



MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Self-Study Report

State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Spring 2022

John E. Wagner, PhD | John E. Turbeville, PhD | Sophie A. Gublo-Jantzen, EdD



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Institutional Overview | |
| Report Overview | |
| Working Group Members | |
| Standard I: Mission and Goals..... | 9 |
| Introduction | |
| Institutional Mission | |
| Institutional Goals and Targets | |
| Institutional Response to COVID-19 | |
| Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard II: Ethics and Integrity | 14 |
| Introduction | |
| Commitment to Academic Freedom | |
| Campus Climate | |
| Grievance Policy | |
| Conflict of Interest | |
| Fair Practices | |
| Public Honesty | |
| Programs Relating to Access and Affordability | |
| Compliance | |
| Institutional Response to COVID-19 | |
| Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience | 25 |
| Introduction | |
| Student Learning Experience | |
| Faculty Qualifications and Preparation | |
| Academic Programs Clearly and Accurately Described in Official Publications | |
| Sufficient Learning Opportunities and Resources | |
| General Education Programming | |
| Graduate and Professional Education | |
| Programs Delivered by Third-Parties | |
| Assessment of Program Effectiveness | |
| Institutional Response to COVID-19 | |
| Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience | 43 |
| Introduction | |
| Clear Policies and Procedures for Access and Success | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies Surrounding Transfer Credit and Alternative Learning Safe and Secure Maintenance of Student Information and Records Extra-curricular Activities Student Support Services by Third-party Providers Assessment Institutional Response to COVID-19 Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment | 59 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly Stated Educational Goals Organized and Systematic Assessments Use of Assessment Results Assessment of Third-Party Assessment Services Assessment of the Effectiveness of Assessment Processes Institutional Response to COVID-19 Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard VI: Budgeting, Resources, and Institutional Improvement | 74 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction and Institutional Objectives Leadership Changes and Strategic Planning Efforts Institutional Planning and Improvement Efforts Financial Planning and Budgeting Process Responsibility and Accountability Commitment to Sustainability Integrated with Comprehensive Planning Assessment of Resource Allocation Institutional Response to COVID-19 Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration | 94 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Governance Structure Governing Body Chief Executive Officer Administration Assessment of Leadership, Governance, and Administration Institutional Response to COVID-19 Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII) | |
| Conclusion | 106 |

Table of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Total ESF Campus Population Composition | 11 |
| Figure 2. Survey Response Population Composition | 11 |
| Figure 3. Academic Unit Diagram | 26 |
| Figure 4. ESF's Graduate Program Continuum..... | 28 |
| Figure 5. Graduate Program Assessment Continuum..... | 39 |
| Figure 6. Visual Representation of Institutional Priorities in Context of Self-Study | 74 |
| Figure 7. ESF College-wide Organizational Chart | 95 |

Table of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1. General Education Knowledge and Skills Areas..... | 37 |
| Table 2. Program Review Schedule | 60 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional Overview

The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF or the College) is one of the 64 institutions in the State University of New York (SUNY) system. It was created by an act of the New York State legislature in 1911 as the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University. With the formation of the State University of New York in 1948, the College became recognized as a specialized college within the state university system, having been state-supported from the very beginning. The name was changed to the State University College of Forestry at Syracuse University. In 1972, the College's name and focus were changed yet again to better reflect the tradition and grounding of forestry in the environment and the capabilities of our academic programs. By special act of the New York State Legislature, the College became the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The mission of the College includes research and education dedicated to solving a wide range of environmental and related problems, while taking into consideration human and economic implications, as well as scientific understanding. Sustainable practices have been embedded within the College from the beginning. ESF has a Basic Carnegie Classification of Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity. Other Carnegie descriptors include STEM dominant, high undergraduate, primarily residential, more selective, and higher transfer-in based on publicly available data from 2019 and 2020.

Report Overview

The self-study steering committee engaged in this process using our 2012 self-study report, 2017 Periodic Review Report, annual Commission requested updates, and our most recent strategic planning documents as a foundation and framework to celebrate the institution's accomplishments over the past five years. ESF was in the final cohort of institutions required to submit a Periodic Review Report to the commission, which was accepted November 2017, and beginning in 2019 we documented institutional progress regarding Standard III and Standard V as part of the MSCHE Annual Institutional Update process. Through the steering committee's assessment of the materials and documents from the most recent strategic planning efforts, particularly the Vision 2020 strategic plan and the Vision 2020 Update, the co-chairs determined that in order to efficiently and successfully complete this report it would be essential to distill the strategic planning documents to a smaller number of focused institutional priorities. We were successful in this effort and we have contextualized those priorities within our alignment with MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, underlying principles that inform our institutional decision-making, and alignment with the institutional mission.

The following report will illustrate that ESF has successfully created, deployed, and sustained excellent academic programs that support the Colleges' mission and vision through strategic investment and resource allocation. Through its institutional mission, ESF demonstrates commitment to developing knowledge and skills to support environmental stewardship and establish a welcoming environment

for diverse perspectives and lived experiences. We recognize that delivering an outstanding student experience is vital to developing future leaders who will be successful in promoting effective stewardship of natural and designed environments. An important element of delivering an outstanding student experience is a commitment to ensuring that community members from diverse backgrounds are welcome at ESF and treated equitably in our community. In order to deliver an optimal experience for students from all backgrounds, ESF has strategically invested in physical and human resources to ensure curricular and co-curricular opportunities are of the highest quality and will support their academic, professional, and personal goals.

ESF's recent investments in facilities and technological infrastructure required careful planning and deployment of resources to achieve the greatest return on investment. In order for these investments to reach their full potential, ESF recognizes that it is also vital to attract and retain excellent leadership, educators, and support staff to deploy and manage these physical resources. Due to some pandemic-related limitations, ESF has not fully realized the outcome of our careful investments of scarce resources, but as we engage in a renewed strategic planning process, the success of our careful resource allocation will be an important consideration in how to move forward. This self-study report has provided an important opportunity to evaluate our success in delivering excellent and challenging academic programs with a clear commitment to broad and equitable representations of diversity. An outstanding student academic and co-curricular experience is characterized by the institution's deeply engrained ethical commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity.

ESF's inquiry into the fields of environmental stewardship and sustainability demands a commitment to academic freedom, integrity, and ethics, particularly in the current socio-political climate. The College has a responsibility to support students as they navigate the social and political factors surrounding issues of climate change and environmental stewardship, and without a strong ethical framework and commitment to academic freedom, the College would struggle to deliver on this aspect of the student experience. Tangential to the teaching, learning, and research ethics training faculty provide to students, the College is also responsible for ethical representation of institutional data, institutional resources, and inclusive engagement with employees and candidates throughout the process of hiring and employment.

Academic excellence is an important priority for any institution of higher education, and ESF has framed this responsibility in support of the institutional mission statement. The College accepts responsibility for providing a rigorous and coherent learning experience that reflects our institutional commitment to environmental stewardship, diversity, equity, and inclusion. ESF continues to make progress in deploying curriculum and co-curricular support structures through responsible institutional planning and resource allocation. Faculty and staff commitment to supporting outstanding student learning opportunities requires strategic investment in campus facilities and in attracting and retaining talented professionals. ESF has made notable progress in this area since the 2017 Periodic Review Report through the facilities masterplan and enhanced technological infrastructure to support operations.

While the ESF curriculum is the core of our academic excellence, we recognize the importance of high-quality co-curricular programs and the vitality of an outstanding student experience. ESF's commitment to student achievement and success requires adequate investment of institutional resources, including to recruit and retain talented professionals to deliver instruction and programming. Rigorous and coherent student learning experiences will continue to reflect an overall institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by ESF's regular assessment of diversity, equity, and inclusion for continuous improvement, the inclusion of diversity and accessibility in the campus-approved syllabus template, and opportunities such as Educational Opportunity Program (EOP); ESF in the High School, Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Growth (ProdiG); Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP); and others that provide greater access for underrepresented scholars to engage with ESF's educational programs. As such, a commitment to student academic success is vital to ensuring academic excellence.

To make certain that programs of the highest quality are delivered in a consistent manner, and that these programs can respond to evolving needs, ESF has engaged in assessment of student learning. In part, this is evidenced through the institution's strategic reorganization of the general education programming at the college. Establishing the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs aligns with current scholarship around general education program models by transcending the "distributive" model of general education, bound by number of credits earned in various categories, to a more integrative model where students are invited to build their skills and capacities in foundational areas such as writing, mathematics, diversity and inclusion, critical thinking, and information literacy, among others. SUNY's recently approved General Education Advisory Committee's framework for General Education programming across the SUNY system provides an outline for campuses to move toward an integrated model for general education programming.

For the College to demonstrate support of the institutional priorities identified in our Self Study Design, ESF must establish data-driven, responsible, and equitable planning and resource allocation. ESF will make strategic financial investments in programs that support academic excellence, an outstanding student experience, and a commitment to revitalized physical infrastructure and human resources. The College is responsible for ethically representing and maintaining student support, academic programming, and co-curricular activities, and must be nimble enough to respond to the diverse needs of an evolving student body. Likewise, ESF has a responsibility to faculty and staff to ensure safe working conditions and adequate compensation to support and reflect ethical practices within the organization. Campus governance and administration set the tone for these investments and responsibilities.

Ultimately, ESF's executive leadership team is responsible for the decisions made in support of institutional priorities, to promote the College mission, and in the interest of student success. ESF has a system of shared governance, which includes participation from both faculty and college staff. Additionally, ESF's renewed leadership and strategic alignment with institutional priorities positions the College for success as we prepare for renewed strategic planning efforts. To date, ESF has successfully navigated a number of high-level leadership changes, has made efforts to address a structural budget deficit, and has supported the campus community through an ongoing global pandemic.

Working Group Members

Standard I Working Group

John Wagner, Co-Chair & Professor
John Turbeville, Co-Chair, Sr. Asst. Dean for Student Affairs
& Director of Career Services
Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, ALO and Assistant Director for
Assessment & IR
Matt Smith, Evidence Inventory Curator & Director, F.
Franklin Moon Library
Executive Cabinet, Fall 2019

Standard II Working Group

Sophie Gublo-Jantzen Co-Chair and Assistant Director,
Assessment & IR
Kitty McCarthy, Co-Chair and Associate Provost for
Enrollment Management
Gary Scott, Academic Governance Chair
Malika Carter, Chief Diversity Officer
Danielle Gerhart, Executive Director of Communications
and Marketing
Cheryl Liptak, Assistant Director, Research Programs

Standard III Working Group

John Wagner, Co-Chair & Professor
Kim Armani, Co-Chair, OIGS Assessment of Graduate
Programs
Greg McGee, Associate Professor, Dept. of Environmental
and Forest Biology
Gary Scott, Professor & Director of the Division of
Engineering
Doug Johnston, Professor & Dept. Chair LA
David Newman, Professor, Special Assistant to the
President
Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, Assistant Director Assessment & IR,
Self-Study Steering Committee, ex officio member
Matt Smith, Director of College Libraries and Evidence
Capture Archivist, ex officio member

Standard IV Working Group

Anne Lombard, Co-Chair, Vice Provost and Dean for
Student Affairs
John Turbeville, Co-Chair, Sr. Asst. Dean for Student Affairs
& Director of Career Services
Tom Fletcher, Associate Director of Admissions
Mark Hill, Director of Financial Aid
Lindi Quackenbush, Professor and Chair, Department of
Environmental Resources Engineering
Amelia Hoffman, Academic Success Coordinator
Daniel Collins, Graduate Student Representative
Hannah Doktor, Undergraduate Student Representative

Standard V Working Group

Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, Co-Chair and Assistant Director,
Assessment & IR
S. Scott Shannon, Co-Chair and Associate Provost for
Instruction & Dean of the Graduate School
Kim Armani, Co-Chair, OIGS Assessment of Graduate
Programs
Amelia Hoffman, Academic Success Coordinator
Erin Tochelli, Academic Advisor
Katherina Searing, Associate Director of the Open Academy
Brandon Murphy, Coordinator of Continuing Education
Daniel Collins, Interim Associate Director, ESF in the High
School
Maura Stefl, Administrative Assistant, Office of Experiential
Learning & Outreach

Standard VI Working Group

Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, Co-Chair and Assistant Director,
Assessment & IR
Matthew Millea, Co-Chair and Executive Director for
Strategic Initiatives
Jim Sahm, Chief Information Officer
Brenda Greenfield, Assistant Vice President for
Development
Ragan Squier, Executive Director of Administration
David Newman, Professor, Special Assistant to the
President
Samuel Mukasa, Provost & Executive Vice President
John C. Stella, Vice President for Research
Mark Lichtenstein, Executive Operations Officer
Anne Lombard, Vice Provost and Dean for Student Affairs

Standard VII Working Group

David Newman, Co-Chair and Professor, Sustainable
Resources Management
John Turbeville, Co-Chair, Sr. Asst. Dean for Student Affairs
& Director of Career Services
Brenda Greenfield, Assistant Vice President &
Executive Director of the ESF College Foundation
Joe Rufo, Chief Financial Officer & VP for Administration
Malika Carter, Chief Diversity Officer
Gary Scott, Academic Governance Executive Chair and
Professor, Chemical Engineering
William Fisher, ESF Board of Trustees
Mark Lichtenstein, Executive Operations Officer

STANDARD I: MISSION AND GOALS

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

Introduction

This chapter describes how SUNY ESF meets each of the four criteria, all the sub-criterion, and the two related Requirements of Affiliation (Numbers 7 and 10) within this Standard.

Institutional Mission

The State University of New York College of Environmental Science (ESF or the College) is one of the 64 institutions in the State University of New York (SUNY) system. It was created by an act of the New York State legislature in 1911 as the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University. With the formation of the State University of New York in 1948, the College became recognized as a specialized college within the state university system, having been state-supported from the very beginning. The name was changed to the State University College of Forestry at Syracuse University. In 1972, the College's name and focus were changed yet again, to better reflect the tradition and grounding of forestry in the environment, and the capabilities of our academic programs. By special act of the New York State Legislature, the College became the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF). The College's Basic Carnegie Classification is Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity, and ESF offers programs primarily in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields. The objectives of the College include research and education related to engaging with and demonstrating solutions to a wide range of environmental problems, while taking into consideration human and economic implications as well as scientific understanding. Sustainable practices have been embedded within the College from the beginning.

Carrying this history through to our present institutional vision and mission, we have honored the initial focus of the College and expanded our scope to protect and curate environmental consciousness in a variety of contexts.

This is reflected in ESF's Vision: **A Better World through Environmental Discovery**

ESF's Vision is supported directly by its Mission: **The Mission of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry is to advance knowledge and skills and to promote the leadership necessary for the stewardship of both the natural and designed environments.**

The Mission statement is publicly available on ESF's website.

A concise statement combining the college's Vision and Mission used commonly is **Improve Your World**

In fact, this statement can be found on ESF's Homepage. These were approved by the College community and the Board of Trustees (BOT) in 2001/2002 and have been reaffirmed periodically. In May 2016, the Vision and Mission statements were reaffirmed by the College community in the Vision 2020 Update: Bridging from 2016 to 2020 and Beyond.

ESF offers a variety of challenging, primarily STEM-oriented, undergraduate and graduate programs of study consistent with our Vision and Mission. Undergraduate majors include programs in Biological and Life Sciences, Forest and Natural Resources Management, Sustainable Energy Management, Chemical Engineering, Environmental Resources Engineering, Sustainability Management, Chemistry, Landscape Architecture, and Sustainable Construction Management. Graduate enrollment is disbursed between Master of Professional Studies (MPS), Master of Science (MS), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs in Biology (31%), graduate programs in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science (26%), the combined Engineering programs (14.5%), Sustainable Resources Management programs (14%), Chemistry (9%), and a Master's in Landscape Architecture program (5.5%). Online education at ESF was implemented in 2017 through the Open Academy, following a substantive change approval from Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). In fall 2019, we enrolled our first six students in the online AS to BS completion program in Sustainability Management. The first graduate of this program was in spring 2021.

Institutional Goals and Targets

As a result of a failed institutional strategic planning process in 2014-2015 and an uncertain academic climate, a college-wide strategic planning steering committee was formed and tasked with updating the 2003 Vision 2020 strategic planning document. In May 2016, the Vision 2020 Update: Bridging from 2016 to 2020 and Beyond strategic plan was presented to and accepted by the college community. The Vision 2020 Update included the seven (7) goals and 75 targets from the 2003 Vision 2020 strategic plan and added a goal of diversity, equity, and inclusion, plus an additional 37 targets. The ending strategic planning structure in the Vision 2020 Update identified eight (8) goals and 112 targets with an average of 14 targets per goal. This goal and target structure is untenable for moving ESF forward, but was politically necessary during those unsettled times, and the faculty and staff who worked on that committee were and are applauded for their hard and difficult work.

The College's Middle States Steering Committee engaged in a process of summarizing the institutional goals and targets contained within the Vision 2020 Update to create a more tenable goal-targeted strategic planning structure that is consistent with ESF's Vision and Mission. A Qualtrics online survey was created and asked students, faculty and staff, and the President's Executive Leadership team to rank the eight institutional goals from the 2020 Vision Update in order from most important to least important, and to identify the three most important "targets" associated with each goal. Responses were collected beginning Nov. 8, 2019, and ending on Dec. 31, 2019. The survey resulted in 187 full and partial responses, with 89 participants identifying their role at ESF

(student, faculty, department chair, executive leadership, staff, etc.). To better understand the campus representation reflected by this survey effort, the steering committee examined the distribution of faculty, staff, students, and Executive Leadership by percentage: Executive Leadership comprises less than 1%; faculty represents 8%; staff 20%; and students 72% of the campus population (Figure 1). Of the 89 fully completed surveys, students were somewhat underrepresented at 21%; faculty made up 50%; staff represented 21% nearly matching the overall campus representation; and Executive Leadership comprised the remaining 8% of survey responses (Figure 2).

