also, it was understood that this approach would foster best practices in the assessment process. Initially, the assessment plan began with presentations from higher education doctoral students relating to the development of assessment for the college. This activity helped to focus efforts of the faculty on appropriate assessment tasks. Later, the assistance from a mainstream institution's assessment coordinator was solicited to provide assessment training and technical assistance. These two activities introduced and prepared faculty for assessment workshops hosted by HLC and IUPUI, which were attended by CMN faculty and staff.

In-house, the Academic Dean presented a training session on Bloom's taxonomy and its relationship to learning outcomes and the process for considering the taxonomy when writing outcome statements. Cooperative learning techniques were used to facilitate the development of the learning outcomes. Through these ongoing efforts, the Academic Affairs department and faculty will continue to evaluate CMN processes and methodology concerning assessment of student learning, observe data generated throughout the cycle, and ensure that these activities reflect good practice.

## Sources

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- Assessment Plan
- Catalog 2015-2016
- Catalog 2015-2016 (page number 26)
- Communication Assessment Report Action Improvement Plan
- Communication Outcome Assessment Report
- Communication Outcome Assessment Report (page number 7)
- Communication Outcome Assessment Report (page number 8)
- Communication Outcome Assessment Report (page number 9)
- Governance Institute for Student Success - CMN Report
- Sample Syllabus
- Strategic Plan
- Strategic Plan (page number 14)

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

### Argument

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#### 4.C.1.

The defined goals for CMN that relates to retention, persistence, and completion are cited in the [Strategic Plan](#) as priorities 4.3.1 *defining goals*, 4.3.2 *collect and analyze information*, 4.3.3 *use information to make improvements*, and 4.3.4 *processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information*. These priorities establish the commitment that the college has to retention, persistence, and completion in its degree and certificate programs.

Challenges affecting retention, persistence, and completion are the high percentage (96%) of first generation students enrolling at the College of the Muscogee Nation in 2013-2014. Also, the high percent of students who have taken the COMPASS skills assessment test and were placed in remedial/developmental courses based on the results which are as follows: Reading (45%), Writing/Comprehension (68%) and Math (99%). Comparatively speaking 71% of CMN students taking the skills assessment test were placed in remedial/developmental courses, while 39% of the students entering Oklahoma state colleges and universities were required to take at least one remedial course, whereas the national rate was 32%. Considering these two variables of first generation students and enrollment in remedial courses, the college has designed a Retention Strategy and Student Success program with goals to focus on these issues.

Within the Retention Strategy, the college has designed a process to improve the current retention rate, and to increase retention by 1% of first-time, full-time degree seeking students. Students enrolling in fall 2013, and returning in fall 2014, the retention rate for first time students was 67% at CMN and based on the established goal, the retention rate is projected to be 68%.

The most recent complete graduation (150%) rate at the college (2012) is 10% with a projected goal of 14% for the 2013 entering class, based on increased retention goals (1% per year) and the strategies implemented to support them. It is reasonable to expect a higher graduation rate based on the 2013 retention rate level and its positive relationship with graduation rates, which is when retention rates increase, graduation rates increase.

The CMN [persistence rate](#) for all full time degree seeking students who enrolled in the Fall of 2014 and returned in the Spring of 2015 was 59.6% (8 students graduated in the Fall). While the persistence rate for students enrolling in the Fall of 2015 and returning in the Spring of 2016 was 72.2% (3 students graduated in the Fall). Consistent with the retention and graduation goals CMN will improve their persistence rate at the same level.

The goal for retention was set by a Retention Strategy committee with seven related objectives. This committee consists of the Regents Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Academic Dean, Registrar, Research Specialist, and Police Science Instructor. It was decided that this committee was the appropriate body for establishing the goal as its primary purpose was to support retention and the strategy taken to help students in their retention efforts. Utilizing approaches outlined in the CMN Retention Strategy, faculty and staff were provided with detailed processes that positively impact a student's higher education experience and support them through graduation.

#### 4.C.2

At the beginning of the trimester, enrollment numbers are calculated for each of the courses offered. These values are an indicator of current enrollment, which is analyzed over time for graduation, retention, persistence, and completion information. Other information relating to retention, persistence, and completion is collected by faculty and staff in order to facilitate student success when barriers are identified.

As the trimester progresses, [attendance](#) is documented by the instructor who tracks students to determine any difficulties that students may be encountering. When absences reach the criteria identified in the Retention Strategy, the instructor will determine the avenue of remediation that best fits the student's situation. Faculty are proactive in student success and implement the strategy to address student absence. Prior to a student reaching the Administrative Withdrawal (AW) criteria, faculty contacts students through email and telephone to assess the situation and determine a course of action.