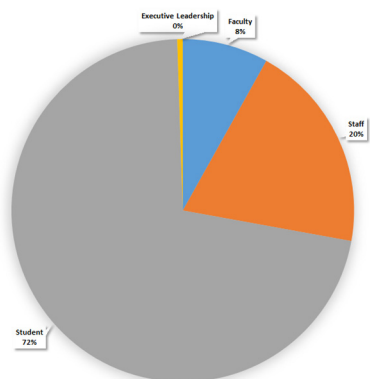


Figure 1. Total ESF Campus Population Composition

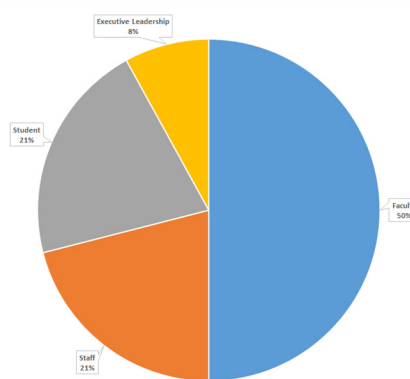


Figure 2. Survey Response Population Composition

Finally, 45% of the survey responses were either partial completions, or the participant chose not to self-identify their role at the College.

The Steering Committee met with Executive Leadership to present the preliminary survey results and to propose a plan for using these findings. Together, we established three institutional strategic priorities from the eight goals consistent with ESF’s Vision and Mission:

- Goal 1: Enrich academic excellence in both undergraduate and graduate education
- Goal 2: Provide an outstanding student experience
- Goal 7: Invest in ESF’s human resources and physical infrastructure

Reflecting on the text of 2003 Vision 2020 and the Vision 2020 Update strategic planning documents, the survey data, and input from Executive Leadership, it became clear that our three most important institutional priorities cannot be realized without a commitment to three guiding principles:

- 1) Institutional commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity
- 2) Demonstrate financial responsibility
- 3) Maintain ESF’s role as a premier environmental college to engage in collaboration with external stakeholders and to enhance our visibility as an authoritative source on environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts nationally and globally.

It is essential that ESF operates in a way that is true to the institutional Vision and Mission (environmental stewardship principle), welcomes a variety of perspectives and lived experiences (inclusion, diversity, and equity principle), and deploys College resources appropriately and ethically in pursuit of the three strategic priorities (financial responsibility principle). The survey, results, and chosen strategic priorities and principles have been approved by the Executive Leadership team. The College community has been informed of these priorities and principles at various Academic Governance meetings and this information has been available to the College community for comment since May 2020.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

As with all institutions during the past two years, ESF was impacted by COVID-19. The faculty, staff, and Executive Leadership worked diligently to pivot quickly to respond to the required shutdowns and still provide a high-quality education consistent with the College's Vision and Mission. Due to circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, all instruction was moved online starting March 2020 for the remainder of the spring 2020 academic semester. All summer 2020 courses were also online. Classes for fall 2020 academic semester began on Aug. 24 and ended on Nov. 24. Students left for Thanksgiving break and finals took place online following the break. ESF offered three class modalities that semester: 1) Face-to-face for classes were offered simultaneously with online content. 3) Online-only courses. These three modalities included field lab courses. ESF condensed spring 2021 semester into a 13-week semester and again offered the three class modalities. In both semesters, students living on campus, faculty, and staff were tested regularly for COVID. Both the fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters returned to normal with in-person classes.

To uphold the institutional priorities and principles before, during, and after the pandemic, ESF's instructional designers have worked closely with faculty to ensure the coherence and alignment of program level learning outcomes with course level learning objectives; course objectives with module level learning objectives; and course and module objectives to the course materials, learning activities, and assessments.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

The work of the college community, Executive Leadership, and the steering committee to develop this Vision ↔ Mission ↔ Priorities ↔ Guiding Principles provides an efficient and realistic procedure for moving the College forward. The double arrows are used purposefully to illustrate an assessment and feedback mechanism necessary for flexibility and the strategic resource allocations consistent with the

College's commitment to environmental stewardship. The College's strategy for examining the mission statement and associated priorities and guiding principles aligns well with the norms in the higher education sector, and ESF has been successful in clearly connecting each piece (Vision, Mission, Priorities, and Guiding Principles) in a manner that is clear and invites continuous improvement at the campus level.

Areas for Improvement

Areas for Improvement recognize: 1) Strengths and how they might be enhanced and 2) Concerns and how they might be resolved. We have been recovering from a climate of uncertainty and distrust culminating with the College president who resigned in 2018 after four years and two votes of no confidence. We had an interim president who started the healing process and hired a new college president in November, 2020, who is committed to continuing this process. Enhancing the collegiality that is being fostered with stabilized leadership will help the outcomes of this self-evaluation move the College forward.

ESF has a history of combining experiential learning at the undergraduate and professional graduate program level with applied to basic science undergraduate and graduate degree programs all focusing on the environment. This is related directly to ESF's stated Vision and Mission. The identified strategic structure Vision ↔ Mission ↔ Priorities ↔ Guiding Principles developed because of this self-study report will provide a plan to move ESF forward and demonstrate its commitment to environmental stewardship.

ESF is known as a premier environmental college. To maintain and enhance this strength will require ongoing engagement and collaboration with external stakeholders, educators, and researchers as well as collaborating across departments within ESF to enhance our scholarship and visibility as an authoritative source on environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts nationally and internationally. This will require strategic resource allocations.

ESF has a small school advantage appreciated by our students. However, this small school status has fiscal challenges given the nature of our degree programs and research. ESF recognizes the improvements that can be made with a well-implemented assessment plan. This is moving forward with our undergraduate degree programs, many of which have their own professional accreditation. However, this is just starting at the graduate level with a recently developed graduate program assessment plan.

Insights

If the evidence inventory resulting from this self-study report is maintained and added to over the next 10-years and beyond, future co-chairs of these self-study reports will not have to build this from scratch the next time. This will allow creating a living strategic structure Vision ↔ Mission ↔ Priorities ↔ Guiding Principles that does not have to be recreated each time and can evolve as ESF moves forward with its Vision and Mission of environmental stewardship.

STANDARD II: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

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

Introduction

This chapter describes how ESF meets each of the nine criteria, all the sub-criterion, and the related Requirements of Affiliation within this Standard.

Commitment to Academic Freedom

ESF's commitment to Academic Freedom is affirmed in our most recent strategic planning document "Vision 2020 Update: Bridging from 2016 to 2020." In this document, ESF acknowledges the necessity of academic and intellectual freedom to the academic enterprise and ESF's mission to inspire leaders for environmental stewardship and sustainability. Intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are protected at the state level by SUNY and New York State governmental agencies, but ESF affirms these rights as well through human resources and research office policy documents. Freedom of expression is further protected and fostered with the addition of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) at ESF and the formation of the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (OIDE), which assesses campus climate, provides education and training on individual rights to self-expression, intellectual freedom, and academic freedom. OIDE also facilitates campus-wide interest groups for a variety of student and employee identities and expression. In both the 2017 and 2012 administrations of the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey, academic freedom was one of the best aspects of working at ESF, with Quality of Colleagues, Quality of Undergraduate Students, Academic Freedom, and Sense of Fit being the top for best aspects in both survey years. Academic freedom appears on the best aspects of working at ESF across racial/ethnic, gender, and tenure status lines as well (*COACHE Survey Presentation*).

In addition to a strategic plan for inclusion, diversity, and equity at ESF, OIDE has developed a bias reporting system, a faculty guidebook that outlines the Nondiscrimination Policy, Interfaith Guidelines, and Recruiting and Hiring practices and protections, which are all available in the Evidence Inventory (*IDE Strategic Plan*). This guiding document provides information on available trainings for employees and the Students' Bill of Rights. This resource also provides guidance for faculty members with regard to student advising and mentoring junior colleagues. The approved Course Syllabus Template is provided to ensure faculty acknowledge inclusion, diversity, and equity expectations in their classes (*SyllabusUpdated_2019.10.10*). The establishment of OIDE has held the campus community accountable to campus policies that protect academic freedom, intellectual freedom, and freedom of expression for faculty and students alike.

Campus Climate

Through campus-wide and system-wide survey initiatives, ESF collected data through the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education in 2012 and 2017, and ESF participated in the ModernThink “Great Colleges to Work For” survey in 2021. The COACHE survey revealed that the areas in most need of improvement were the quality of the facilities, support for research, cost of living, and the quality of leadership in 2017 (*COACHE Presentation*). In the years since then, ESF has invested in facilities improvements, the Office of Research Programs has new leadership and is engaged in exciting initiatives to support research efforts for both tenure track and tenured faculty members, and the College has renewed leadership in the following areas: President, Provost, Vice President for Research, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives, Enrollment Management, Chief Diversity Officer, College Associate Counsel, and Executive Director of Communications and Marketing. It will be important to seek additional opportunities to survey faculty and staff about the campus climate, particularly with respect to senior leadership, in the coming years to assess the effectiveness of these leadership changes. The highest scoring items on the “Great Colleges to Work For” survey were Diversity, Inclusion, & Belonging; Faculty & Staff Wellbeing; Job Satisfaction & Support; Mission & Pride; and Supervisor/Department Chair Effectiveness (*Great Colleges to Work For*).

The academic programs at ESF attract students, scholars, and staff members from diverse backgrounds, representing a variety of political ideologies, cultural and ethnic identities, etc. Because of the broad spectrum of stakeholders at ESF, the College has re-invigorated a commitment to fostering a climate of respect in all spaces where ESF stakeholders study, work, and live. This work began in 2016 with the initial Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, which drafted the College’s first Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Strategic Plan. This was drafted to remain as a living document, with the elasticity to adapt to an evolving campus – and broader social – climate. In 2017, ESF named the College’s inaugural Chief Diversity Officer, who embraced the initial Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Strategic Plan and enhanced the content by making the goals tangible and realistic through identifying campus stakeholders with responsibility for curating the College’s progress on the goals stated in the Plan. The assessment of ESF’s progress with regard to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity was conducted in 2020, using the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Higher Education. The Chief Diversity Officer has also guided the campus through a semester long engagement with the USC Equity Institute in 2019 and follow up climate surveys for staff, faculty, and students created and maintained by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The USC Equity Institute participants were comprised of a selection of administrators, faculty, and staff, and established a foundation for the ongoing Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity work being carried out at the College. The HERI surveys distributed following the USC Equity Institute programming were distributed to First Year College Students, College Seniors, and Staff at ESF. The survey results were useful in identifying strengths and opportunities for further exploration and education for the campus community regarding Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity topics. These early projects have allowed the CDO to tailor her approach to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity work at ESF to meet the unique campus culture and needs, as well as to promote enhanced diversity among the students and staff in a way that will be sustained over the

long term, rather than short-term initiatives that do not produce lasting change on campus. In 2021, the CDO, in cooperation with the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee, launched the campus-wide assessment of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity initiatives in follow up, using the New England Resource Center for Higher Education tool “NERCHE Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Higher Education” (*NERCHE Assessment Project*).

Using the NERCHE Rubric to guide assessment efforts, the Chief Diversity Officer’s 2021 survey of campus stakeholders revealed that 58% of the ESF campus community agrees that there is an “operationalized definition for diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus, but there is some variance and inconsistency in the application of the term.” An additional 14% of the respondent population indicated that the “institution has a formal, universally accepted definition for high quality diversity, inclusion, and equity that is used consistently to operationalize many or most aspects of diversity on campus.” Qualitative data from the assessment effort acknowledge that this is ongoing work that is important to the community, but there is more work to be done. One area that emerged as an opportunity for investment is in supporting and rewarding faculty for engagement in inclusion, diversity, and equity work and that academic departments could do more to reward this work in tangible ways. Related to this, teaching and learning resources have room for enhancement to be more inclusive of a variety of learning styles, lived experiences, and approaches to teaching. Staff engagement with inclusive practices in their work is developing, but the survey data indicate that Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity are not yet embedded in the formal planning and budgeting processes. The survey indicates administrative leadership and institutional support for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity is very high, but the professional development provided for faculty and staff to engage with the work has not been effective. More than half of the respondents indicated that “initiatives – regardless of the topic addressed – always support and integrate the established commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity across the campus.”

In recent years, ESF has enhanced the visibility and scope of the Title IX Coordinator role. To better meet state and federal standards, the role was created, performed (until a permanent appointment was made), and supervised by the Chief Diversity Officer. This has resulted in greater awareness on campus of that office, who to speak to, and how the incumbent can help. In 2017, only 35% of students and 44% of employees were aware of how to contact the Title IX Coordinator. This improved in 2019, with 48% of students and 71% of employees confirming they know how to find the Title IX Coordinator. In 2021 59% of students indicated that they know how to contact the Title IX Coordinator and 86% of employees. Increased awareness of the Title IX Coordinator’s responsibilities are related to enhanced on-campus presentations regarding climate and equity on campus and the Title IX Coordinator’s engagement with search committees to ensure the work is being completed effectively. In summer 2021, the role of the Title IX Coordinator and Affirmative Action Officer was elevated to report directly to the President. This action was taken in order for more direct communication and increased awareness of significant trends or emerging situations that impact the College community. A Presidential Focus Group is currently working to improve overall campus climate and to enhance the student experience.

Since the first NY State Mandated Sexual Violence Prevention Campus Climate Survey in 2017, student awareness of campus policies regarding sexual assault has improved. For example, in the most recent survey, 91% of the respondents indicated they were aware of the existence of sexual assault policies and procedures, up 20% from the previous survey. Employee awareness of policies and procedures to address sexual assault have remained stable throughout the three survey years (2017, 2019, and 2021), ranging from 91% in 2017 to 94% in 2021 (*Sexual Violence Prevention Campus Climate Survey*).

Grievance Policy

Grievance procedures exist for students and employees, and they are differentiated based on type of complaint and the relationship of the complainant to the institution. Students may proceed with formal grievance procedures in accordance with the Office of Student Affairs following procedures outlined in the Student Handbook, or in the case of academic grievances, the Office of Instruction and Graduate Studies. Faculty and UUP-represented staff may initiate grievance procedures with the UUP Grievance Chair, and likewise for CSEA-represented staff. For grievances related to Title IX discrimination, ESF has a procedure for reporting these concerns to the Title IX Coordinator (*ESF Title IX Grievance Policy*). Additionally, at the end of fall 2021, the Provost's Office announced an internal search for an Ombudsperson following an effort by the President's office throughout the fall 2021 semester to assess the need and capacity to support this role on campus. At the beginning of spring 2022, the Provost's Office announced that a Professor, Dr. David Newman, had agreed to serve a renewable three-year term as Ombudsperson. With the addition of this role in combination with the other long-standing avenues to address complaints or grievances raised within the campus community, ESF has a variety of channels available to community members to have their concerns heard and impartial consultation support for addressing issues that arise.

Conflict of Interest

The Office of Research Programs is sponsoring conflict of interest trainings in order to meet funding guidelines for competitive grants. Prior to submitting a conflict of interest disclosure, all investigators charged with managing research awards administered via the Research Foundation for SUNY are required to complete Conflict of Interest training in The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program, which provides training courses for colleges and universities, healthcare institutions, technology and research organizations, and other agencies responsible for ensuring compliance with established research ethics expectations. CITI Program has been at the forefront of online research ethics and compliance training since its founding in 2000. The training modules include Financial Conflicts of Interest: Overview, Investigator Responsibilities, and COI Rules, Institutional Responsibilities as they Affect Investigators and Conflicts of Commitment and Conscience. The initiative we are continuing this year is in the evaluation of disclosures. As we have done in the past, we did a thorough review of disclosed relationships to determine if a management plan or mitigation plan was required. We are also in the process of reviewing our Responsible Conduct of Research Training guidance and updating procedures to continue to ensure that all trainees working

under federal awards are appropriately trained in accordance with federal mandates.

Fair Practices

All tenure-track professors, instructors, contract instructors are hired through a formal search process following an advertised job description outlining the minimum qualifications required. A search committee processes all the applications and determines the top 3 to 5 candidates. These candidates are interviewed by the search committee with input from the college community based on public presentations. The search committee provides a list of the top 3 candidates with respect to their strengths and weaknesses relative to the advertised position to the college President and Provost. The President and Provost then chooses the candidate based on their strengths and weaknesses and the department chair then begins the negotiation process. Visiting Professors/Instructors are vetted by the Department Chair and hired based on their professional qualifications to teach a specific class. At the college level, the Appointment, Promotion, and Continuing Appointment (Tenure) process and policies are available publicly through Provost's webpage using the menu link for "Policies and Procedures," and the document is available for review in the MSCHE evidence inventory portal. Each department has a companion document providing clear descriptions of the criteria used in each step of the promotion and tenure process. The following supporting documents are available in the MSCHE evidence inventory portal.

- P&T Documents (*ESF P&T Standards*)
- HR Handbook (*ESF HR Handbook*)
- Student Handbook (*ESF Student Handbook*)

Additionally, the Chief Diversity Officer and Human Resources have published a toolkit for retention and hiring that search committees and chairs are encouraged to review (*Checklist-with-STOP-notifications; ESF-Summary-of-Information-for-Search-Committee; Candidate Screening and Evaluation; ESF-Interview-Questions-Sample-and-Unlawful; ESF Reference Checks; IDE-Strategic-Plan*). The instrument is located on both department's websites.

Near the beginning of the 2020-2021 Academic Year, a number of shortcomings were identified in the Bylaws and Standing Rules governing Academic Governance (AG). Since their last major revision in 2015, the Bylaws and Standing Rules and other procedures of AG had been amended several times usually with supplemental documents and not integrated into the master documents. In addition, a number of committees that were created at the time of the previous major revision, while serving a purpose at the time, had outlived their usefulness, but persisted since they were codified in the bylaws. Several procedures, including the appointment of faculty, staff, and students to search committees and the process of removal of AG officers, were either very cumbersome, ambiguous, or otherwise time consuming.

To address these issues, a committee of faculty, staff, and administration were empaneled to review the Bylaws and Standing Rules and propose revision to Academic Governance. Early in the

committee's review, it was determined that it would not be possible to address the multiple issues simply with amendments to the existing documents. The committee decided to do a complete rewrite of the Bylaws and Standing Rules. Over 15 months and ending with approval of the new Bylaws and Standing Rules in the Fall Semester of 2021 the new guiding documents achieved a number of significant goals including (*Academic Governance Bylaws; Academic Governance Standing Rules_2021*):

- Streamlining the appointment of search committee members of high-level administrative positions
- Consolidating the AG committees with a process to create ad hoc committees as necessary
- More clearly codifying committee membership and scope
- Rewriting of the Bylaws to include the organization elements and the Standing Rules to include the operational elements of Academic Governance
- Developing the processes for appointment of staff to Academic Governance
- Removing and improving ambiguous language in the documents.

These achievements strengthen shared governance, thereby strengthening practices and clarifying expectations for senior administration, faculty, and staff at ESF.

Public Honesty

The Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM) holds primary responsibility for the truthfulness and accuracy of documents circulated within and external to campus for general consumption. Enrollment Management partners with the OCM to develop effective and accurate content for use in print and electronic communications that support new student recruitment efforts. This collaboration ensures we disseminate current information that has been appropriately vetted as needed.

The Assistant Director for Institutional Research and Assessment is primarily responsible for verifying the accuracy of externally reported data, including SUNY, NYSED, and IPEDS required data. The Assistant Director's Institutional Research work is overseen by the Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and Director of Institutional Research. This arrangement connects the offices that are primarily responsible for disseminating information about the College to off-campus stakeholders, and provides a good line of communication for College data that are shared internally. The Assistant Director is also the coordinator for surveys that publish institutional data in commercial rankings for prospective students and their families. These reported data are gathered through collaboration with colleagues in information systems, who have the responsibility of curating and querying the College's data warehouse. The Assistant Director also has access to the SUNY System Business Intelligence dashboards in order to compare System-wide data with institutional data and to support consistent institutional reporting. Through this reporting relationship, the Assistant Director collaborates with the staff in Information Systems to ensure that the queries that produce data reports are adequate and accurate.

ESF has relied on a homegrown legacy student information system since prior to the 2012-2022 self-study report and site visit. After a two-year implementation and conversion process that began in 2018, in fall 2020 we began using the Ellucian product Banner to manage and integrate the data

from many campus units to centralize and better manage data integrity and security. As of fall 2021, the Legacy system is no longer being updated with institutional data, and all data must be extracted from the Banner system using the SQL querying tool Argos. The Information Systems team is working to recreate the reports from the legacy system that many units, especially Institutional Research and Assessment, relied on in order to provide accurate data to internal and external constituencies, as requested.

Programs Relating to Access and Affordability

In addition to robust New York State need-based funding opportunities, primarily for undergraduate students, the College Foundation and the Office of Student Financial Aid work together to ensure affordability for a diverse class of qualified students. Under the leadership of the Director of Financial Aid, the Office of Student Financial Aid advises accepted students of their aid eligibility and works with them to plan for how to finance their educational goals. ESF has a low default rate on federal student loans. The most recent fiscal year is 2018, and the federal loan default rate was 0.6%. ESF has consistently provided need-based and non-need based financial support to qualifying undergraduate students, with 80% of undergraduate students receiving any type of grant or scholarship aid, with an average award of \$7,129.

Last academic year, 2020-2021, there were a total of 2,306 full and part-time undergraduate students enrolled at ESF. In the 2018-2019 academic year, 79% of our undergraduate students received some type of grant or scholarship aid with an average award of \$6,804 per qualifying student. In addition to student financial aid, ESF supports a full-time Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) director who works directly with students enrolled through the EOP program to facilitate their academic and personal success in higher education.

At the graduate level, last academic year of 2020-2021, there were a total of 491 full and part-time graduate students. ESF awarded 201 state-funded graduate assistantships. These graduate assistantships were split between semesters at a full-time or half-time appointment. A full-time appointment had a stipend of \$14,000 per academic year plus a tuition scholarship. In the academic year 2021-2022, ESF awarded 170 state funded graduate assistantships. A full-time appointment had a stipend of \$16,000 per academic year plus a tuition scholarship. These graduate assistantships were split between semesters at a full-time or half time appointment. Faculty sponsored research in the academic year 2019–2020 funded 120 research assistantships with an average compensation of \$12,079, which included a tuition scholarship and 33 research assistantships paid hourly with an average compensation of \$4,511. In addition, in the academic year 2019–2020 ESF had nine Diversity Fellowships and Sloane Indigenous Fellowships and 14 Fulbright and Laspau Fellowships. In the academic year 2021-2022, faculty sponsored 140 research assistantships with an average compensation of \$10,985, which included a tuition scholarship, and 27 research assistantships paid hourly with an average compensation of 4,472. In the academic year 2020-2021, ESF had 11 Diversity Fellowships and Sloane Indigenous Fellowships and 12 Fulbright and LASPAU Fellowships. ESF has approximately 450 to 490 graduate students during the academic years 2019 to 2021, this implies that

approximately 75% of our graduate students received some type of funding.

In addition, the ESF College Foundation also provides scholarships, fellowships, and grants to undergraduate and graduate students. From 2017 to 2021, these awards have increased steadily from \$1,204,948 in 2017 to \$1,886,766 (including COVID related extra-ordinary aid of \$288,965) in 2021. Upon commencement from ESF, students in the graduating class of 2020 who borrowed for college carried an average of \$22,013 in student loan debt. That average is calculated based on a mean federal student loan debt of \$17,699 and an average private loan debt of \$25,297 for students who graduated between 7/1/2019 and 6/30/2020. ESF's federal loan default rate is consistently below the national average, with the FY 2018 default rate at 0.6% for ESF graduates, as compared to a 7.3% national cohort default rate for FY 2018. Federal student loan borrowers comprise approximately 19% of the total enrollment at ESF. Prospective students, current students, and their families can locate student consumer information on the ESF website <http://www.esf.edu/consumer>. This information is also contained within the Evidence Inventory (*Student Consumer Information*).

Compliance

Verification of Compliance with Relevant Federal Regulations Form

The Verification of Compliance Form is located with other documents and evidence in the MSCHE portal.

Assessment

ESF Campus Policies and Procedures have been evaluated since the last self-study review period, and continue to be evaluated periodically, as needed. Many SUNY system policies supersede campus policies at ESF, but the campus has implemented new policies and evaluated existing policies for updates as circumstances warranted. The College's executive leadership team is primarily responsible for these decisions, but may delegate working groups or task forces to produce documentation. Data analysis of employee surveys, including the COACHE survey, revealed that ESF employees wished to have more agency in their daily work. This initiated a thorough review of ESF operations and the CDO led an effort to revise campus policies in order to clarify and establish guidelines for campus employees that would allow them to have more control over how they fulfill their professional obligations. Furthermore, the structure and policy-related documents are designed in a way to enhance inclusion, diversity, and equity among ESF's workforce and student populations. This effort resulted in a defined structure for policymaking and a series of templates that are available through the faculty & staff portal.

This proposed structure allowed for full campus participation in the creation and design of campus policies at ESF. On the ESF website, campus community members are invited to comment on policies that are in development, there is an area where newly implemented policies are listed, and a final section that lists any policies that were recently revised. ESF's Associate Counsel and the Executive

Director of Communications and Marketing are both involved in policy review and messaging, to ensure we are within legal guidelines and that the information is disseminated to campus effectively. This method for the development and assessment of campus policies has allowed ESF to have a clearly defined procedure for the review and revision of policies at ESF, which have been posted to the Vice President for Administration Office website (*Policy-template*).

ESF also engages in a number of campus-level and system-level climate assessments. At the campus level, the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity led an effort to assess the dimensions of the NERCHE self-assessment rubric on campus in the 2020-2021 academic year. These included an evaluation of the philosophy and mission of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity at ESF; faculty support for involvement in Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity; teaching, research, and service in support of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity; staff engagement in Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity; and administrative leadership and institutional support for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. The results of this assessment of our campus-wide engagement with and promotion of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity efforts is available in the evidence inventory.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

ESF's most visible response to the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to ethics and integrity at the campus level was our strong partnership with Syracuse University and Onondaga County in order to promote and provide surveillance testing, coordination to ensure essential staff were safe on campus, and regular communication about the status of COVID-19 cases on and near the Syracuse Main Campus. Dr. Brian Leydet, Assistant Professor of Environmental Biology, worked closely with campus leadership and the campus Health and Safety Office to initiate coordinate ESF's COVID response protocols early in the pandemic. Over time, Dr. Leydet was able to deploy several ESF students as trained contact tracers to assist the Onondaga County Health Department with identifying individuals who should be issued quarantine or isolation orders. In fall 2021, ESF hired a staff member to conduct contact tracing for the ESF campus community and to coordinate internal and external institutional communications concerning the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The Office of Human Resources and the Student Affairs unit were responsible for requesting and maintaining testing and vaccination records for employees and students, respectively, and sharing student vaccination information with Syracuse University in accordance with their vaccine requirements beginning in spring 2021. The Assistant Director for Assessment and Institutional research collaborated with ESF and SU stakeholders to ensure this information was available to both campuses through fall 2021, when SUNY published a System-wide data collection platform. With the arrival of a System-developed platform, the Information Systems unit took over responsibility for data collection and secure maintenance of student vaccination records.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard,

while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

ESF has demonstrated noteworthy progress in the area of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and the campus community has sustained energy around related campus-wide initiatives. Similarly, the campus climate around the importance and role of the Title IX officer has been communicated more effectively and has been enhanced to establish the Title IX Coordinator as a visible and active member of the campus community who is a strong resource for support for everyone on campus. The progress in these areas has been gaining momentum since 2016, with the formation of the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee and 2018 with the College's first Chief Diversity Officer. One of the College's strengths in this area has been a commitment to establishing structures that are elastic enough to respond to current campus needs, while building the community-wide knowledge of inclusive strategies, diversity resources, and best practices based on periodic assessment. This progress supports the College's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as an underlying principle evident throughout our campus priorities of Academic Excellence, and Outstanding Student Experience, and an Investment in Human Resources and Physical Infrastructure. With particular respect to the College's investment in campus infrastructure, there have been a number of strategic investments in campus buildings and technology resources since the last self-study report, with each effort informed by assessment and strategic facilities planning (Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS), Facilities Master Plan, ABET accreditation review, LAAB accreditation review). Finally, our low default rates for federal student aid repayment, low level of student debt, and efforts to provide undergraduate and graduate funding opportunities to allow greater access to higher education are also ESF strengths.

Areas for Improvement

The robust and detailed policy creation and revision process that was developed in 2018 allows a mechanism for the Office of Enrollment Management to further clarify their strategies to ensure honesty in recruitment and retention materials. The current procedure of working with the Office of Communications and Marketing and verifying data shared with internal and external audiences does ensure that the College is providing trustworthy information to both current and prospective students and their families. Working toward the creation of some policy guidance that is easily available to the staff in that office will provide additional assurance that ESF is meeting our public honesty obligations. The College Assessment Committee has an opportunity to make better use of the SUNY-sponsored student satisfaction surveys (SUNY SSS, NSSE, etc.) and other campus-wide surveys, such as the SVP and employee satisfaction survey instruments to make timely recommendations. Rich data are contained therein, but it has been a challenge to dedicate staff and faculty time to process the data in order to provide any meaningful recommendations to campus leadership. Reviewing these survey efforts for this purpose has provided some insight into how the information could be presented to

the Assessment Committee and other College committees, task forces, or working groups in targeted/ manageable portions in order to support the related work these groups are doing in the interest of continuous improvement at the College.

As the campus adapts to a new information system and query platform, it will be important to assess progress in the availability of standardized reports and the capacity to produce ad hoc reports in a timely manner. Many of the Legacy standardized reports did not allow for adaptation to align with ad hoc data requests, so as these reports are generated in the new system it will be vital to ensure each one contains commonly requested attributes; for example, race, sex, citizenship, state of residence are commonly requested data points that are difficult to capture in a single, comprehensive report. Adequate capacity in the Information Systems unit will be vital in order for accurate disclosure of institutional data to internal and external constituencies to be maintained. The Assistant Director for Assessment & Institutional Research is currently in the process of converting much of the online Fact Book data to be sourced from our internal system.

Insights

Student feedback on the SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey indicates that students may be interested in additional ESF-based opportunities for engagement with creative endeavors. The Digital Storytelling Studio, recently formed Poetry Club, and other centers on campus may be able to support student satisfaction with opportunities for engaging with their programs of study through creative pursuits for additional enrichment and enjoyment of their course of study. While ESF offers a number of co-curricular and supportive units to support overall student well-being, 10%-20% of respondents report not using these resources or knowing of their availability.

STANDARD III: DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Introduction

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) clearly demonstrates the conditions required for compliance with Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience. We recognize that post-secondary academic programs are characterized by rigor, and an intentional crafting and sequencing of learning activities and interactions. Curricula must be coherent, demonstrate a logical structure and consistency, and be purposefully designed to facilitate learning in that discipline. Within a curriculum, the component learning experiences must adhere to the principles of rigor and coherence in any interaction or experience regardless of setting. One of the institutional priorities we highlighted was a commitment to Academic Excellence, and our presentation of the materials in support of our reaccreditation self-study acknowledge that rigorous and coherent student learning experience reflect the institutional commitment to environmental stewardship of natural and designed environments reflected in our Vision, Mission, Priorities, and Guiding Principles.

Student Learning Experience

ESF is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) institution with the basic Carnegie classification “Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity.” ESF is structured with nine (9) academic units that provide undergraduate and graduate degree programs from professional (e.g., forest resource management, landscape architecture, sustainability management, etc.) to applied/basic science (e.g., forest ecosystem science, environmental science, biology, engineering, chemistry, etc.). To clearly discuss and demonstrate how ESF delivers consistent, coherent, and rigorous learning opportunities that are appropriate to the disciplinary goals and norms of the subject matter, we have displayed the degree programs offered at the College using a four-quadrant figure (Figure 3). Consistent with ESF’s mission of environmental stewardship, Figure 3 illustrates where each academic unit resides along the two continuums of biophysical science to social science skills and knowledge and specific to multiple resource focus.

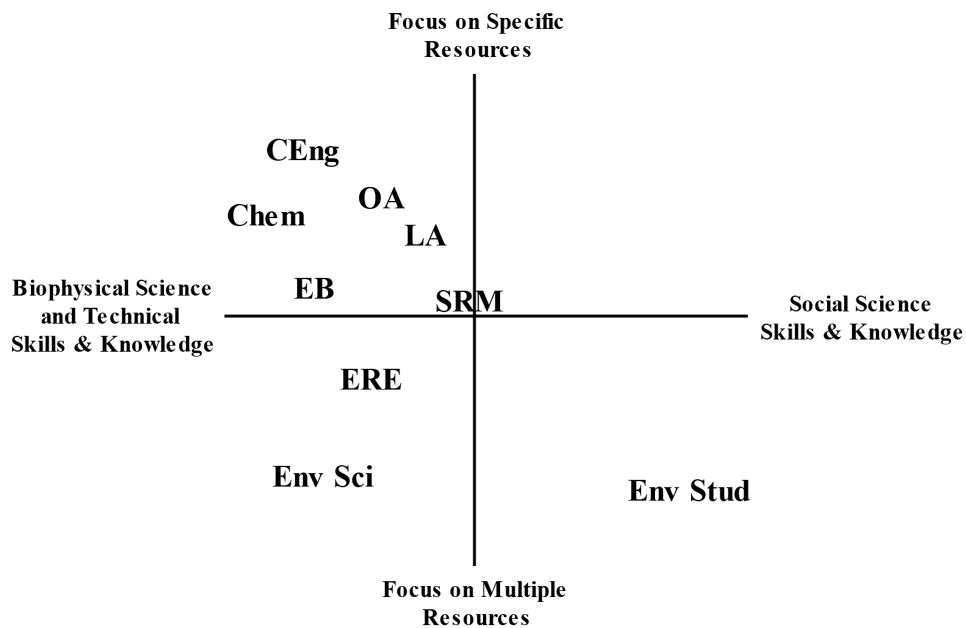


Figure 3. Academic Unit Diagram

In the upper left quadrant, we have displayed the Chemical Engineering (CEng), Chemistry (Chem), Open Academy (OA), Landscape Architecture (LA), and Environmental Biology (EB). These departments offer academic programs leading to degrees where students focus on biophysical science and technical skills and knowledge as these subjects interface with specific resources. For example, Chemical Engineering and Chemistry emphasize fundamental science and skills pertaining to traditional chemistry sub-specialties and engineering fields. Our largest department, Environmental Biology (EB), examines natural ecosystems from the molecular to ecosystem level including biodiversity conservation, physiology, and ecology of plants, animals, and microorganisms, and emphasizes the interactions and changes in biological systems in the context of the broad fields of aquatic and forestland sciences; biotechnology and physiological ecology, evolution, chemical ecology; conservation biology; fisheries and wildlife biology; and global, landscape, and urban ecology. Landscape Architecture aligns with the quadrant as well, due to their focus on how to sustainably integrate human communities with land and landscape in ecological design and planning. ESF Open Academy (OA) delivers online programming and continuing education opportunities including professional certifications and an AS to BS bachelor's degree completion program.

The lower left quadrant includes departments and programs that are deeply rooted in the biophysical sciences and associated technical skills and knowledge, as appropriate to the discipline. Environment Resources Engineering (ERE) focus in on ecological engineering, geospatial engineering, water resources engineering, and the broader field of environmental resources engineering. The Division of Environmental Science (Env Sci) has two interdisciplinary degree programs that take full advantage of its location within an environmentally-focused college. The first program provides a strong

foundation in the sciences and introduces students to the interdisciplinary breadth of environmental science through a selection of core courses dealing with the geographical, physical, social and living environments. The second examines the direct effects of the environment on human health and the factors that adversely affect the ecological balances essential to human health and environmental quality.