These procedures were developed to remain more closely aware of variables that may affect retention and graduation of students. In identifying issues leading to absences, faculty provides focused attention and remedies to student problems in order for the student to remain focused on academic success. It is believed that when this process becomes thoroughly familiar, by not only faculty and Student Success staff, but students as well, that retention and graduation issues will be better addressed. Graduate and follow-up surveys have been distributed to faculty and staff to consider the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for improving retention and graduation practices.

#### 4.C.3

The primary source for [institutional efforts](#) and programs that address student retention, persistence, and completion has been obtained from the Student Success Center and Academic Affairs-Faculty. As an example, the college received funding for a Title III funded program to address the need for student advisement and academic counseling. With this funding, CMN developed the Student Success Center, which is centrally located for new and incoming students to access all of the services necessary for enrolling and succeeding in their first academic year.

The initial focus for improving retention at CMN is through the Student Success Center. The SSC provides an outreach program to public schools, advisement of first year students, and the early alert initiative, all of which can impact retention, persistence, and completion. The SSC works in collaboration with faculty according to the Retention Strategy to notify and communicate with students identified as chronically absent or those who are not completing work assignments, which may indicate that these students are at-risk. The outreach program offered to high school students prepares them for college expectations, and first year advisement is a critical factor in completing general education requirements before moving into a degree program.

The CampusVue student information system has been purchased to expand the capacity and capability of our student data related to practices that could support higher retention, persistence, and completion. This system enables faculty and staff to track students' grades, attendance, financial aid disbursement, and degree progress. The SSC utilizes this system to monitor student attendance and degree progress, and if a student is identified as high-risk, the counselor contacts the student for further discussion of student success.

Another connection, specifically between CMN and at-risk students, occurs with our tutoring services. Started with grant funds in 2010, CMN's tutoring program is an integral part of improving retention. After analyzing the tutoring program and its effectiveness, the College continues to support the program by dedicating necessary funds from the budget. Due to the success of this program, it has been integrated as part of the Retention Strategy in order to provide focused attention on academic needs of individual students which sometimes becomes a barrier to completing their degree.

The college, through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, employs several data collection processes, which provide CMN with the information necessary to improve retention, persistence, and completion rates. Graduate and Follow-Up Surveys have been developed and administered to gain insight into positive aspects of the institution, gaining feedback from individuals who were successful at the college. Some responses from these instruments indicate that CMN should continue supporting student organizations, co-curricular activities, and expanding service learning opportunities which are linked to persistence and community involvement. Further review of the surveys revealed that the provision of scholarships offsets the costs associated with college, which allows many of our students to pursue higher education without the worry of student loan debt.

Students have also indicated a desire to interact with faculty and staff outside of the classroom setting. CMN has implemented a co-curricular assessment committee to develop and assess other methods of student engagement. These activities help promote retention through campus-wide personal interaction and allowing students to be a part of a community.

Through the various methods of data collection and inferences, CMN has been mindful of students and their experiences on and off campus. These reports have shaped the development of activities, programs, and facilities to create a healthy atmosphere during a student's college experience. A variety of methods (e.g., comment cards, survey questions, Student Senate-Student Forum) has been utilized to improve various aspects of the college with the intent of improving student retention, persistence, and completion.

#### **4.C.4.**

Information gathered by CMN on student retention, persistence, and completion reflects good practices. The Office of the Registrar has completed a [Student Success Report](#) that provides recommendations for improvement and analyzes data from the following sources. Data is generated from admission and enrollment information that is consistent with CampusVue student information system, Integrated Post secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and American Indian Measurements of Success (AIMS) reports. AIMS is a report required by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). The Registrar generates reports for IPEDS and AIMS, which address the student and institutional criteria set forth by each. Reports are distributed internally and to the appropriate agencies respectively, U.S. Department of Education, and AIHEC.

A list of [Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) has been completed, reviewed by staff and approved by the Board of Regents. The data relating to the respective KPIs will be regularly produced and reviewed by faculty and staff to be used for evaluating success and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Consistent with the IPEDS definitions and terms, the Registrar has completed the 2014-2015 Fall Collection Survey. To be accessible to our internal and external constituents, the reports are available for public review. Recently IPEDS data was submitted for the fall 2015 report, which will be located on the CMN website under the link College Navigator, and, will be included in the official report. The Registrar attended an IPEDS workshop hosted by the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), and AIHEC in 2013 in Santa Fe, NM. Another IPEDS conference attended was hosted by Mid-AIR in Springfield, MO during fall 2015.