The Department of Environmental Studies (Env Stud) aligns more closely with social science skills and knowledge, which complements the study of biophysical skills and knowledge and provides students studying in the other departments with opportunities for coursework that allows for the exploration of history, context, and juxtaposition of science with humanity. Environmental Studies emphasizes interdisciplinary social science, humanities and natural science approaches to environmental understanding and stewardship. Their programs focus on fundamental environmental challenges and dynamics such as multiple and conflicting levels of environmental governance, participatory democracy, sustainable development, uses and limits of scientific prediction, environmental communication and interpretation, cultural expressions of nature, risk, and ecological sustainability. Located centrally on the diagram, Sustainable Resources Management's (SRM) focus is to advance our understanding of current environmental issues through cutting edge research, education, and outreach, with a special focus on sustainably managing renewable, natural and constructed resources, including energy, forests, recreation, soils, water, and building materials, to provide short- and long-term benefits with and for people. This department also includes degree programs at the Ranger School (Ranger School). The Ranger School confers the associate in applied science degree (A.A.S.) in three areas of study: forest technology, land surveying technology, and environmental and natural resources conservation.

The delivery of these exceptional academic programs requires adequate facilities with the appropriate equipment and technology to facilitate student learning. Each of ESF's academic programs is best delivered using active learning strategies that are deployed through traditional classroom, studio, computer lab, and scientific lab instruction; field classrooms and labs; applied learning experiences; service-learning experiences (*Applied Learning Inventory*); and an honors program (*Honors Program Reports*). Each of these educational settings allows ESF to deliver high-quality academic programming that prepares students to be responsible environmental stewards, to be successful after commencement through supporting their ability to work as part of a diverse and globally oriented team; and to recognize the importance of investing in the betterment of the human and natural resources in their communities.

The freshman year contains foundational science and general education courses. The sophomore year contains a mix of foundational science, professional, and general education course work. The junior and senior years contain professional course work that includes opportunities for students to synthesize the myriad coursework they engaged with throughout their degree program. This logical sequencing of courses from the freshman to the senior year is enhanced by specific upper division courses have specific lower division courses as prerequisites (*Conservation Biology Curriculum Plan Sheet*; *ERE Curriculum Plan Sheet*; *NRM Curriculum Plan Sheet*). Each undergraduate degree program

and applied sciences, to engineering, design, and planning of both natural and human communities. Because of this, and to facilitate the range and depth of graduate education provided at ESF, learning outcomes vary across the graduate academic programs. However, common to these programs is a set of three overarching goals that characterize the ESF graduate educational experience:

Doctoral and Master's Students:

- Are ambassadors for providing environmental solutions and affecting change through exemplary scholarship, teaching and research
- Engage effectively as leaders and stewards of the natural and designed environments through various forms of outreach
- Recognize and seek diversity and inclusion as a source of strength, creativity, and innovation.

Further details about the expected proficiencies for students in Doctoral and Master's programs at ESF and how these outcomes are assessed are presented in the College's Strategic Graduate Program Assessment plan, which was approved by College leadership in Fall 2021 (*ESF Strategic Graduate Program Assessment Plan*). With the Graduate Program Assessment Plan, we are able to connect College-wide Student Learning Outcomes to the graduate programs of study. ESF's College-wide Student Learning Outcomes are concerned with six areas (*College Student Learning Outcomes*):

1. Scientific Reasoning – Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of modern science and the implications of scientific discoveries, apply the scientific method, and use science to address contemporary problems.
2. Quantitative Reasoning – Students will be able to effectively describe, interpret, apply, and evaluate quantitative information.
3. Communication – Students will be able to formulate and present ideas that reflect critical thinking skills and show awareness of audience, context, and purpose, and present a well-developed argument.
4. Technological and Information Literacy – Students will be able to use critical thinking skills to determine the information needed to solve a problem, access information using appropriate technologies, and effectively and appropriately use information to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. Values, Ethics and Diverse Perspectives – Students will be able to demonstrate awareness of diverse cultures and values, recognize ethical issues in contemporary society, and apply ethical concepts in addressing diverse personal, professional, and societal settings.
6. Critical Thinking – Students will be able to identify, analyze, evaluate, and develop well-reasoned arguments (Note: This area inherently overlaps outcomes in the prior areas purposefully).

Faculty Governance Oversight

ESF has a system of shared governance among faculty, staff, and administration. In fall 2021, the College's faculty governance body, Academic Governance, chose to assess and revise their bylaws. These committees were in effect for the assessment period 2011-2021. The following committees

guide curriculum and academic quality at the college.

Committee on Curriculum:

The committee is composed of eight (8) voting faculty members representing the academic departments and the library. The College President and the Executive Chair of Faculty Governance or their designees are also voting members. Non-voting members are the Associate Provost for Instruction and Dean of the Graduate School, Registrar, an undergraduate student representative, and a graduate student representative. This committee is responsible for all matters that pertain to the development, modification, and removal of courses and curricula at the College including: i) support and administration; ii) content and interrelationship of courses and curricula; iii) instructional methods; iv) degree requirements; and v) outcomes and compliance with College and SUNY policies that pertain to curriculum. Once an action has been moved through the Committee on Curriculum, it is presented at an Academic Governance meeting for approval by the faculty.

Committee on Instructional Quality and Academic Standards (IQAS):

This committee promotes and supports best practices in teaching excellence; guides assessment of the College curriculum, including general education assessment; promotes quality academic advising; sets standards for evaluating student academic performance; reviews policies regarding recruitment and admission of both graduate and undergraduate students; creates, reviews, and assesses academic policies; evaluates quality of instruction; and evaluates student academic probation and dishonesty. This committee is also responsible for the standardized syllabus template that is recommended highly for all courses taught at ESF (*Syllabus Template*).

Faculty Qualifications and Preparation

At the college level, the appointment, promotion, and continuing appointment (tenure) process and policies are available publicly on the Provost's webpage (*ESF P&T Policy*). Each Department has a companion document providing clear descriptions of the criteria used in each step of the promotion and tenure process (*Promotion and Tenure Documents*). Faculty ranks at ESF consist of: i) Assistant, Associate, Professor, and Distinguished Professor with tenure or continuing appointment; ii) Tenured-track and Tenured Instructors; iii) Research Associates; iv) 1- to 3-year contracted Instructor; and v) Visiting Professor/Instructor hired on a semester-by-semester basis to teach a specific course. Copies of CVs summarizing qualifications are publicly available through the Esploro platform, maintained by Moon Library staff. Consistent with the mission, three priorities, and three guiding principles, ESF provides opportunities for professional pedagogical growth and innovation primarily through programs delivered by the Open Academy's Teaching and Learning Center. The Center provides many different workshops and seminars throughout the academic year (*OA Teaching and Learning Center*). The highlight is the annual Hardy L. Shirley Faculty Mentoring Colloquium usually held in January (*Hardy Shirley Colloquium Agendas*).

Academic Programs Clearly and Accurately Described in Official Publications

Academic programs are clearly and accurately described in several online venues. First, the college catalog provides descriptions of each department and degree program (*ESF Academic Catalog of Record 2021 – 2022*). Second, the college website provides links to each department. These departmental websites provide descriptions of the departments (*Academic Departments*) and the degree programs and often a plan of study; for example, the Conservation Biology program within the Environmental Biology Department (*Conservation Biology*). Third, some departmental websites also have links to undergraduate and graduate handbooks that provide these descriptions; for example, the Sustainable Resources Management Department (*SRM*).

Students can enter ESF in two ways: as a freshman or as a transfer student. The above programmatic descriptions show ‘the how’ courses are vertically integrated from freshman to senior. To facilitate transfer students moving smoothly into their desired academic program, ESF has transfer agreements with many New York State community colleges, several out-of-state community colleges, and other SUNY colleges and universities (*Cooperative Colleges*). These transfer agreements show which courses have been vetted by ESF to be equivalent to the lower division course work of a degree program. The student must earn a C or better for a course to fulfill a degree requirement. For graduate students, only graduate courses may be transferred and only after the student’s graduate committee all agree that the coursework is suitable.

Sufficient Learning Opportunities and Resources

In light of ESF’s ongoing construction and renovation projects that temporarily reduce the capacity of the already limited number of spaces that can accommodate large lecture style classes, the College is able to continue to provide adequate learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Based on assessment data from both the Facilities Master Plan work as well as the report resulting from the First Year Experience (FYE) Task Force (*1st Year Experience Task Force Executive Summary-2019*), ESF undergraduate students expressed a preference for a learning environment that prioritizes instructor-student connection with a smaller number of students per section. The FYE Task Force recommends capping all classes at a maximum of 150 students, which the space utilization assessment confirmed is possible. To meet this goal of 150 students maximum per large lecture, evaluation of teaching loads and faculty utilization juxtaposed with class size and department faculty workload trends will be critical to the success of these efforts around revitalizing ESF’s campus teaching and learning spaces and meeting student needs.

The resources ESF has to deliver academic programming include access to 25,000 acres of property across New York State. These locations include undeveloped property, managed forests, and properties that include modern, state-of-the-art living and learning spaces. Additionally, ESF offers students access to academic support and counseling services to ensure that their learning experience is aligned with their skills and needs.

Physical Resources

ESF's main campus area is approximately 19 acres and has seven academic buildings (*ESF Academic Buildings*). This includes Moon Library (*Moon Library*), which provides information resources to the ESF community and teaches library users to learn independently. In 2020, outside firms JMZ Architects and Planners and Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects were hired to establish a benchmark for space utilization to better achieve our research and teaching goals consistent with the College Mission given our campus acreage limitations (*ESF Facilities Master Plan and Presentation*). We are working toward meeting these benchmarks with Marshall Hall, one of the older buildings on campus, which is receiving a complete renovation and is expected to be complete by 2022-2023 academic year. The 4th floor of Bray Hall is also being renovated and should be completed in 2022 (*Bray Hall Renovation Memo*). These renovations will support the student learning experience by responding to various assessment endeavors with respect to classroom, lab, and studio spaces.

Outdoor learning spaces are essential to the ESF curriculum and student learning opportunities because of the extensive fieldwork and active learning experiences that are embedded in many of ESF's degree programs.

Svend O. Heiberg Memorial Forest (Heiberg):

Within a 30-minute drive from the Syracuse main campus is the Svend O. Heiberg Memorial Forest, containing 3,800 acres that are used extensively by many academic departments at ESF as a year-round outdoor classroom and laboratory for teaching, demonstration, and research by faculty, students, and staff. For 2015 to 2019, 15 courses used Heiberg, with an average class size of 63 and generating an average of 673 student hours per semester (*Use of Heiberg 2009-2019*). Sustainable forest management is practiced year-round by a full-time professional staff. These practices supply a diverse array of forest products that generate a consistent flow of revenue for the College. These products include maple syrup, Christmas trees, firewood, and sawlogs.

The Pack Demonstration Forest (Pack Forest):

The Pack Demonstration Forest property was presented to Syracuse University in trust for the use of the College, in 1927, by Charles Lathrop Pack through the instrumentality of the Seaboard Corporation. Mr. Pack had three objects in view when presenting this property for the use of the College: (1) as a demonstration of good forestry methods to the public and particularly to the owners of forest properties; (2) to provide the best facilities for the training of forestry students in the woods; and (3) to furnish a field laboratory for various lines of forest research, especially in the economic field. While the Charles Lathrop Pack Demonstration Forest, now 2,500 acres in size, continues to support the College's mission of teaching, research, and demonstration, it has not been utilized as much now as in the past.

Wanakena Campus (Ranger School):

The Ranger School, established in 1912, is located in the heart of the 6 million-acre Adirondack Park. The 2,800-acre campus supports field-based education technology undergraduate degree programs. The degrees conferred are associates in applied science (A.A.S.) in forest technology (FT), land surveying technology (LST), and environmental and natural resources conservation (ENRC). In 2020 and 2021, there were four degrees conferred in LST, 18 and 27 in ENRC respectively, and 32 and 23 in FT respectively. The main campus building houses state-of-the-art facilities, including classrooms, a conference room, and a dining facility. Additional facilities include a library, dry lab, computer lab with 24 stations, student residence rooms, and entertainment and recreation areas.

Thousand Islands Biological Station (TIBS):

The Lorraine E. Lewis Thousand Islands Biological Station (TIBS) hosts an aquatic research program on ecology, conservation, and management of the St. Lawrence River with an emphasis on fisheries, faunal habitat, wetlands, limnology, and invasive species. The TIBS research program continues to advance scientific inquiry to guide management activities and understand perturbations that affect the ecosystem. Many faculty, staff, and students from a variety of institutions are attracted to the unique nature of this immense river that is the natural outlet to the Laurentian Great Lakes. Long-term aquatic ecosystem monitoring and graduate and undergraduate student projects, with the support of a variety of faculty, provide a diverse ecological research portfolio with many related studies supported by extramural grants. Regional outreach activities maintain a strong ESF connection to the St. Lawrence River community and provide students and staff opportunities for information exchange.

Adirondack Ecological Center (AEC):

The Adirondack Ecological Center (AEC) was established in 1971 at the 15,000-acre Huntington Wildlife Forest in the central Adirondack Mountains in northern New York. The AEC has led research in ecological sciences by being a major contributor to international, place-based research in the Adirondacks. The mission of the AEC is to understand the Adirondack ecosystem through research and education, providing excellent opportunities for students to engage in active, hands-on learning and research opportunities. The AEC and amenities at the Newcomb Campus attract researchers from throughout the world, providing a base of operation for research on the natural and cultural systems of the Northern Forest. AEC conducts and facilitates the science that underpins the management of Adirondack Park, one of the world's foremost experiments in conservation and sustainability.

The Cranberry Lake Biological Station (CLBS):

Located in the western Adirondacks, the 988-acre Cranberry Lake Biological Station (CLBS) is surrounded by Adirondack Wild Forest and Wilderness lands. It is isolated by the absence of roads and can only be accessed by boat, which adds to the experience of the great wilderness adventure. Approximately 250 students regularly utilize this facility each summer. Cranberry Lake is the third

largest body of water in the Adirondacks and its environs are ideally suited for a biology summer program. Much of the original forest cover in the region was harvested a century ago; today a rich variety of community types occupies those sites as the vegetation reverts to mature forests. The remaining old-growth forests nearby also provide students with many examples of climax ecosystems, each type reflecting the particular environmental conditions controlling forest development. Facilities include a wireless campus, four classroom-laboratories; a computer cluster; field and laboratory equipment; a dozen power boats; dining facilities for 120; faculty quarters and cabins; an administration building; 12 cabins housing six to eight students each; a recreation hall; and several smaller, supporting buildings.

The Lafayette Road Experiment Station:

Located 4 miles south of Main Campus. The Lafayette Road Experiment Station is used extensively for teaching and research. There are over 50 different tree species on the property used for teaching dendrology, silviculture, and forest ecology. The American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project at SUNY ESF is located at the Lafayette Experiment Station. Its mission is to grow blight-tolerant American chestnuts with the goal of restoring them to their previous forest ecosystems. The ESF Timbersports team also has their home practice field at the property.

The Tully Field Station:

Located just outside the Village of Tully, the 60-acre property was transferred to the College in 1960 to meet the demand for additional land for research. The property is used by The Willow Project to research and develop shrub willow for renewable energy and environmental applications, and an additional research site for The American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project at ESF. The Tully Field Station is also home to the ESF's Championship Mighty Oaks Soccer and Timbersports teams.

JMZ Architects and Planners and Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects have also visited the satellite properties; the Ranger School, Newcomb campus, and Pack Forest in Warrensburg and are developing a facilities master plan for these properties with a draft report to be delivered in May 2022.

ESF Offices to Support Students

Office of the Dean of Student Affairs (Student Affairs):

This office consists of academic support services, career services, student conduct, diversity and inclusion, community service, student involvement and leadership (student activities), and student support. The Office of the Dean is responsible for providing leadership and guidance to fulfill its mission. Student Affairs works in partnership and collaboration with faculty, community partners, and students to create and facilitate opportunities that promote student learning and advance students' success. This office is dedicated to helping students achieve academically, get involved, contribute to their community, "launch" their careers, and to have the basic principles and foundations for living a

quality life. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs has oversight of the Office of Career Services and the Academic Success Center. The Office of Career Services (OCS) is committed to advising, educating, and providing students with services, programs, and resources to guide in the development of the skills necessary to advance through ESF and enter into a rewarding career. The Office supports resume and cover letter reviews, exploring various career paths, finding internships, conducting a successful job search, applying to graduate school, preparing for a first professional job, and more. In addition, the Office of Career Services is responsible for a number of large-scale events including the Graduate and Professional School Fair and multiple Career and Internship Fairs.

The Academic Success Center (ASC):

The ASC was created to help students grow to become resilient, confident, and independent learners. As the ‘home base’ for the ESF Peer Tutoring program, the ASC plays an integral part in providing a variety of academic success services for students to help them realize their educational goals, particularly for new students experiencing their academic transition to ESF. The newly constructed ASC in the basement of Moon Library houses some of our critical academic support resources in one location, creating a one-stop shop for students to receive support. The ASC offers small group peer tutoring in over 40+ courses and helps connect students to academic and social support resources at the college and provides academic coaching for students who wish to develop individualized academic success plans. In a traditional year, ASC see an average of 250-350 students utilize tutoring annually and employs an average of 30 tutors per year depending on the demand and specialty areas in specific courses (*Academic Success Center*). The Academic Recovery Program (ARP) supports all students on academic probation at the college. The ARP uses a variety of support services to help customize a plan for students with low GPAs to find success. The ARP includes a combination of reflection and goal-setting exercises, one on one academic coaching, peer tutoring, course selection advising in collaboration with their academic advisor, skill-building workshops, and learning modules. ARP sees on average between 50-150 students per academic year (*Academic Success Center*). Finally, the ASC offers a variety of success workshops focused on enhancing academic self-efficacy and strengthening academic skills like time management, organization skills, online learning strategies, stress management, study skills, test-taking, reading comprehension, memorization, and note-taking each semester. ASC averages 26 skills workshops annually (*Academic Success Center*).

Office of International Education (OIE):

The Office of International Education is the primary on-campus immigration resource available to the ESF international student community. This office assists international students with maintaining status and adhering to U.S. immigration laws by providing advice regarding immigration regulations and various immigration-related topics such as employment and travel. OIE provides all immigration document services including initial I-20s/ DS-2019s, SEVIS transfer I-20s/DS-2019s, F-1 and J-1 work benefits (*CPT, OPT, Academic Training*) and document updates (*e.g., I-20 extensions, travel signatures*) for active students. OIE also processes all J-1 scholar exchange visitor requests and advises all scholars, dependents and students on J-1 ESF sponsorship. In the academic year 2020-2021, this

office assisted 191 international students and scholars (*OIE ISSS Annual Report*). This number is down due to COVID. However, the percent of international graduate to undergraduate students is relatively constant at ~72% and ~28%, respectively.

The Office of International Education is also the primary on-campus resource for students interested in study abroad during their academic program at ESF. OIE provides information regarding study abroad eligibility requirements, study abroad opportunities, and the study abroad request approval process. In the academic year 2019-2020, 64 students studied abroad (*OIE Study Abroad Annual Report*). This was a 61% decrease of from the academic year 2018-2019. There are no data for 2020-2021, as all these programs were cancelled due to COVID. Lastly, OIE serves as the emergency point of contact for all ESF students conducting research abroad and participating in international programs and for ESF faculty taking students abroad.

Roosevelt Wild Life Station (RWLS):

The Roosevelt Wild Life Station's (RWLS) Roosevelt Wild Life Collection forms the backbone of training in vertebrate diversity coursework at ESF (e.g., *Diversity of Life II, Ornithology, Mammalogy, Herpetology, and Ichthyology*). The RWLS also manages a student internship agreement between the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Bureau of Wildlife and ESF that gives students the opportunities for paid professional experience in wildlife conservation. This has involved anywhere from one (this past year) to 10 students at a time. In addition, The RWLS periodically offers "special" coursework to students. An example of this was the Wildlife Field Techniques course held twice at the Lucky Star Ranch in northwestern New York. Another example is the 1-credit online course Animal Tracks and Signs to provide a meaningful field-intensive course in a virtual platform so as to deliver wildlife techniques to a broader student audience. The RWLS also sponsors technical workshops associated with professional conferences that our students benefit from, e.g., the "Spatial analysis in R" workshop held at both The Wildlife Society's national conference last year as well as at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife conference earlier this year. Finally, the affiliated faculty employ dozens of students annually in active, applied research programs in wildlife conservation from sponsored research programs.

Randolph G. Pack Environmental Institute (RGPEI):

The Randolph G. Pack Environmental Institute was established at ESF in November 1995, based on funding from a generous gift by Virginia Pack Townsend, in honor of her father, Randolph Greene Pack, philanthropist and international forestry policy expert. The Institute supports and encourages the research and public service activities of the Department of Environmental Studies in the broad area of international environmental, natural resources, and conservation policy. Since its founding, the Institute has engaged in a wide variety of activities, incorporating activities launched prior to its inauguration. A key feature has been the large number of faculty participating in activities of the Institute, including scholars from across ESF, Syracuse University, elsewhere in New York state, the USA, and internationally.

General Education Programming

ESF's General Education is founded on its defined student learning outcomes of: (1) Scientific Reasoning; (2) Quantitative Reasoning; (3) Basic Communication Skills; (4) Technological and Information Literacy; (5) Values, Ethics and Diverse Perspectives; and (6) Critical Thinking (*College Student Learning Outcomes*). These learning outcomes are consistent with ESF's mission; three strategic priorities, especially an Outstanding Student Experience and Academic Excellence; and the three guiding principles, particularly establishing the College as a leader in Environmental Stewardship. In addition, the State University of New York requires graduates of Bachelor degree programs to successfully complete 30 credit hours of general education coursework distributed among 10 different knowledge and skill areas given in Table 1.

Table 1. General Education Knowledge and Skills Areas

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mathematics | Natural Sciences | Social Sciences | American History | Western Civilizations |
| Other World Civilizations | Humanities | The Arts | Basic Communications | Foreign Language |

Students pursuing a degree at ESF are required to complete at least three credit hours of coursework each, from at least seven of the 10 knowledge and skill areas to fulfill the SUNY requirement. The core of the curricula for all ESF undergraduate degree programs satisfies several of the requirements, including those for the natural science, basic communications, mathematics, and humanities general education knowledge and skill areas. For the remaining general education knowledge and skill area requirements, students must complete an additional 15 credit hours distributed among courses chosen from at least three of the five remaining knowledge and skill areas, or as specifically designated by their degree programs. Also illustrated are courses intended to be broad and apply to foundational skills and knowledge in all programs of study. By having classes with diverse majors represented, each student brings a unique perspective to class discussions. Finally, ESF participates in SUNY's seamless general education transfer policy, which assures transfer students who follow the established articulation agreement that all credits will transfer between SUNY institutions.

To better achieve ESF's defined general education student learning outcomes, ESF has recently established a Division of Interdisciplinary Programs, which houses several centers and services available to all graduate and undergraduate students and is responsible for delivering Writing, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Math courses to the student community. In addition to the coursework delivered under the umbrella of the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs, the unit also houses the Writing Resource Center, the Math Center, the Public Speaking Lab, the Digital Storytelling Studio, and the ESOL Center. These centers are available to all undergraduate and graduate students.

ESF's Writing Resource Center (WRC) is a free service designed to support the development of undergraduate students' personal, academic, and professional writing skills. The WRC is a community of practice where students come together to develop their writing skills and work on the shared craft of writing. WRC tutors work with students in individualized 25- or 50-minute interactive sessions focused on brainstorming, organization, drafting, and/or revising among other writing related tasks. In the academic years of 2018 and 2019 and 2019-2020 the WRC logged 931 and 955 tutoring sessions. The mission is to help writers succeed in a strong ESF writing community. The ESOL Center provides strong support to the College's population of international graduate students through cultural exchange programming, language support and tutoring services, and ESOL-specific sections of writing courses. ESOL regularly partners with the Office of International Education, the WRC, and the Public Speaking Lab (PSL) in order to facilitate cultural exchange and international student success. The Public Speaking Lab provides credit bearing coursework (both undergraduate and graduate level) and support to students in their speaking and presentation skills to serve their academic and professional goals. Likewise, the Digital Storytelling Studio (DSS) provides opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to envision their scientific work through storytelling for public-facing dissemination. The DSS provides equipment, training, and other resources to support student projects. The Math Center provides academic support to students in the Math courses, Pre-calculus through advanced calculus coursework.

The Division of Interdisciplinary Programs is in year two of existence but has done small-scale assessments in all programs and centers to improve service delivery. SUNY System approved a new General Education Framework for all two-year and four-year campuses in the system, so a formal assessment plan for the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs will necessarily be deeply engaged with that document.

Graduate and Professional Education

Graduate degree programs at ESF range from prescriptive to descriptive with respect to formal course requirements (Figure 3). ESF does not have a defined Graduate Faculty; instead, all faculty members with research appointments are expected to mentor graduate students. The qualifications of these faculty members are summarized in their CVs contained in the Esploro platform.

The current responsibility for maintaining and improving the academic quality of the graduate programs lies primarily in the departments with the faculty, graduate coordinators, and chairs. Responsibility for the quality of each student's learning experience is left to the faculty through the appointment and activities of students' advisors (major professors) and steering committees. In order to provide a more formal structure, while maintaining the challenge and rigor of research based graduate programs, ESF has developed a Graduate Strategic Program Assessment Plan (*ESF Strategic Graduate Program Assessment Plan*). This proposed strategic assessment plan recognizes the differences in graduate programs across discipline and prescriptive versus descriptive programs and provides for the continual improvement and educational effectiveness of ESFs graduate programs consistent with our mission. The approach we plan is illustrated in Figure 5.

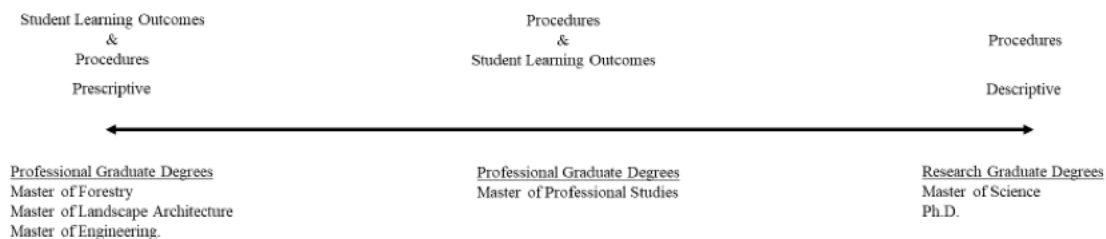


Figure 5. Graduate Program Assessment Continuum

The Graduate Strategic Program Assessment Plan was accepted by Executive Cabinet reviewed by the Chair Council, and endorsed by the Graduate Council in fall 2021. The Graduate Strategic Program Assessment Plan was made available to the College community via ESF's Middle States webpage and will be presented to the College community at large during an Academic Governance meeting in February 2022.

Programs Delivered by Third-Parties

ESF provides a limited number of certifications at the undergraduate level. These are found in the Construction Management degree program and are: a) The LEED Green Associate is for professionals who want to demonstrate green building expertise in non-technical fields of practice and denotes basic knowledge of green design, construction, and operations and is administered through the U.S. Green Building Council; and b) Associate Constructor Certification administered through the American Institute of Constructors.

At the graduate level, ESF partners with Syracuse University (also accredited by MSCHE) to deliver the following graduate joint degrees an MS, MPS, or Ph.D. combined with a Master of Public Administration at Syracuse University. In addition, ESF graduate students can earn a Certificate of Advanced Study in Conflict and Collaboration at Syracuse University through the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration. Also available through Syracuse University's School of Education are Certificates of Advanced Studies on the following topics: Designing Digital Instruction; Disability Studies; Educational Leadership; Educational Technology; Instructional Design Foundations; Intercollegiate Athletic Advising and Support; and School Counseling Assessment of Program Effectiveness

ESF has an Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (OIR). This office is a resource to the entire campus community for assessment and program improvement for the academic departments as well as administrative units. The assessment team applies nationally recognized practices, strategies, and standards to support the College's commitment to academic and operational excellence through promoting and providing support for accreditation and assessment of student learning outcomes and programs. Specifically, the Assessment Office: coordinates academic and administrative assessment at the College; provides resources and support to faculty and staff engaged in the internal assessment

process; and serves as the document home for all assessment results. An Assessment Committee that includes administrative staff and faculty representation was formed in 2018. Since 2019, the membership of that committee has focused on engagement with the MSCHE re-accreditation self-study process but following the virtual site visit will reconvene in order to facilitate ongoing assessment at the College level. As evidence of applying this assessment approach and closing the loop in order to improve program effectiveness, we use an internal periodic Program Review Process for programs that are not accredited, and for programs with disciplinary accreditation those self-studies are retained for evidence of sustained assessment and continuous improvement. The following are Departments that have degree programs with professional accreditations:

- Departments of Environmental Resources Engineering and Chemical Engineering – Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology the Bachelor of Science programs (ABET)
- The Sustainable Resources Management Department – Society of American Foresters the Bachelor of Science Forest Resources Management, Forest Ecosystem Sciences, Natural Resources Management, and the Master of Forestry programs (*SRM SAF*). SRM has five degree programs, each of these degree programs are reviewed annually and in-depth every five years to assess if curricular changes are required. The five-year pattern is done so that only one degree program is reviewed in detail at a time.
- Department of Landscape Architecture – Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture (*LA ASLA*).
- Division of Environmental Science – National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council the Bachelor of Science of Environmental Health

Additionally, the Construction Management degree program within the Sustainable Resources Management Department submitted a self-study report to the American Council for Construction Education this year and is scheduled to host a site visit in March 2022. (*SRM ACCE*)

Departments that do not have disciplinary accreditation include Environmental Studies, Environmental Science, and Environmental Biology, Chemistry, and the College's single online bachelor's degree program in Sustainability Management. In fall 2019 the Undergraduate Environmental Studies program successfully completed an external peer review and hosted an on-campus site visit. The Division of Environmental Science has completed a self-study report for an external peer review, but due to COVID the planned site visit has been delayed until fall 2022. In 2015, the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology completed an assessment of their seven (7) degree programs using data collected 2009-2012 (*EB Assessment of BS SLO*). Recognizing the challenges associated with an assessment model that does not allow for timely actions for program improvement, the Environmental Biology department is engaged in an assessment of their assessment processes with support from the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. Chemistry will begin a program review process in Spring/Summer 2022. Open Academy offers an AS to BS bachelor's degree completion program which was approved in 2019. They have developed an assessment plan which will be deployed once there are at least four years of data for analysis (*Sustainability Management Program Evaluation Plan*).

Institutional Response to COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, as per New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo, all instruction switched to online only due to COVID-19. Students left campus and continued the spring 2020 semester remotely. This impacted all classes, including field lab courses. Steps were taken by instructors of field lab courses to provide as much of the field experience as possible. This included videotaping field labs. Faculty taught classes via Zoom and Blackboard. Some gave traditional lectures during the scheduled class period and others employed a flipped classroom model. On April 3, 2020, the Provost implemented a Pass/Fail option for all classes for the spring 2020 semester given the extraordinary circumstances. As result of the continued campus closure, 2020 summer residential field courses taught in the Adirondacks at our remote campuses were cancelled.

On July 1, 2020, the fall 2020 restart plan was made public. Classes for fall 2020 would start on Aug. 24 and end on Nov. 24. Students left for break and reading week and finals took place online following Thanksgiving. ESF offered three types of classes: 1) Face-to-face for some classes with less than 30 students. 2) Flex/hybrid classes in which some face-to-face instruction will be offered simultaneously with online content. 3) Online-only courses. These three modalities included field lab courses. No Pass/Fail Option was allowed for fall 2020. Students living on campus, faculty, and staff were tested regularly for COVID.

On Jan. 7, 2021, the spring 2021 semester plan was made public. The normal semester was condensed into a 13-week semester while satisfying the required contact hours of New York State Department of Education. ESF again offered three types of classes: 1) Face-to-face classes for some classes with less than 30 students. 2) Flex/hybrid classes in which some face-to-face instruction will be offered simultaneously with online content. 3) Online-only courses. These three modalities included field lab courses. No Pass/Fail Option was allowed for spring 2021. Students living on campus, faculty, and staff were tested regularly for COVID. Beginning in fall 2021, ESF returned to in person instruction with CDC and SUNY recommended precautions in classroom spaces including masking and vaccinations mandates. During summer 2021, courses were offered at CLBS, Wanakena, and the Newcomb Campus to a reduced number of students, and per guidance approved by respective county health departments, in order to mitigate for COVID-related risks.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

ESF's design and delivery of a quality STEM undergraduate and graduate student learning experience

reflects the passion, dedication, and drive that our students, faculty, and staff bring to the College's vision and mission every day: Improve Your World. ESF prepares leaders to steward the natural to designed environments. The college offers a wide variety of learning environments from classrooms to wildlands. Given the size of ESF, a strength of the graduate program has been the ability to maintain our Carnegie classification and provide some type of funding for graduate students – including science based and professional degrees. Our faculty are actively involved in research and bring these findings into the classroom in addition to giving undergraduate students chances to participate in their research. At the undergraduate level, the college has a relatively low faculty to student ratio. We actively promote applied-learning and service-learning experiences. Given our size, we have a relatively large number of our undergraduate degree programs accredited by professional organizations and have actively worked to have others externally peer reviewed. This provides evidence of assessment – closing the loop approach to improving degree program effectiveness consistent with the College's Vision, Mission, three Goals and three Guiding Principles.

Areas for Improvement

ESF continues to design and deliver STEM undergraduate and graduate programs reflecting the College's vision, mission, three strategic priorities, and three guiding principles. This strength will be enhanced through continued internal assessment and closing the assessment loop and external accreditation by professional societies and other external peer review processes. Designing and delivering these programs requires hiring and keeping well-qualified faculty. While sometimes challenging given our fiscal constraints, our faculty have demonstrated high levels of scholarship. Data management continues to be an area for improvement. Academic data collected in administrative silos continues to be a challenge, although some of this is unavoidable due to reporting regulations. More easily accessible databases will allow for better strategic planning due to the outcomes from assessments.

Insights

The continuous improvement allowed by the assessment – closing the assessment loop approach requires timely and relevant data. However, developing systems to provide easily accessible timely and relevant data will be useful for more than just assessment in the design and delivery of the student learn experience, these data systems will be useful for monitoring our objective of continual improvement, providing evidence to internal and external constituents of continual improvement consistent with the College's vision and mission, and informing strategic directions of change for the College.

STANDARD IV: SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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

Introduction

This chapter describes how SUNY ESF meets each of the six criteria, all the sub-criterion, and the two related Requirements of Affiliation (*Numbers 8 and 10*) within this Standard.

Clear Policies and Procedures for Access and Success

Personalizing communications and customizing the admissions process were at the heart of the 2019 adoption of the Slate platform for admissions, enrollment management, and student success. While implementation is ongoing, Slate has already provided robust opportunities to support student engagement and process improvements. Providing real-time reporting, enhanced communication opportunities, and automating and integrating with various other College systems has enhanced the experience of prospective students from the start of their interaction with the institution. This commitment has showcased the College's investment in continuous improvement and serves as a guide for clear communication of policies and processes surrounding admission.

Admissions

Admission to ESF is selective and, due to the specialized nature of the academic programs, particular attention is paid to the 'fit' between academic and co-curricular offerings and applicants' interests and abilities in the review of individual credentials. By virtue of the specialized programs of study offered at ESF, students express their areas of interest by their selection of the programs of study to which they apply. Students are asked to identify a first and second choice program to allow the Admissions Committee to evaluate the fit and preparation the applicant has for those choices. They are also asked to prepare an essay explaining their interest in ESF's specialized mission and how their program of study choices will fulfill their educational and career goals. Students may demonstrate their interest in ESF and academic programs by participation in related co-curricular activities, letters of recommendation, or other personal statements.