Since 2008, CMN has been collecting and analyzing student data to annually complete AIHEC's AIMS report. This AIMS report is given each year to the AIHEC Board of Directors for institutions to remain in good standing. The AIMS report has two parts, including quantitative and qualitative indicators. Some quantitative indicators ([AIMS Report](#)) are First Generation Status, Skill Assessment/Placement Test Results, Cohort Retention, Cohort Graduation, Enrollment, and Graduation Information. Qualitative indicators relate to narratives describing the growth of the institution, fundraising for various projects, in addition information on Native language, and science related student research. The collection of this data are examples of the

processes and methodologies in practice at CMN, and how they reflect good practices for collecting and analyzing information on retention, persistence, and completion.

## **Sources**

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- AIMS Report Selected Data
- Attendance Summary Sample
- CMN Rate of Persistence
- Key Performance Indicators CMN 2015
- Selected Efforts to improve Retention, Persistence, and Completion
- Strategic Plan
- Strategic Plan (page number 15)
- Student Success Report 2015-16

## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

### Summary

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CMN has completed program reviews on all four degree programs offered, and has now established a program review cycle, where one program will be reviewed annually according to the five-year calendar. In regard to accepting transfer credit, each course earned at fully-accredited institutions is evaluated on an individual basis by the Registrar. The Board of Regents maintains and exercises authority over all courses offered at CMN. Prior to submission of degree/certificate programs or courses to the Regents, the college Curriculum Committee ensures the rigor of courses, pre-requisites, and expectations of student learning by reviewing the degree program curriculum and course content. The success of graduates is evaluated through instruments developed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and results are shared throughout the college.

The Dean of Academic Affairs convened the faculty to work on learning outcomes, rubrics, and assessment measures, which initiated a process consistent with the Assessment and Strategic Plans. In addition, faculty have attended HLC assessment workshops, developed more assessable learning outcomes, and created standard rubrics to be used throughout the curriculum. Implementation of the learning outcomes process resulted in faculty members assessing students to determine the level of student learning.

The focus on the achievement of curricular student learning outcomes is a high institutional priority for the tribal college. Achievement of the learning outcomes is assessed consistently with the Student Learning Assessment Plan, which serves as a handbook for faculty and staff to follow when developing and practicing assessment across curricular and co-curricular objectives. The benchmark for program success in both curricular and co-curricular assessment requires 80% of the students to achieve competency in the program, institutional, and general education learning outcomes assessments.

The college uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning by determining the effectiveness of institutional methods, student services, and student activities. Faculty members collect student data in relation to their student learning outcomes, which provides more understanding of the achievement of course competencies. As the trimester progresses, in faculty development meetings, results are shared to determine what is working and suggested areas for improvement.

The defined goals for CMN that pertains to retention, persistence, and completion are cited in the Strategic Plan as priorities, which establish the commitment of the college to student success. The college utilizes approaches outlined in the CMN Retention Strategy where faculty and staff

are provided with detailed processes that positively impact a student's higher education experience and support them through graduation. The primary focus for improving retention at CMN is through the Student Success Center; also the CampusVue student information system expands the capacity and capability of our student data related to practices that support higher retention, persistence, and completion.

## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*



**Criterion Five - Resources, Planning,  
and Institutional Effectiveness**

## 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

### Argument

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#### 5.A.1.

The College of the Muscogee Nation has no institutional debt and maintains a reserve of \$2 million. To prepare for future financial growth and development, the college has created a [business plan](#) framework that will be used for forecasting income and expenditures on a 3-5 year basis.

The majority of funding for operations is received from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in an annual appropriation; the college has also received [grant funding](#) from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and the Department of Education (ED) for dedicated projects. CMN has a fully functional Title IV office, which distributes [student financial assistance](#) received from federal, state, tribal, and independent funds.

Faculty and staff employed at CMN are selected based on not only the necessary educational requirements for higher education, but also with respect to the Native culture that many have learned from a very early age. The college is committed to the educational and cultural requirements necessary to continue its operation and cultural richness.

CMN has a [master site plan](#) in place for campus expansion. Currently, in addition to regular classrooms for general studies that seat 32 students, there are dedicated classrooms for Gaming, Computers, and a Science Lab; totaling 11 classrooms. Smart board technology has been included in each classroom, conference rooms, in the library, and is accessible by all faculty and students. Desire to Learn (D2L) is used for accessing online assignments; and CampusVue is the Student Information System. Wireless access is provided for students and staff inside buildings and hard-wired internet access for student housing. The local and virtualized servers supporting our network are located onsite as well as having servers for disaster recovery at an off-site location. Computers are continually maintained and replaced, as well as software upgrades as needed by students and faculty.

### **5.A.2.**

The CMN [annual budget](#), strategic plan, master site plan, anticipated government funding, economic conditions and current needs of students and the community are all considered when planning and allocating funds for both day-to-day operations and potential growth. First and foremost, in all decisions is how the students will be impacted. Checks and balances built into the college organization structure, the accounting and budgeting principles utilized, and the auditing standards of independent auditors all ensure that the resource allocation process is not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.

A governing board oversees the college, but does not receive any dividends, stipends, or other benefits directly from the college budget. The college is a nonprofit institution, therefore, no employees or Board members benefit from the funds received by the college. It is noted that the Board of Regents has a separate budget, which provides stipends (NCA 11-040) for members.

### **5.A.3.**

CMN's Mission Statement is on the website, primary college documents, posted in buildings, and on promotional items. When the Mission Statement was developed, substantial discussion was held to ensure that it was realistic, focused, and the capacity to fulfill the goals existed. Recognizing the importance of the mission, the students, faculty, and staff are continually reminded of its value and need to remain within its scope.

Organizational elements such as college functions, departments, faculty and staff, degree programs, curricula, and projected enrollment were considered as the mission was implemented. The mission was a critical aspect for determining the level of resources that the college needed to fulfill the three goals: positive learning environment, exemplary academic programs, and encouraging lifelong learners. Through ongoing budget projections that require analysis of mission goals and organizational needs, CMN submits its budget to the tribal government, so the tribe can provide resources for maintaining operations.

As elaborations of the mission, the following established institutional goals guide the College of the Muscogee Nation in the present and into the future. The allocated resources, organizational structure, and opportunities are realistic in fulfilling these goals, which will enable us to:

1. Offer academic degree programs that are unique and reflect Mvskoke culture, history and language.
2. Create educational opportunities that are accessible to the Native community and tribal members.
3. Provide co-curricular activities that respect tribal traditions and culture.
4. Develop quality educational programs that give students a scholastic foundation to pursue higher academic degrees or to achieve their career objectives.
5. Maintain a focused learning environment in a safe and secure campus.

#### **5.A.4.**

Policy and procedures are followed when hiring qualified staff. Human Resources review the job description and discuss the position needs with the supervisor prior to advertising an open position. All positions are advertised in the appropriate venue (e.g., MCN website, local and regional newspapers, networking) to attract qualified applicants. A selection committee reviews and screens applications, selects for and conducts interviews, and recommends a choice based on a standard point system interview score-sheet. The President approves all hires; a pre-employment background check and drug test must be successfully passed prior to hiring.

Personnel at the college have the following educational qualifications: One Doctorate, one Juris Doctorate, eleven Master's degrees, sixteen Bachelor's degrees, and eight Associate degrees, demonstrating that staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained. Annual evaluations are required to assess performance and training needs for all faculty and staff.

All personnel on campus have participated in training in such areas as CPR, AED, fire suppressants, sexual harassment and family violence, Active Shooter on Campus, FERPA, and assessment. Administration and faculty are active members in professional organizations (NASPA, NACUBO, OACRO, etc.) that benefit and strengthen their classroom abilities and function-specific knowledge. Included in the budget are funds for staff development for such activities as training sessions or to order literature in their chosen fields.

#### **5.A.5.**

The college budget is developed according to tribal law, which is initiated through an Executive Order from the Principal Chief's office directing the Controller to initiate the annual budgeting process. The Budget Call from the Controller outlines the basic costs considerations including the fringe benefit rate, indirect cost rate, travel for in state and out of state, per diem and other overhead costs.

The [budget](#) is reviewed and approved by the Board of Regents before being submitted to the Tribal Executive Budget Committee. The Committee, under the direction of the tribal Controller, reviews and adjusts, if necessary, budgets for departments and constitutional agencies such as the College, within the parameters of the Tribal Comprehensive Annual Budget. All budgets are reviewed and approved by legislative committees and the full National Council. When the budget becomes operational, it is entered into the tribal college Abila MIP accounting system with appropriate account numbers.

The Director of Business Affairs is charged with the general supervision of all accounting procedures in accordance with generally accepted principles of accounting. All orders or bills are paid in accordance with policy and are approved by both the Director and the President. Monitoring of the budget, including grant funds is part of the college's internal control. To closely monitor budgets, SEBA reports are regularly generated reporting expenditures, encumbrances, and balances of each line item. This information provides the administration the ability to control and manage the budgets effectively.

As required in federal legislation, audits are performed on an annual basis in compliance with the Single Audit Act. The Single Audit Act requires an [audit](#) be conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments and Nonprofit Organizations. To maintain the goal of transparency, audits are provided to the tribal Executive and Legislative branches, the Board of Regents, CMN personnel and to the public as requested from the Business Affairs office.