If other information provided by the student in their application indicates the programs they have selected may not be well-matched with their goals, the applicant is contacted by an Admissions Counselor to clarify their interests and, if appropriate, they are guided to a different choice of program. If not admissible to their first-choice program, students could be admitted to their second choice.

If their academic preparation is not within the profile for first-year entry, they may be offered Guaranteed Transfer if they complete the outlined requirements for admission.

Undergraduate Admissions Policies and Requirements

All applicants for first-year or transfer entry are required to submit the online admissions application (*either the SUNY Application or The Common Application*) and official documentation of high school coursework and any college-level coursework (or equivalent) completed, even if it does not pertain to their intended program of study at ESF. Additional required credentials for each admission pathway are outlined below (*Admissions Policies & Requirements*). International students with or without Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status who apply to ESF are treated identically to other U.S. citizens or permanent residents (*Admissions for Undocumented Students*).

NOTE: As a result of the COVID pandemic, SUNY implemented a test-optional approach for spring 2021, fall 2021, and has now extended this approach through spring 2024. This approach has been adopted by all state-operated campuses.

Multiple admissions pathways exist including: Early Decision First-Year Admission for High School Seniors, Regular First-Year Admission for High School Seniors, Guaranteed Transfer Option for High School Seniors, and Educational Opportunity Program for High School Students (*Admission Information*).

Outstanding high school seniors who select ESF as their first-choice institution may apply for Early Decision admission and, if admitted, must commit to enroll at ESF. Early Decision students may apply to other institutions under Regular consideration, and if admitted to ESF, must withdraw their other applications and commit to enroll at ESF no later than March 15. Early Decision candidates must have a completed application on file by Dec. 1.

Most high school students apply to ESF under Regular First-Year Admission. First Year applicants present strong academic credentials in a college preparatory high school curriculum. A minimum of three units each of college preparatory mathematics and science are required for all majors. For most programs of study, completion of additional units of math and science, or design or art sequences for Landscape Architecture applicants, as well as advanced level coursework (honors or college level) indicates strong preparation for the academic rigor students will experience at ESF. An official high school transcript, including 12th-year first-quarter grades, must be submitted as part of the student's application credentials. Traditionally, applicants are required to forward the results of either the SAT I or ACT examination. Detailed enrollment and admission information can be found as a part of our IPEDs data linked from the institutional effectiveness website (*Enrollment and Admissions Information_ IPEDs*).

Graduate Admissions Policies and Requirements

Admission to graduate studies is conditional upon review and acceptance of an applicant's

credentials by appropriate faculty members and upon the recommendation of the appropriate department chairperson or program director to the Associate Provost for Instruction and Dean of the Graduate School. All applicants must have previously earned a bachelor's degree from a recognized institution with an academic record showing at least a "B" average for junior and senior years of the baccalaureate program or for the master's program if applying to a doctoral program. Applicants must submit a completed application, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, resume, statement of educational professional goals, and nonrefundable fee (*Graduate School Admissions Information*).

Accurate and Comprehensive Information on Finances

Both new and current ESF students are provided with transparent and accurate cost of attendance figures including but not limited to: tuition, fees, living expenses, etc. The cost of attendance is an estimated budget of a student's expected education and essential living expenses (*Cost of Attendance*). This budget, as determined by the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, represents the maximum amount of financial assistance a student can receive in a specific academic period. The cost of attendance budget can vary by student and is subject to a range of contributing factors. Financial aid at ESF is intended to assist students with education and essential cost-of-living expenses. Funds are awarded primarily on the basis of financial need and are coordinated to supplement parent/family support, student employment earnings, savings, and assistance from other sources. Some scholarships and fellowships are awarded based on additional criteria, such as academic achievement or minority student status. Financial support for students begins with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and detailed information regarding eligibility and additional funding opportunities are maintained on the Financial Aid website (*Types of Available Awards*).

ESF and the Office of Financial Aid are aware of the many challenges involved with financing higher education and meeting day-to-day living expenses. It is important for students and families to be well educated about ways to manage personal and family finances. The creation of financial literacy efforts to help students and their families develop good money management skills is at the core of SUNY and ESF's collaboration with the SUNY Smart Track program which offers a wide range of resources and online educational modules (*Financial Literacy*).

By making information easily accessible, by being visible on campus and at new student events, and by helping support the general financial literacy of students, ESF experienced a federal student loan default rate in 2018 (the most recent data available) of 0.6%, which is well below the national average of 7.3% and consistently among the lowest in all of SUNY (*Student Default Rate*).

Educational Support for Underprepared Students

Students' ability to succeed at ESF starts at the point of admission for all students. All new first-year students are required to take an online math placement test. All new transfer students who have not satisfied the math requirement in their program of study are also required to take the math placement exam. The results of the exam are used by the math faculty in conjunction with the student's high

school and/or college math background, to assess preparation and placement recommendations. This information is sent to the Registrar's Office for proper scheduling assignments. Historically, the communication of this requirement and management of its implementation were handled by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. With the creation of the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (IDP) in 2020, responsibility for this support function was transferred to the IDP. The change has resulted in a direct line of communication with the academic units, has taken the Admissions Office out of the middle, and allows students to interact directly with those who are most knowledgeable about these tools.

Beginning in the fall 2019 semester, the ESF Chemistry Department implemented an online knowledge check and learning tool called ALEKS, designed to support and prepare students for college-level chemistry. First-year and transfer students without transfer credit for the chemistry requirement in their program were sent an email from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, on behalf of the Chemistry Department. It was recommended they spend at least 2-3 hours a week in the ALEKS system, engaging in self-paced learning to prepare for their arrival on campus. Students were told that the results on the learning tool would not jeopardize their admission to the College or their choice of program of study. The goal was to provide a refresher in chemistry prior to the start of the school year and to improve their performance in chemistry at ESF in the fall. For fall 2020, the administration of the ALEKS knowledge check and learning tool was moved to the faculty in the Chemistry Department.

Prospective students may choose to apply for admission through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). EOP provides access, academic support, and financial aid to students who show promise for success in college but who, without special consideration, would otherwise not meet the academic qualifications to be offered admission. EOP has a long history at ESF with a significant and extensive remodel over the last three years. Prior to 2017, the program was housed under the Financial Aid Office and functioned primarily as a pathway for admission and a financial aid grant. The program underwent significant revision starting in 2017 when it was reassigned to the Division of Student Affairs and when the College hired a full-time EOP director in fall 2018. Since the arrival of a full-time director, the program now offers a wide variety of services beyond just the financial aid grant. These services are designed to promote student success, e.g. a 3-week EOP Pre-First Year Summer Bridge Program, an EOP Scholars first-year course offered each fall and spring, a comprehensive Academic Recovery Program for EOP students at or near academic probation, regular EOP financial planning and aid counseling, and ongoing 1:1 academic counseling for the full roster. The success of EOP is seen both in student academic performance rates and in the ways that students comment on their experiences in the program. In 2020-2021, 100% of the EOP first-year class in fall 2020 returned for the spring 2021 semester, 88% of the full EOP roster ended the academic year in good academic standing, and 43% earned at least one 3.0 term GPA (*ESF EOP Program*).

Orientation, Advisement, and Counseling Programs to Enhance Retention

The ESF Orientation programs aim to provide information, resources, and support to facilitate students' academic success, social engagement, and to aid in their overall transition to ESF.

Orientation at ESF introduces key resources on campus, provides an introduction to academic life and the opportunity to finalize course scheduling, and offers a variety of social events at ESF and Syracuse University (*Undergraduate Student Orientation*).

At the graduate level, additional presentations focused on faculty/student relationship building and understanding how to thrive in class and as a researcher are offered (*Graduate Student Orientation Agenda*). For undergraduates, as an added opportunity for our student population to connect with each other and the College, class-specific Facebook pages were created. These pages were made strategically to support students' successful transition to ESF and enhance their affinity and knowledge of the College prior to the start of their time at ESF, while also allowing connections and announcements to continue through their time at the College. Additionally, Zoom sessions have been facilitated by Student Affairs and other staff members for students and family members leading up to their matriculation to the College.

Specialized orientation programs exist for international and EOP students. International students are required to attend an orientation prior to that of the campus-wide orientation, which includes an immigration check-in and compliance with SEVIS regulations (*International Student Arrival & Orientation*). In addition, many non-regulatory sessions are focused on cultural adjustments and/or personal safety and include but are not limited to: Culture Shock; Counseling Services; Writing Center; Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Services; University Police Safety Presentations; Title IX and Sexual Assault; and American Classroom 101. EOP students have a required three-week pre orientation focused on: enhancing students' understanding of social and academic expectations at the College, providing opportunities for added interaction with faculty, staff and campus community members, enhancing relationships as a cohort, and discussing strategies for engaging as a method of enhancing their ESF experience.

At ESF, academic advising is managed by a faculty member within the student's field of study. With the arrival of ESF's new President in fall of 2020, four targeted task forces were created, one of which focused on academic advising. Each of the task forces was chaired by a member of the ESF Board of Trustees in partnership with an ESF staff/faculty liaison. At the conclusion of their work, each task force reported back to the President and Executive Cabinet members. In the spring of 2021, the Academic Advising Task Force was convened and charged with the following: explore the benefits and barriers of the current academic advising model at ESF; review expectations, policies, trends, and best practices in academic advising; and provide a list of recommendations for improving advising at the College. The slides used for this presentation are available here (*Task Force Report*). At the time of drafting this report, the following recommendations from the Task Force were being reviewed for implementation or enhancement: review advising infrastructure and role clarification for a Director of Academic Advising; develop a common definition and set of expectations for advisors across departments; enhance current midterm grade reporting, early alert, and academic probation processes; review improvements for student registration process and supporting student satisfaction; and pay particular attention to the experiences of transfer and veteran students in advising (*Transfer Student Advising*).

In fall 2015, Syracuse University (SU) and ESF determined that ESF students would no longer receive counseling or health service from SU. During the 2015-2016 academic year, searches for Counseling Services staff were conducted and completed, which allowed for the delivery of direct counseling support to be offered for the first time on ESF's Syracuse campus in fall 2016. The Office is staffed by a director and two staff therapists. ESF Counseling Services, in the last academic year with only two counselors, saw 221 unique visitors for counseling, had a total of 1021 sessions, and managed 27 crises during day-time hours. The Office saw 10% of the total student population for counseling support. With the successful implementation of Counseling Services, a partnership with Syracuse University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate program has resulted and ESF has begun hosting practicum students each of the last two years. Counseling Services provides individual counseling; crisis management (2 hours each day for crisis walk-ins Monday-Friday); assessments and referrals to long-term counselors; consultations for students, staff, and faculty; and outreach programming on mental health-related topics. In an effort to create opportunities for individuals who cannot attend in person programming/workshops, Counseling Services has created several online presentations geared for faculty and staff on improving their stress management, listening and communication skills, and how to work with students of concern. Counseling Services has created a separate video library for students on issues including mindfulness and meditation, homesickness, resiliency, and self-care among others. Their website also offers several free, anonymous, online screening tools on different mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, autism (*Counseling Services Resources*). For after-hours support and crisis response, Counseling Services has maintained a contract with a third party organization called Protocall, which hires licensed therapists to speak with students after business hours and on the weekends. Protocall counselors will provide empathic listening, assess all calls for safety, offer strategies for calming and grounding, suggest campus and off-campus resources, and will take the necessary steps to contact University Police for transportation to the hospital if needed to manage crises. After every contact with Protocall, Counseling Services receives a summary of all calls to allow for follow up with students.

Student Support Services

Students' successful achievement of their educational goals and post-graduation placement aligns closely with ESF's strategic goal of providing an outstanding student experience. Worthy of highlighting in this section are the advancements being made in academic support services; inclusion, diversity, and equity; international student success, student assistance; and career services.

Effective fall 2021, the Academic Success Center (ASC) has been relocated into newly renovated space and now includes collaborations with the Math Center, Writing Resource Center, Public Speaking Lab, and Digital Storytelling Studio. The ASC supports a peer tutoring program, one-on-one academic coaching, the College's academic recovery program, and a host of academic success workshops (*Academic Success Services*). Additional details on the Academic Success Center were presented as a part of Standard III and the design and delivery of the student learning experience.

To support the recruitment of a talented and diverse student body and consistent with the

commitment to institutional diversity and inclusion, the College created an Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (OIDE) and an Office of International Education (OIE) in 2018. ESF's Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity is led by the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Reporting to the CDO is the Director of Student Inclusion Initiatives and Special Assistant to the Chief Diversity Officer, who, in addition to supporting the CDO, provides service to underrepresented students, including domestic students of color. The Director of Student Inclusion Initiatives has a dotted line supervisory relationship to the Dean for Student Affairs. The Director helps promote cultural growth and understanding across campus through activities and services specifically designed to support student members of the ESF community. This helps students to more effectively interact with others in an increasingly diverse and global society. One goal is to welcome and include IDE in all its forms, including the broadest possible range of cultures, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in each department and division. The Office works to see beyond the traditional definition of diversity and is working to erase inequality. They use a framework that acknowledges areas of individual differences in personality, learning styles, life experiences, and group or social differences that may manifest through personality, learning styles, life experiences, and group or social differences. OIDE has adopted a definition of diversity that also incorporates differences of race and ethnicity; sex; gender, and gender identity or expression; age; sexual orientation; country of origin; language; disability; emotional health; socioeconomic status; and affiliations that are based on cultural, political, religious, or other identities. As the College grows, so do the demographic shifts that are critical to success. It only makes sense that the faces of ESF reflect that change as well – which is why IDE is a key part of the College strategy (*Inclusion, Diversity and Equity*).

The creation of the Office of International Education (OIE) committed administrative infrastructure to support international student advising and success and study abroad (*Office of International Education*). OIE was formally established to become a three-person unit with a Director of International Education, a Coordinator of International Student and Scholar Services, and a Coordinator of Education Abroad. This expansion of services aimed at ensuring the recruitment, admission, retention, and success of international students as well as the ever-expanding education abroad programs. The OIE Director acts as the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) F-1 Program, working to ensure compliance with federal regulations including maintaining valid F-1 SEVIS certification, and applying for SEVIS F-1 Recertification every two years. They also serve as the ESF Exchange Visitor Advisor (EVA) for the SUNY EVP Consortium and ensure compliance with federal regulations including maintaining valid SUNY EVP Consortium Membership, and generating J-1 reports annually in July to be submitted to SUNY Office of Global Affairs and then to the Department of Homeland Security. Both the OIE Director and Coordinator of International and Student Scholar Services assist international students in providing immigration document services including initial and transfer I-20s/DS-2019s, employment authorizations (*CPT, OPT, AT, etc.*), and document updates (*extensions, dependent additions, etc.*) for initial and active F-1 students and J-1 visitors. They also serve as emergency points of contact for individual, regional, national and/or international crises and emergencies affecting international students.

All three OIE staff oversee other international student and scholar transition services including

orientation, retention programming, cultural celebrations, inclusion/diversity/equity-based training, and other workshops not limited to health insurance, student employment, and career services-based workshops. They collaborate with other offices to assist in the recruitment and yield of international students, and direct international students to resources that will assist them in finding housing and meeting other transition needs such as banks, social security numbers, cell phones, and local transportation. OIE staff members advise two international clubs on campus – the International Student Association and the Chinese Student and Scholar Association.

In response to the growing need to support students out of the classroom, as a mechanism for in-class success and continued progress toward degree completion, the creation of a student assistance role took form in 2014. Using a non-clinical case management approach to this work, staff meet with students struggling academically at the College. This direct contact has increased student referrals to critical resources such as counseling services, disability resources, and health resources in the Syracuse area. Serving as a direct liaison to Syracuse University’s Center for Disability Resources, Student Support at ESF has provided a point of contact for students, faculty, and access counselors to interface and navigate the institution’s resources more effectively, making a more seamless provision of academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Most impactful has been the notification and advocacy to faculty on behalf of students who are struggling. A formal absence notification process for student emergencies has been developed and implemented, as well as messaging when appropriate to instructors regarding the request for additional support or consideration for extenuating circumstances. A student of concern report has been developed and marketed to faculty and staff for use when student behavior causes concern. While most faculty will call or email directly, the formal report is available on the website (*Students of Concern*). Student Support meets with approximately 12% of the student body annually to review concerns and provide connections to campus resources. Because it is not uncommon for students who may be experiencing a crisis to take a temporary pause in their academic plan, the College’s official withdrawal and readmission processes are housed in this office to streamline a student’s departure and return when extenuating circumstances have played a role in their decision. In 2015, New York State passed NYS 129-B (*Enough is Enough*) that requires students to receive annual training on issues related to sexual assault, dating/ domestic violence, and stalking. Student Support provided leadership in organizing the delivery of this annual training program as there is no health service or health promotions office that exist on campus. In 2017, ESF received a grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (*DOJ*) to further support education and prevention work in these areas. We have just received notification that we have received a second cycle of funding to continue our efforts in this area.

Advancements in the work of Career Services and the support for students in reaching their career goals and outcomes has been supported by the institution’s commitment to providing an outstanding student experience. A priority is to enhance the College’s visibility as an authoritative source of environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts nationally and internationally. With the addition of a Career Advisor in 2015 and an Employer Relations Coordinator in 2018, the Office of Career Services has expanded its service delivery to include a range of additional employer networking events, job shadowing opportunities, a graduate and professional school fair, and multiple career and

internship fairs (*Career Services-Service Snapshot*). A second of the task forces convened by President Mahoney in the spring of 2021 focused on internship and career opportunities. The goal of this task force was to receive input, identify areas of further investigation, and propose suggestions for changes and/or improvements to enhance the student experience. Six findings and recommendations resulted from the group targeting a range of topics from space and visibility, to enhancing internships and curricular integration of career readiness skills. At the time of writing this description, an action plan was being developed for immediate implementation efforts on four of the six recommendations (*Internship and Career Opportunities*).