## Sources

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- 2013 Annual Financial Statements and Independent Auditors Report
- Board of Regents 5-12-14 Agenda FY 2015 Budget
- CMN Business Plan
- CMN SITE PLAN
- Financial Assistance to CMN Students Spring 2014
- FY15 Budget
- Grant Awards

## **5.B - Core Component 5.B**

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The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

### **Argument**

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#### **5.B.1.**

Through monthly meetings with administration, the Board stays current on college activities and events. Qualifications that the Board members possess enable them to be more knowledgeable about higher education, teaching, and Muscogee (Creek) culture. Also, all of the Board members have had experience with the college since the Board was seated in February 2005, adding to their knowledge base. The Board also reviews and approves institutional policies that are developed concerning all educational programs. The governing Board has the final responsibility to ensure that it protects the academic and social interests for the students.

In addition to oversight, financial responsibilities held by the Board are to expend funds and maintain books and records relating to the financial affairs of the college. To ensure stability, a necessity for an effective structure through which policy and processes are approved, the Regents serve staggered terms. Since the Board approves policy relating to academic requirements for the institution, including faculty and students, it is important that they involve these parties for contribution and a collaborative effort. Board policies ensure that members act in the best interest of the college in fulfilling their legal and fiduciary responsibilities. As the final authority for proposed policy and college development, Board members are committed to the educational legacy left to us by our ancestors.

#### **5.B.2.**

The college engages its internal constituencies through a structured process that involves a series of policy handbooks for the Board of Regents, faculty, staff, and students. By providing access to the policy handbooks through the CMN shared drive, internal constituencies can reference and review material that is relevant to promote effective leadership and collaborative processes. The

ease of accessibility of these policies is important as CMN strives to include all relevant constituencies in the fulfillment of its mission.

The Board of Regents, that derives its authority from the MCN Legislation, is engaged through by-laws and the Board of Regents Manual. Within these documents are clarifications for their authority, powers, duties and responsibilities that guide them in their role as the governing board.

Faculty roles are enhanced by the availability of information in the Faculty Handbook and Advisement and Enrollment Handbook. Furthermore, communication is improved because the Faculty Council and its by-laws provide an avenue through which a unified voice is developed. Considering the availability of faculty policy documents, collaborative processes are more productive.

The college has an organization chart that depicts the relationships between all departmental functions and positions, which supports effective communication throughout the institution. In addition, CMN makes available the Personnel Policies and an Employee Handbook to provide organization operations information to educate staff about specific rules and regulations. All personnel, at the beginning of their employment, are provided with an orientation to the tribal government and college.

Students are an internal constituency who reference policies through the [Student Handbook](#), [Student Housing Handbook](#), and Consumer Information Guide, which defines their rights and responsibilities at the college. Each student organization has by-laws, which provide a framework for clarity and cohesion, resulting in a greater understanding of how organizations shape them to be citizens of a tribal and global society.

### **5.B.3.**

Administration, faculty, staff, and students all work together in collaborative roles within the college organization, facilitated by standing committees. Academic Affairs/Curriculum, Assessment, Accreditation Steering, Publications/Website, and the Executive Committee are established committees that meet regularly. Other committees, such as the Special Events and Student Services meet to plan events such as graduation, Fall Fest, special considerations, and disciplinary actions.

Students are involved in several committees such as, Student Housing Organization, Tribal Leadership Circle, Student Senate, Grade Appeals, and Accreditation Steering Committee. College wide committees are the Institutional Review Board, Library Committee, and the Faculty Council. Within the structure of the college, internal constituencies utilize committees for consistent communication to create policies. Students are welcome to meet with the President at any time regarding the development of setting requirements or developing policy, and have a standing invitation to attend and participate in Board of Regents meetings. Through the effective structures that are currently in place, the college enables involvement of the Board, employees, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes.

## **Sources**

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- Student Handbook
- Student Housing Handbook

## **5.C - Core Component 5.C**

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

### **Argument**

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#### **5.C.1.**

This institution's ability to carryout its mission is evident in its effective strategic planning and careful management of resources which enhances institutional effectiveness. Alignment of resources has been critical in the ability of the college to continue to fulfill its mission and priorities, and to guide the institution's operations. The Strategic Plan will be a guiding document as budgets are forecast over the next several years. Also considered is the Master Site plan as CMN applies for grant funding to expand the campus, maintaining the goal of encouraging life-long learners for personal growth, professional development and intellectual advancement. An example is when CMN prepares its annual budget from a list of program priorities and projected events.

For instance, the Student Center development exemplifies the ability of CMN to maximize its resources and complement the mission. With the services available in the center including the expanded library, fitness facilities, bookstore, convertible classroom/conference space, science lab, on-site food services, and storm shelter, planning has allowed a complete campus for students while fulfilling the mission. This is a perfect example of how CMN has brought reality to a vision set forth in the strategic plan.

Furthermore, this center has allowed faculty more technology and better equipped space, which supports teaching excellence and offering exemplary academic programs to meet student, tribal, and societal needs. This development of resources is consistent with the priorities in the Strategic Plan and will continue to provide valuable capital assets to benefit our students and staff as they pursue the Mission and priorities set forth for the college.

### **5.C.2.**

CMN has made significant progress in developing its capacity for data-driven decision-making. However, this is an area where the college continues to improve its linking of assessment data to systematic and integrated planning throughout the institution. As previously discussed, CMN is maturing its assessment process through the establishment of two assessment committees, curricular and co-curricular. The committees address both forms of student learning and are measured through a variety of methods.

The college believes, to ensure students are prepared for a successful life, that co-curricular assessment (Co-Curricular assessment guide) should be based on four concepts of development: intellectual (self-awareness, lifelong learners), communications, information literacy, and wellness. While initial assessment has been conducted in each of these co-curricular areas and data has been generated, the available information can be used in the budget development process when considering funding of the co-curricular program.

The college has set priorities that impact student learning through the funding of a Student Success Center, which has a staff that is dedicated to effective advisement of first year students and academic support for students that may be needing guidance. In addition, funds have been budgeted for additional technology, which includes portable computer labs and computer charging stations to enhance a student's technology accessibility to develop their capacity to conduct research. Another priority has been to budget for an expanded library to better serve student research and learning. These are examples of process linking and systematic planning that the college has engaged in to enhance student learning and overall efficiency of the institution.

### **5.C.3.**

The strategic plan has evolved from a series of planning events beginning with Operational Unit Plans that were organized by college function and provided direction for each of the departments. A second plan was broader in scope and maintained short term focus. The most current plan takes a longer range approach with a more comprehensive perspective aligned with accreditation criteria.

College of the Muscogee Nation utilizes the framework and plan provided in the Strategic Plan 2013-2023 as the basis for systematic and integrated planning. The current strategic plan was adopted by the Board of Regents in 2013, and was guided by the college's mission statement and the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. The plan was developed by building upon the Strategic Plan 2007-2012, which was created using data and resource analysis that took place during the first three years of the college's establishment, from 2003 through 2006.

Strategic planning for CMN began with the Tribal College Work Study Group in 2003, which later became the Strategic Planning Task Force. This group, composed of Muscogee (Creek) citizens, tribal employees, tribal leaders, and Oklahoma State University executives, provided

abroad spectrum of representation for the planning process, including cultural Mvskoke values and traditional academic perspectives.

The group, in an effort to assess needs data and identify priorities to be considered when developing the tribal college, sought input from both internal and external stakeholders. This practice was not limited to drafting the initial strategic plan; however, the college is continuously seeking the perspectives of all constituent groups:

**Steering Committee:** This committee comprised of CMN administration and administration of our former partner institution (external constituent), meets quarterly to discuss planning for the college. Under direction of the mission statement and strategic plan, the Steering Committee is tasked with ensuring the college's goals are being recognized.

**Strategic Planning Task Force:** The Task Force meets periodically to refine and update the Strategic Plan. Currently, the group is responsible for the long range (2013-2023) plan.

**Bureau of Indian Education (BIE):** This federal agency conducted a site visit and approved CMN for BIE funding that helps tribally controlled eligible institutions of Higher Education increase their self-sufficiency to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. Annual funding is based on the enrollment count of students from federally recognized Indian tribes.

**Intertribal Council (ITC) of the Five Civilized Tribes:** As protocol to the sovereignty of neighboring member tribes of the ITC (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Muscogee Creek) a [resolution](#) of support for the college plan was approved in 2003. Students from these tribes regularly enroll at the college.

**American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC):** The college holds membership in AIHEC, an organization consisting of 37 tribal colleges throughout the United States. Within this organization, CMN networks with other institutions, acquires institutional support, participates in professional development activities, and our students attend AIHEC conferences.

**Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT):** OSUIT served as a partner institution with both institutions mutually approving a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

**Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE):** CMN meets periodically to keep the Regents staff updated on the development and progress of the college. Even though OSRHE does not have authority over the tribal college we opted to maintain a line of communication with them. We work to be a part of the higher education community and to network through professional organizations and with other institutions.

In considering the perspectives of internal and external constituencies, planning at the college has a broad focus. This network allows the college to share its distinct mission, while providing students experience in a global society.

#### 5.C.4.

Through resource analysis used for developing the Strategic Plan, CMN has a better understanding and ability to respond to future needs. The institutional planning process involves CMN conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis from the Steering Committee Initial Accreditation Criterion Teams. Each team chair met with their respective members to solicit their responses on the [SWOT analysis form](#). Their responses have been collated to be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. This process will help the college to have a broader perspective on its future and to ensure that neither internal nor external downturns have a limited negative impact on the college. Should fluctuations in revenue occur, the college, through experience and planning, will be prepared to address these tests to its capacity.