Student Success

A continued commitment to student academic success and the overall experience at ESF has as its measure student persistence from year-to-year, as well as tracking student completion to graduation. ESF's first to second year persistence for undergraduate students who began their studies in fall of 2019 and returned in fall of 2020 was 86% (*Student Persistence Data (IPEDS)*). ESF's four-year graduation rate for first-time students starting in 2014 was 66%. The six-year graduation rate for first-time students who started in 2014 was 77% (*Student Persistence Data (IPEDS)*). Although these persistence and graduation rates are higher than average, the College hired a new Associate Provost for Enrollment Management in the fall of 2020. The Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and the Vice Provost and Dean for Student Affairs are working in partnership to reinvigorate the College Retention Council. This group, charged with identifying key factors that affect student success and retention within the College community and recommending interventions that address these factors, will focus on retaining students by devising common sense, campus-wide strategies that empower students to persist to graduation. This newly reconfigured group began meeting in fall 2021 (*ESF Retention Council Charge*).

Policies Surrounding Transfer Credit and Alternative Learning

ESF does not accept experiential learning, other non-academic learning, or competency-based assessments as fulfilling credits toward a degree. The detailed policies and procedures guiding the acceptance of transfer credit at ESF are presented below. In general, only coursework completed at institutions that are fully accredited by one of six regional accrediting agencies will be considered for possible transfer credit toward ESF degree requirements (*Admission Policies & Requirements*).

Regular Transfer Admission

ESF enrolls more than 40% of its new students each year as transfer students from other colleges and universities; two-year, four-year, public, private, in-state and out-of-state. As a result, the culture at ESF is very accepting of transfer students, and faculty and staff are very familiar with, and responsive to, the issues pertaining to transfer students.

Transfer students' admissibility is based on how much of their previous college-level coursework

applies to the requirements of their intended major at ESF, overall academic performance at their previous colleges, and specific interest in ESF programs. For most programs, a significant emphasis is placed on students' backgrounds in mathematics and science.

Transfer applicants must submit official transcripts and examination scores from all college-level coursework completed, an official high school transcript or equivalent, supplemental application information, and essay question response. Students who have completed fewer than 30 semester hours of college-level coursework are required to submit copies of their high school transcript and SAT I or ACT test scores as part of the admissions process.

Students who apply as transfers to ESF are expected to have successfully completed some portion of the established required sequence of courses appropriate to their intended major at the College. Applicants to Landscape Architecture should have some background in art or graphic design, and they are required to submit a portfolio for studio placement. Students attending one of the pre-ESF cooperative transfer colleges will find information on course equivalencies for all programs of study on the College website.

Transfer students applying for bachelor degree programs at the Syracuse campus should have a 2.80 (A=4.00) or higher cumulative grade point average at the last institution they attended full-time. Those applying for associate degree programs at the Ranger School campus should have a 2.50 or higher cumulative grade point average at the last institution they attended full-time. Applicants with cumulative grade point averages below these thresholds will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, transfer applicants may be updated for consideration for a future entry date, for one or two semesters beyond their original entry date, to allow them the opportunity to complete additional core degree requirements and/or improve academic performance. Students with cumulative grade point averages of less than 2.00 will not be considered for transfer admission to SUNY-ESF. Only coursework with grades of C or higher will transfer to meet ESF degree requirements.

Cooperative Transfer Colleges

ESF maintains transfer articulation agreements with 38 two-year colleges in New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. ESF has established course-to-course equivalencies to assist students with course selection prior to transferring to ESF. Students should follow these guidelines when registering for courses to maximize the number of credits that will transfer to ESF. These agreements are updated annually based on changes to the curricula at ESF or at the partner institutions. For a listing of the Cooperative Transfer Colleges, go to (*Cooperative Transfer Colleges*).

Onondaga Community College (OCC) in Syracuse, NY is the largest feeder college for transfer students to ESF and, therefore, a more formalized agreement was established in the fall of 2019. Onondaga Community College President Dr. Casey Crabill and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) Interim President Dr. David Amberg signed a new 5-year articulation agreement, giving OCC students pursuing degrees in Liberal Arts & Sciences: Mathematics & Science a seamless pathway

into 18 different bachelor's degree programs at ESF. OCC students who complete work toward an associate degree in Mathematics & Science with a 2.8 grade point average or higher will be eligible to transfer to ESF with junior status.

The 18 new program-to-program articulation agreements are in the following OCC to ESF majors:

- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Aquatics & Fisheries Science B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Biochemistry B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Biotechnology B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Chemistry B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Environmental Biology B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Environmental Health B.S.
- MTS.AS Biology Specialization to Forest Ecosystem Science B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Conservation Biology B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Construction Management B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Environmental Education and Interpretation B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Environmental Science B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Environmental Studies B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Forrest Health B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Forest Resources Management B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Natural Resources Management B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Sustainability Energy Management B.S.
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Sustainability Management B.S. (on-line)
- MTS.AS General Degree Program to Wildlife Science B.S.

Additional information on policies and procedures guiding the transferring of credits between ESF and Syracuse University can be found in the College Catalog (*Admission Policies & Requirements*). Additional information on ESF Ranger School admission and internal transfer policies are also available in the College Catalog.

Safe and Secure Maintenance of Student Information and Records

ESF follows the SUNY records and retention policy 6609 (*Records Retention - SUNY*) and corresponding records retention schedules. ESF also adheres to the SUNY FERPA compliance policy 6600 (*FERPA -SUNY*) where protected student information is only released with student consent following the outlined policies and procedures from the College (*FERPA _ ESF Registrar*).

The last five years have seen significant change and advancement in maintenance and security efforts surrounding student information. The College made the strategic decision to transition away from a number of “home grown” systems managing student information and records toward the adoption of Banner, Argos, and Degree Works. A soft launch of the Banner system began in the fall of 2021 and was

accompanied by the College's transition to using a multi-factor authentication system, called Duo MFA, for protecting faculty and staff access to campus systems (*DUO Authentication*).

Extra-curricular Activities

ESF offers athletic, student life, and other extracurricular activities that are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles and procedures that govern all other programs. ESF follows the SUNY policy 3901 for the transparent accounting, use, and disbursement of student activities fees (*Student Activity Fees - SUNY*). ESF also follows the SUNY policy 3000 governing intercollegiate athletic competition and funding (*Intercollegiate Athletics Fee_SUNY*). Detailed financial policies and procedures can be found within.

Athletics

The intercollegiate athletics program at ESF is built on a firm commitment to supporting the academic mission of the College, with the understanding that intercollegiate athletes are, first and foremost, students. ESF student-athletes are dedicated to completing their degree programs and succeeding in life after graduation, and our intercollegiate athletics program helps them to achieve those goals. ESF athletes participate in the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA), which establishes compliance with eligibility and standards for participation. Additional details surrounding the role of athletics and policies governing student athlete participation can be found in the Student-Athlete Handbook (*Student Athlete Handbook*).

The ESF Mighty Oaks Athletics program consists of nearly 200 student-athletes, competing in 12 sports totaling over 100 events a season. ESF competes in the Hudson Valley Athletic Conference (HVIAC) and United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA), which provide opportunities for conference and national championships. ESF student-athletes train and compete at some of the premier athletics venues in Central New York. In 2019, the Mighty Oaks Athletics program launched their first “home field” with the creation and opening of the Tully Soccer Fields (*Athletics Facilities*).

Student Government and Clubs and Organizations

ESF has both an Undergraduate Student Association (USA) and Graduate Student Association (GSA) that function under separate and distinct sets of bylaws, policies, and procedures (*USA-By-Laws & GSA_bylaws*). Both groups are responsible for allocating resources from corresponding student activity fees; planning and coordinating events; managing connections between students, faculty, and staff; representing student perspectives through voting membership in Academic Governance; and representing the student perspective in campus discussions. USA also serves as the umbrella organization for all student clubs and organizations on campus. With over 40 clubs on campus, student life at ESF is an important facet of our campus culture. Student clubs and organizations at ESF add layers of traditions, outings, bonding opportunities, community service, and professional development for students who choose to get involved (*Involvement & Leadership*).

Student Support Services by Third-Party Providers

There is limited third-party vendor-based product use across the College. There is only one instance and the platform is being used to enhance the College's ability to provide its students with mental health support after hours and on weekends. A description of this third-party provider and their function is below:

Protocall is used by the Office of Counseling Services to support students' mental health needs after hours and on weekends. The College contracted Protocall in the fall of 2016, from the inception of the office being on the ESF campus. The vendor speaks to any students who call, provides empathic listening, assesses all calls for safety, offers strategies for calming and grounding, suggests campus and off-campus resources, and will take the necessary steps to contact University Police for transportation to the hospital if needed to manage crises. The service is assessed regularly by reviewing a transcript of every student contact with Protocall, allowing for follow-up with individual students as needed.

Assessment

Annual functional area assessments occur for each administrative unit across campus, including those within the Division of Student Affairs. This formalized process is tied closely with individual performance programs, evaluations, and budgeting (*End of Year Administrative Processes*). Results of these assessment practices are used to evaluate effectiveness in meeting the mission and goals for the Division. With continuous improvement as a guide and the goal of enhancing the student experience, administrative assessment results are compared with the results from a number of national, regional, and local student surveys that ESF participates in, including: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) and the SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) to form a picture and understanding of service delivery and opportunities for improving the student experience. A selection of examples include:

- Local student survey outcomes, coupled with national survey data, identified food insecurity, the state of having limited or uncertain access to food, as an issue on college campuses across the country. To address this problem, ESF established an on-campus food pantry for students who may be experiencing hunger and/or struggling to attain food due to financial hardship. The food pantry is named to honor Beth Ann Newkirk, an ESF student who died June 11, 2019 in a house fire. Beth came to ESF as a transfer student in the fall of 2018 in Environmental Biology. She used the Syracuse University Food Pantry and if she was still with us, would be an avid supporter of ESF's pantry. Beth was described as "a glowing bright light" and "a joy to be around." It is a great privilege for ESF to name the pantry to honor her spirit. Beth's Bounty: The Food Pantry at ESF is run by Alpha Xi Sigma, ESF's Honors Society student organization (*Food Pantry*). It receives support from the Division of Student Affairs and the Food Pantry Advisory Team.
- The Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity formalized an initiative called Project Inclusion, a two-year, campus-wide, cultural climate assessment, to review university policies, programs, and

strategic initiatives around diversity, equity, and inclusion. With input from students, faculty, and staff, the first phase of Project Inclusion built on the momentum started with the 2016 Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Strategic Plan and Living Document (*IDE-Strategic-Plan*). A Project Inclusion Steering Committee was created to organize assessment results and to create baseline dimensions to help guide change moving forward. The fall of 2021 saw the start of the second phase of Project Inclusion. The Office of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity (OIDE) and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity Committee (IDEC) have facilitated an ongoing, College-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion (IDE) resources inventory with the following objectives: improve the coordination, planning, and visibility of the College's IDE resources (affinity groups, awards, councils/committees, courses/curricula, education/training, events, personnel, policies, programs, publications, research, services, etc.) amongst the ESF community; detail and curate community-wide antiracist resources in an effort to advance racial equity and justice; create an interactive, searchable IDE resource database and mapping tool to facilitate a vibrant and strategic, College-wide exchange of information, opportunities, and best practices; establish an institutional baseline for IDE efforts across all levels and divisions at the College and for all campus constituencies; activate intentional actions that positively alter climate and increase the number of historically underrepresented people at ESF; and develop a comprehensive report of the College's progress toward its strategic goal of advancing diversity and inclusion.

- The College's First Destination Survey (FDS) outcomes regularly show an average of 16% of each graduating class heading directly to graduate school after ESF. Coupled with data from a local survey on alumni outcomes five years after ESF, it was seen that as many as 50% of ESF alumni had either completed or were enrolled in a graduate program by this time. In 2016, the Office of Career Services created a Graduate and Professional School Fair, hosted each fall to enhance the opportunities for students and alumni to connect with graduate schools. In addition, the Office of Career Services created a preparation series leading up to the Fair to help prepare students/alumni for success in advancing their academic pursuits (*Graduate Fair Report 2021*).
- At ESF, academic advising has been the primary responsibility of each academic department. Academic advisors are primarily faculty, except for two professional academic advisors. The expressed needs and desires of students have consistently been recorded through results from NSSE data and USA resolutions, as well as shared information collected from the First-Year Experience Task Force. In addition to student satisfaction data, the experience of academic departments and chairs and the challenges they have faced when serving students' advising needs, exploring opportunities for further improvement, and working to ensure all students have an equitable advising experience has also been well-documented. The 2021 Advising Task Force commissioned by the new ESF President has set the stage for change to improve the experience of students and faculty in advising.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, then New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo directed all college campuses to switch to online instruction. ESF students left campus for Spring Break 2020 and completed their semester remotely. The Division of Student Affairs and other student-facing functions pivoted quickly to begin offering programs, resources, and supports to students remotely. This included shifting

to remote provision of mental health counseling, academic supports including tutoring, career advisement, and general student support among other initiatives.

The next two semesters, fall 2020 and spring 2021, continued in an amended way as students were given the opportunity to take classes in varying formats – in-person, flex/hybrid, and fully remote. The provision of student support services and programs continued to be challenging to do remotely but staff have been committed from the start to support students as best they can with the limitations and challenges we've all faced. New student orientation was offered to students in a fully remote way with some sessions being held synchronously while most were offered asynchronously via Blackboard. We continued providing direct counseling, career coaching, tutoring, and student support to students in a remote format primarily using Zoom or the phone. We have seen a significant decrease in the number of student conduct cases since the onset of the pandemic, but we have managed this in a remote way as well. There was limited in-person connection with students and student organizations during this period, but staff members in Student Affairs worked to maintain their connections with students and the provision of services to best support students.

Fall 2021 saw a broadening of in-person classes and interactions including in-person student meetings and direct support, in-person meetings for student organizations, and limited athletic participation.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

After this critical review and analysis of information surrounding support of the student experience at ESF, it is evident that the College meets the criterion for MSCHE Standard IV accreditation. Our review also supports that ESF is in compliance with the identified Requirements of Affiliation (ROA) numbers 8 and 10. The College has clear processes and procedures for admitting and retaining quality students and an array of services and experiences to support their success.

The review found the following to be the major areas of strength within this Standard:

- 1) The College has committed to an enhanced experience for international students and study abroad opportunities.
- 2) The College has invested heavily in advancing the safety and security of student information and records. This investment will pay dividends with enhanced access to data and information to communicate in a more customized fashion with students.
- 3) Administrative infrastructure in Career Services has resulted in enhanced student opportunities and career readiness support.
- 4) ESF continues to make progress toward its strategic goal of advancing diversity and inclusion.

5) Access to information on admission and financial aid is well documented and readily available for easy access by prospective students and their families.

Areas for Improvement

The above outlined strengths and success are tied to the College's goal of providing an outstanding student experience. With this as a foundation, the College should formalize and accelerate its attention and work on advancing the recommendations of the recent Advising Task Force.

Insights

A continued commitment to an outstanding student experience at ESF should honor the changing nature of students and their needs. The ability to respond to the growing needs of students relative to advising, mental health, and overall support, with ongoing customized attention and assessment, while focusing on continuous improvement remains a priority and a model for making progress.

STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Clearly Stated Educational Goals

All academic program requirements, course descriptions, accreditation information, and academic policies and procedures are contained in the annual Academic Catalog. Students are responsible for meeting the expectations contained in the academic catalog at their time of matriculation. Departmental websites offer further admissions information, access to program faculty details, program-specific opportunities, and details about the program history and expectations. Any information not clarified by the program website can be addressed by the “Request Information” field on the screen, which allows a student to enter their name and email address along with a question or comment that will be directed to ESF admissions and/or program specific staff as appropriate.

Much of the same information is available for graduate programs in each department as well, including course descriptions, degree program details, general information, information about available advanced certificates, as well as highlighted information about current graduate students in the program. The website is dynamic and connected to the course catalog to enhance the consistency of information, messaging, and marketing to ensure all information distributed to current and prospective students is consistent and correct.

Organized and Systematic Assessments

The College offers a number of undergraduate and graduate programs that are accredited by professional associations with discipline specific standards for evaluating student achievement of curricular goals. These agencies each offer a tailored format that outlines the expectations for establishing defensible curricular goals that are assessed on a periodic basis. For those programs that do not hold professional accreditation through a discipline-specific agency, we have adapted the structure and format for the organized and systematic assessment of programs that are not accredited by an outside organization. These programs include Environmental Studies (BS), Environmental Science (BS), programs in Environmental Biology (BS), Chemistry (BS). The process for the assessment of graduate programs is described in Standard III – Curriculum. In addition to periodic assessment of the degree programs, each department also prepares an Annual Report for the Provost which includes faculty workload information that is distributed by the Assistant Director for Assessment & Institutional Research. The following table outlines our current assessment cycle for each undergraduate academic program and externally accredited Master’s Programs.