Revenue has, throughout the years, remained constant or increased from its primary source, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. However, as the college has developed, funding opportunities have increased. These funds allow CMN to diversify its economic base by providing a variety of program specific resources based on identified student needs. Cash outlays for any major debts are not an issue as CMN is debt free and plans to remain as such, therefore an economic downturn, fluctuation in income, or reduction in enrollment would have less of an impact.

#### 5.C.5

Institutional planning at CMN has recognized the importance of anticipating emerging factors within a college environment. The college, as part of its information technology vision, is committed to providing a strategy and infrastructure for a current state of the art campus that supports student learning. This is evidenced by the recent addition of the CampusVue student information system, Desire 2 Learn learning management system, and SurveyMonkey for use with data collection purposes.

With the use of more sophisticated reporting tools in CampusVue, CMN has projected a demographic shift to greater enrollment of traditionally-aged college students. As a result, the college purchased a plot of land adjacent to the north end of campus. With guidance from the existing strategic plan, administration is analyzing the best use of this land to improve campus life for the trending demographic shift.

While globalization is not specifically addressed in the latest strategic plan, CMN has demonstrated its global mindset in recent years. The college has hosted groups from Asia, Australia, and South America. Focused attention on international education will be needed to strengthen CMN's footing in this emerging area of academia.

## Sources

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- Inter-Tribal Council Resolution of the Five Civilized Tribes
- SWOT Analysis Form

## 5.D - Core Component 5.D

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The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

### Argument

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#### 5.D.1.

CMN develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations through collection of student data for reports like IPEDS and the AIHEC American Indian Measures for Success (AIMS) annual reports. CMN has reported data to IPEDS for two years. IPEDS Fall Enrollment Data, as reported on the College Navigator, showed an increase in our Retention Rate to 67% from 33%. CMN raised its graduation rate to 12% from 5%.

Since 2008, CMN has been completing and reporting AIHEC AIMS annual report in the fall semester. The narrative of the report highlights the college's successes and challenges. Two major successes highlighted in the report were the opening of the new Student Center and the beginning of processing Title IV Federal Financial student aid. The [AIMS report](#) (2012-2013, 2013-2014) showed an increase in percentage of successful completions of Remedial/Development courses from the previous year. Successful Completions was 62% in Remedial Mathematics from the previous year of 50%, Reading was 65% from the previous year of 44%, and Writing was 53% from the previous year of 29%.

The college produces a Gainful Employment Disclosure on the website. In addition, the Consumer Information link on the website contains the Campus Safety, Security, and Fire Safety Annual Report. Another area that the college documents evidence of performance is in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation quarterly report. In addition, it provides a report in the MCN annual report.

Performance evaluations are conducted for all personnel annually by their respective supervisors. The Board conducts an annual evaluation of the President pursuant to tribal law. The faculty conducts a self-evaluation by reporting information about courses taught, contact hours with students, administrative duties, committee work, and other activities. The Academic Dean has observed all faculty in class and conducted an evaluation based on observations. To review the overall evaluation, the Dean meets with faculty individually.

Students complete electronic course evaluations in all courses every trimester. Results are tabulated and summaries are provided to instructors once grades have been posted. Data from the evaluations is an effective tool for instructors to utilize in improving classroom teaching

methods. The Librarian administers a survey to students to determine the effectiveness of the Information Literacy presentations and the library. In addition, students are provided the opportunity for comments and suggestions. (Link Library Survey)

Every spring trimester, graduate surveys are conducted to graduating students to rate college performance. Some recommendations from the survey have provided ideas to include in institutional planning initiatives. In the summer of 2014 a graduate follow up survey was conducted to all CMN graduates to determine the value of their CMN experience and how it benefitted them in furthering their education and/or career.

A Certified Public Accounting firm annually conducts a financial audit for the college. The audits reflect CMN's financial performance and compliance with established government rules and regulations.

In 2014 the college updated its Strategic Plan to provide goals that will increase CMN's focus for overall effectiveness. (Link Needs Assessment) In addition, CMN has received grant funding from the Federal Departments of: Housing and Urban Development, Energy, Interior, Transportation, Education, and Agriculture. This funding is a perfect example of the benefits from effective planning. Without a strategic plan, college growth and development would have been limited to take advantage of these opportunities.

#### **5.D.2.**

Student input is an important component of institutional effectiveness. The college solicits opinions and attitudinal data from students through questionnaires, surveys, and assessment instruments. Significant findings are used for departments to design and plan programs or for instructors to modify instruction. The college's intent is to follow-up with graduates and determine the benefit and value of their CMN degree. College alumni are asked for feedback and recommendations to improve the institution.

As noted, the college has demonstrated that it values the process of institutional effectiveness from the institution's very beginning with the use of its needs assessment to open the college. Continuing this practice, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provides vital support for departments including faculty and the organization overall. The office hosts meetings, drafts policies, writes grants, conducts research, and serves on committees. Specific examples of the various types of work or projects that are conducted for the purpose of continual improvement of the institution include:

**Graduate Survey:**The OIE surveys each graduating class to obtain feedback from all graduates relating to the impact of their CMN experience, the characteristics of the graduating class, and their attitudes and opinions about CMN. This survey is a component of the Assessment Program. Completed written reports are distributed to all staff and faculty for use in their Program Reviews.

**Graduate Follow-up Survey:** College Alumni from academic years 2007-2013, were surveyed in 2014. The purpose of the survey was to obtain graduate feedback that would define the

personal impact of their CMN experience. The responses from this survey revealed the characteristics of the alumni respondents and determined their attitudes and opinions about CMN. The results are designed to provide a better understanding of our strengths and areas for improvement as we continue our institutional growth, and efforts to strengthen the educational services and support that we offer to our students. Completed written reports are distributed to all staff and faculty for use in their Program Reviews.

**Publications Committee:** A standing committee to review and approve all documents is in place for the purpose of maintaining consistency of documents critical for informing students, staff, and the public. As external laws and policy change (i.e., federal, accrediting agency, etc.) the college uses the Publications Committee to ensure documents are uniform and present CMN information, policy, and procedures accurately to internal and external constituents.

**Retention Strategy:** In June 2015 an ad-hoc retention committee consisting of the Academic Dean, Student Affairs Dean, Research Specialist, and Regents Director for Institutional Effectiveness was convened to develop a structured approach for student retention. As a result, a Retention Strategy was developed to operationalize the CMN Retention Plan and provide measureable processes to monitor variables such as advisement, academic placement testing, attendance, counseling, tutoring, and other components related to retention. This document provides specific steps for the various departments to collaborate and focus strategies for an efficient and coordinated approach for improving student retention.

**Grant Development:** In addition to receiving Candidacy for HLC Accreditation, the college received 1994 Tribal Land Grant status when Congress passed the 2014 Farm Bill, which gave eligibility and leverage for federal funding. During fiscal year 2015 the college has received funding from the U.S. Departments of Education, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and the Bureau of Indian Education. In years past, the college has also indirectly received through the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Energy, and Department of Transportation. Through these opportunities the college has used funds to build facilities, develop infrastructure, purchase equipment, employ staff and faculty, provide counseling, and develop student learning opportunities.

**Energy Efficiency Report:** The purpose of this [report](#) was to determine the emphasis that the college places on energy efficiency, and determine what conservation processes are in place and possibilities for other energy saving measures to enhance the goal of sustainability. Initially a campus inventory of energy saving systems was conducted to establish a baseline for future plans to improve energy efficiency. In addition, the report will serve as a reminder that the college has a responsibility (Mecvlke) to incorporate energy saving measures into new structures and to preserve our natural resources just as our ancestors practiced. College students, tribal citizens, and community members will have access to information about the positive actions that the college is taking in our journey to be green and the importance of preserving our natural resources, and to be a model for the community as a whole to preserve the environment.

The OIE is the driving force behind operational experience generated through a series of tasks and research to improve the college's institutional effectiveness capabilities and sustainability. The systematic improvements at the college have been initiated and conducted throughout the

history of the college, beginning first with a needs assessment, which has now flourished into a number of surveys, research projects, and funding opportunities. As is evident, this has been a learning experience, considering the short time that the college has been in existence, which has resulted in faculty and staff taking on greater responsibilities to serve the higher education needs of our students.

## **Sources**

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- AIMS Report Selected Data 2012-2014
- Energy Efficiency Report

## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

### Summary

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College of the Muscogee Nation has the institutional structure necessary to serve its students in accordance with its mission. The processes the college utilized in this effort are guided by the Strategic Plan, which has been adopted by the Board of Regents. Effective leadership is provided by the governing board that has oversight of CMN's financial and academic policies and practices. The college is aware that the resource base is adequate for its current financial situation; however, it is budgeting for growth in population and infrastructure.

The college maintains a relationship with external stakeholders, which provides a vital perspective for the college to network with other institutions of higher education as CMN responds to future challenges and opportunities. The administration sets realistic goals for the college and works together with internal constituencies to critique and improve performance through various forms of assessment. The systematic and integrated planning that occurs at the college is enhanced through participation of administration, faculty, staff, and students with regard to academic requirements, policy, and processes.

Data from assessment initiatives is critical as CMN plans for the future and ensures that the institutional capacity is sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of educational offerings, and respond to future challenges. The systematic improvements at the college have been initiated and conducted throughout the history of the college, which began with a needs assessment, and then flourished into a variety of data collection methodologies, research projects, and funded programs. Considering the short time that the college has been in existence, faculty and staff have accepted greater responsibilities to serve the higher education needs of our students.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*



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