Table 2. Program Review Schedule

| Program Name | Initial Re-view Year | Most Current Review Year | Accrediting Agency | Site Visit Complete | Next Program Review |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Paper Engineering (BS) | 2001 | 2018 | ABET | 2018 | 2024 |
| Bioprocess Engineering (BS) | 2010 | 2018 | ABET | 2018 | 2024 |
| Chemistry (BS, all programs) | N/A | 2014 | Internal Program Review | N/A | 2022 |
| Environmental Biology (BS, all programs) | N/A | 2015 | Internal Program Review | N/A | 2023 |
| Environmental Resources Engineering (BS) | 2010 | 2018 | ABET | 2018 | 2024 |
| Environmental Health (BS) | 2017 | 2021 | EHAC | 2017 | 2026 |
| Environmental Science (BS) | N/A | 2020 | N/A | External Program Review Pending | 2027 |
| Environmental Studies (BS) | 2011 | 2017 | External Program Review | 2017 | 2024 |
| Landscape Architecture (BLA, MLA) | 1957 | 2018 | LAAB | 2018 | 2024 |
| Sustainability Management (Online) | 2019 (New Program) | 2021 | NC-SARA | N/A | 2022 |
| | | 2022 | Internal Program Review | | 2028 |
| Land Surveying Technology (AAS) | 2009 | 2016 | ABET | 2016 | 2022 |
| Forest Technology (AAS) | 2011 | 2011 | SAF | 2011 | 2022 |
| Environmental & Natural Resources Conservation (AAS) | 2011 | 2011 | Internal Program Review | 2011 | 2022 |
| Construction Management (BS) | 2021 | 2021 | ACCE | Candidate Program | |
| Forest Resources Management (BS) | 1935 | 2014 | SAF | 2014 | 2024 |
| Forest Ecosystem Science (BS) | 2014 | 2014 | SAF | 2014 | 2024 |
| Master of Forestry (MF) | 2014 | 2014 | SAF | 2014 | 2024 |
| Natural Resources Management (BS) | 2014 | 2014 | SAF | 2014 | 2024 |
| Sustainable Energy Management (BS) | 2012 | 2021 | Internal Program Review | 2021 | 2025 |

General Education Assessment

At the System level, SUNY released their proposal for a revised General Education Framework that continues to support the SUNY Seamless Transfer initiative while delivering a broad and interdisciplinary foundation to all SUNY students, regardless of the SUNY campus where they study. The Division of Interdisciplinary Programs was established at ESF to provide an appropriate structure and dedicated leadership for the foundational skills the faculty and staff in the ESOL, Math, and Writing, Rhetoric, and Communications program provide to students, separate from a department that is more concerned with externally sponsored research. This process has been ongoing for several years, beginning in fall 2018 with the decision by the Provost at that time to “incubate” the General Education programming in the Environmental Studies department, which entailed shifting the Math program from the Sustainable Resources Management (then Forest and Natural Resources Management) department to join the Writing, Rhetoric, and Communications Program in the Environmental Studies Department.

General Education programming delivery and the assessment thereof is monitored both at the campus level and as the SUNY System level. Beginning in fall 2020, ESF established the Division of Interdisciplinary Program to capture General Education program delivery, the delivery of “service” courses in Math, Writing, and ESOL, and the collection of support services coordinated and administered by the Math, Writing, and ESOL faculty (*Digital Storytelling Studio, Writing Resource Center, Math Center, ESOL services, and Public Speaking Lab*). These faculty routinely work together to support undergraduate and graduate student as appropriate, as well as provide opportunities for on campus employment to undergraduate and graduate students as tutors and student assistants (*Division of Interdisciplinary Programs Annual Report*).

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, the collection of programs and the associated faculty and staff were successful in establishing leadership responsibilities (*Division of Interdisciplinary Programs Org Chart*), program structure, and selected a name for the unit that best reflected our position within the curriculum of the College. The 2021-2022 academic year has been focused on building relationships with other units on campus (Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, Office of Student Affairs, Office of International Education, and Moon Library, for example) to coordinate how ESF will meet the forthcoming guidelines and expectations for SUNY General Education programming (*SUNY General Education Framework*). We are positioned to deliver this foundational coursework and co-curricular experiences effectively and anticipate using the same framework as other non-accredited units at ESF employ for program assessment.

Faculty Assessment

Faculty at ESF have appointments describing work responsibilities split among teaching, research, and service. These appointment responsibilities are used in annual evaluations and the promotion and tenure process. The splits are agreed upon by the faculty member and their department chair and recorded in a document signed by both individuals. In the past, each department defined its

own scale for what a 40% teaching requirement meant which led to inequities across campus. These inequities are being addressed methodically. Research is evaluated based on the faculty member's discipline and percent allocation. For example, publishing in peer-reviewed journals associated with the faculty member's discipline and grantsmanship. Service refers to participation and leadership in furthering the faculty member's professional discipline, education of the public, and participation and leadership in department and college committees and governance. This structure provides students with opportunities to interact with faculty on committees, as well as in class, during office hours, and casually around campus. Faculty advisors encourage students to seek them out for assistance with professional guidance, research and internship opportunities, as well as academic and personal support. ESF Seniors consistently report engaging in the High Impact Practices, as defined by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), completion of a culminating senior experience, working with a faculty member on a research project, and participation in an internship or related experience (*NSSE14 Snapshot*, *NSSE17 Snapshot*, *NSSE20 Snapshot*). All faculty who teach regardless of title participate in an end of course evaluation system. The end of the course evaluations are submitted voluntarily by students in the class. The system being used by ESF is contracted through IASystems. These end of the course evaluations are used by Department Chairs annually to assess teaching effectiveness of all faculty. Faculty use these evaluations as part of their Annual Reports and as part of the Appointment, Promotion, and Continuing Appointment (*Tenure*) process.

Alumni Placement Assessment

The most recent graduating class ESF has published data for is the Class of 2020, which includes a total of 601 December 2019, May 2020, and August 2020 ESF degree recipients. The overall response rate for the Class of 2020 was 65.4% (n = 393) (*First Destination Report, Class of 2020*). Of the respondents, 93% reported that they are employed full-time or part-time, or they are currently attending graduate school. 82.5% of those who are employed have a position related to their major at ESF, and 73% of those employed secured their position within 6 months of graduation. The average base salary for undergraduates who reported being employed was \$48,000 across all majors, with a calculated median salary of \$45,200. The geographic dispersal of ESF graduates to employment includes 1% employed internationally, 8% employed in the Western US, 7% in the South, 4% accepting positions in the Midwest, and 80% remaining in the Northeast region of the US. Of those in the Northeast 58% of undergraduates remained in New York, with 40% staying in Central New York. 52% of graduate students remained in New York, with 54% of them staying in Central New York. This is important to consider within the context of ESF being part of the SUNY system, as it demonstrates that ESF is preparing graduates to represent their SUNY education outside of New York, while retaining a significant amount of talent within New York State, particularly in the Central New York region. ESF graduates who went on to pursue graduate education dispersed nationally and internationally in a comparable way, with 76% attending graduate school in the Northeastern United States. Overall, institutional data suggest that ESF is preparing graduates for employment and continuing education in the fields of study that are central to the ESF mission.

ESF uses several mechanisms to sustain the assessment of student achievement, including

programmatic accreditation, program review for non-accredited programs, and department and faculty annual reports. These reports are available to the academic department and are important data sources for program continuous improvement efforts at the department level. The results of these assessment strategies are communicated to campus stakeholders through participation in site visits, formal report documents submitted to the Provost's Office, data reporting for IPEDS submissions, the institutional fact book dashboards, and ad hoc data requests made to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. As programs seek accreditation candidacy or reaffirmation of accreditation, the Assistant Director for Assessment and Institutional Research routinely helps faculty identify the type and scope of data the need to meet the expectations of the accrediting body and mines that data from SUNY System and institutional databases.

Use of Assessment Results

Assisting students in improving their learning

ESF's new president, Joanie Mahoney, launched a presidential task force in spring 2021 to address academic advising, specifically in the first and second year of a student's experience. The task force provided additional improvements and recommendations, some of the recommendations aligned with the continued work of the First-Year Experience Task Force. Some of the notable recommendations were to develop a Director of Academic Advising to coordinate a new model training and support of both academic and professional advising staff. The inclusion of mandatory midterm grade reporting was a repeated recommendation, and we look to include this as a general best practice in our new grade reporting system, Banner. This will increase grade transparency, enhance our academic alert process, and assist advisers and students make informed decisions regarding a student's academic transcript and progress. The Advising Task Force also offered clearer recommendations on how to involve advisors in the creation of a common rubric, and soft skill development plan, for the ESF 132 courses. Proactive advising also encouraged students to think about experiential learning opportunities, internships, and career goals early on in their academic career.

The First-Year Experience Task Force Report highlighted many areas for improvement and enhancement of the student experience in the spring of 2019 (*First Year Experience Task Force Executive Summary 2019*). The campus community was very engaged with the process, and after reporting the findings, many stakeholders have assisted with implementing the recommendations over the past two years. Many recommendations have been achieved, and were completed ahead of schedule despite challenges with COVID-19. Some of the most notable, and high priority, implementations were: the hiring of a Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion programs for underrepresented students. Dr. Lizette Rivera joined our community has implemented so and grown so many affinity groups and initiatives, and is now working on the creation of a new Brave Space on campus, and during the pandemic assisted in the creation of a virtual Brave Space for students to join in community, the OIDE office has also increased the number of trainings on implicit bias, microaggressions, and SafeZone trainings for faculty, staff, and students. The EOP Director, Kailyn Wright, expanded the summer

program to a 3-week virtual program which assists students by introducing them to first-year faculty and curriculum, academic skill development, cohort bonding and affinity, as well as an introduction to key support staff to assist with academic transition. To assist students with their academic transition, and ensure correct placement in math courses, we have launched a new academic adaptive learning and testing service, ALEKS to assist students over the summer evaluate their skill level in both math and chemistry. This information is helpful to first year advisors in building the first semester schedule, but this learning platform also helps students identify any achievement gaps and produces customized learning modules to help build their confidence and ability. First-year faculty have also been very proactive in the coordination of first-year course exam dates, and decreasing class sizes for first year courses. One of the more prominent themes during the task force was regarding academic advising at ESF.

General Education:

After a two-year “incubation period” in Environmental Studies, General Education programming has been housed in a newly created academic division, the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (IDP), which is responsible for the assessment of General Education programming as well as delivering ESOL support, the Writing Resource Center, the Math Lab, the Writing, Rhetoric and Communications Program, the Math Program, the Public Speaking Lab, and the Digital Storytelling Studio. In spring 2021, the State University of New York published a new framework for general education programming expectations for SUNY institutions. This new framework aligns well with the structure of the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs because it invites cross-departmental conversations, coordinates services that benefit all students, and provides a framework to assess and subsequently communicate the value of these opportunities to the entire campus community. An additional benefit of the new SUNY General Education framework is that it is designed to be fully integrated throughout the student experience, rather than a discrete list of required coursework. A new exciting development for fall 2021 was the grand opening of our newly renovated Academic Success Center in Moon Library, currently co-located with several of the support services housed in the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs such as the Writing Resource Center, Public Speaking Lab, Math Lab, and Digital Storytelling Studio. This new space will include new tutoring space, team rooms, as well as a new inviting lounge space and office space. The location also allows for close proximity to other academic support professionals to create a one-stop-shop atmosphere to make the process of asking for help simple and accessible at ESF.

Improving Pedagogy and Curriculum:

We are actively exploring ways to address first-year course completion and student retention through increasing summer course offerings and academic support opportunities. We also plan to utilize information from ALEKS to develop targeted and proactive outreach efforts to students who might need additional support, particularly in their first year of study. We have made many strides and hope to continue to progress and improve the student experience at ESF.

Reviewing Academic Programs and Support Services

Committee on Curriculum:

The committee is composed of eight (8) voting faculty members representing the academic departments (Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Environmental and Forest Biology, Environmental Resource Engineering, Environmental Studies, Landscape Architecture, and Sustainable Resources Management) and the Library. The College President and the Executive Chair of Faculty Governance or their designees are also voting members. Non-voting members are the Associate Provost for Instruction and Dean of the Graduate School, Registrar, an undergraduate student representative and a graduate student representative. The committee chair may invite visitors and recognize them in discussion. Committee meetings are open to all members of the Faculty. This committee is responsible for all matters that pertain to the development, modification, and removal of courses and curricula at the College including: i) support and administration; ii) content and interrelationship of courses and curricula; iii) instructional methods; iv) degree requirements; and v) outcomes and compliance with College and SUNY policies that pertain to curriculum. Once an action has been voted out of the Committee on Curriculum, it is presented at an Academic Governance meeting for approval by ESFs faculty.

Committee on Instruction Quality and Academic Standards:

This committee, in order to exercise its responsibility for the conduct of the College's instructional program, shall be concerned with: promoting and supporting best practices in teaching excellence; assessment of the College curriculum, including general education assessment; promoting quality academic advisement; setting standards for evaluating student academic performance; reviewing policies regarding recruitment and admission of both graduate and undergraduate students; creating, reviewing and assessing academic policies; evaluating the quality of instruction; and evaluation of student probation and dishonesty. This committee is also responsible for the standardized syllabus template that is recommended highly for all courses taught at ESF. A copy of the template is available in the evidence inventory.

Professional Development Activities

The Hardy Shirley Faculty Mentoring Colloquium:

The Hardy Shirley Faculty Mentoring Colloquium is a long-established faculty event, typically run between the fall and spring semesters, that is supported by a named foundation fund overseen by the Provost. The TLC began assisting in the planning and administration of the event during the 2019-20 Academic year, partnering with different Academic Governance Committees to plan and run the Colloquium, with the core principle of the event being an opportunity for faculty to collaborate and learn from one another, particularly across departmental units, on issues related to the key areas of faculty responsibilities. Examples of recent Colloquium themes are using active

learning in teaching, successes and innovations from teaching in remote/hybrid formats during the pandemic, and enhancing research effectiveness at ESF. The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) was established as part of the Open Academy office in 2017 with the initial tasks of building capacity for and supporting the development of the first distance education programs to add the delivery method to ESF's accreditation. Following the launch of ESF's first two distance education programs at the graduate level, the TLC was expanded with a dedicated instructional designer in 2018 to support to development of an undergraduate upper division bachelor's distance education program, reflecting the increased need in instructional design support given the number of courses and faculty involved. Following the successful launch of the undergraduate program, the TLC staff's support has continued for the development of new curricula, and more general support of instruction at the college.

The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC):

The TLC offers regular workshops around instruction in a variety of formats each semester, and maintains an expanding digital archive resources and recordings from those workshops. Examples of some TLC offerings include a Book Club around teaching and learning, workshops on digital accessibility, the use of digital tools for online and hybrid teaching, creating and using midcourse evaluations, and online course design. The TLC also runs the Graduate Assistant Colloquium on Teaching and Learning each fall, a required day and half of programming to help prepare new Graduate Teaching Assistants. The GA Colloquium already had a long track record and had previously been run by unit prior to the establishment of the TLC. In fall 2019, the Teaching and Learning Academy series was developed and launched at the request of the Interim Provost to provide more support to new faculty members. The series is run as monthly workshops over the course of a semester, with the objectives of assisting new faculty and existing faculty in planning a course or a course revision.

Planning and Budgeting for Academic Programs and Services

Planning and budgeting for the traditional degree programs and support services on ESF's main campus and the Wanakena Campus is well established at ESF and involves a legislative budget request by academic department chairs each fiscal year that includes justification for the amount requested. The Office of the Provost is responsible for evaluating these requests and allocating an appropriate amount to each department that will cover the operational costs for the year. In the event that an extraordinary circumstance arises, the Provost's Office budget may be able to absorb unexpected costs if necessary. Department chairs are encouraged to pursue external funding, to encourage faculty with research appointments to submit proposals to extramural funding sources, and System-wide funds that become available to meet the needs of their department.

The ESF in the High School program is one facet in communicating information about ESF to appropriate constituents. This program increases access to higher education for high school students, particularly underrepresented students in the Syracuse area and throughout the state. Although titled ESF in the High School, the staff that work on this program are also charged with developing and

implementing K-12 STEM outreach and education programs in collaboration with local elementary and middle schools, non-profit organizations, and other educational partners. The ESF in the High School staff work with faculty to develop education and outreach materials that can be deployed efficiently and in a variety of delivery methods (e.g., in-person, online, and hybrid models). President Mahoney has charged the ESF in the High School program, with support and input from other units and constituents, to evaluate its strategic direction. This includes assessing how the program functions to enhance college access across the state, particularly in cities (e.g., Syracuse, Rochester, and New York City), but also any under-resourced school, including those in suburban and rural areas. Continuing development of this program will allow greater engagement and education of teachers and students across a geographically dispersed region, and greater flexibility to meet those individuals where they are in terms of resources, time, and content. The goal is to keep commitment dispersed across our small faculty body, while maximizing the impact of their time and expertise, and drawing representation from all departments on campus. It will be important to extend this work to enhance faculty engagement with the teachers delivering the course content; there is a dedicated subset of faculty who excel in these partnerships, but the capacity to support the K-12 classroom teachers in the geographically dispersed schools served by the program is limited by ESF's small number of faculty.

ESF also improves access to higher education by providing an opportunity for individuals both within New York State and beyond to easily complete their four-year degree with the online AS to BS completion program in Sustainability Management. ESF's first graduate from the online program completed the degree requirements with the class of 2021, and enrollment in the program is steadily increasing each year. ESF first offered this online bachelor's degree program in the 2019-2020 academic year and had 14 students enrolled at that time. For the 2020-2021 academic year, the program reported 38 matriculated students. Like other courses and programs at ESF, the Online Sustainability Management program requests students to participate in an end of course evaluation.

Informing Constituents about the Institution and Programs

Undergraduate admissions and recruitment activities are the primary responsibility of the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, with oversight from the Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management. The Dean of the Graduate School works with individual faculty departments to support recruitment efforts for the graduate programs, and ESF Open Academy works with internal and external partners to inform relevant constituent groups about ESF in the High School, online undergraduate programming, professional development opportunities sponsored by ESF, graduate online certificate programs, and opportunities for visiting students.

Improving Key Indicators of Student Success

ESF has consistently reported strong retention and graduation rates to IPEDS, commercial surveys, and other data outlets. Furthermore ESF was an inaugural member in the Student Achievement Measure initiative, which goes beyond the federally recognized definitions surrounding retention and completion rates to account for those students who wish to transfer from their first institution and

thus complete their degree elsewhere (*Student Achievement Measure*). ESF submits data for First-Time Full-Time students and Full-Time Transfer students for the fall cohort each year in order to accurately represent the 150% graduation rates for ESF students. For the fall 2014 cohorts, 75% of first-time full-time ESF students graduated from ESF, with an additional 10% completing their degrees at a different institution; another 6% of the cohort is still enrolled in college whether at ESF or another institution. Nine percent of the fall 2014 first-time full-time cohort has a status of Unknown after submitting data to the National Student Clearinghouse. For full-time transfer students who entered ESF in Fall 2014, 77% graduated from ESF, another 10% graduated from a different institution, 3% are still enrolled whether at ESF or another institution, and 10% are Unknown at the six-year mark. This is consistent with the prior five years' worth of data for bachelor's degree seeking students. National Student Clearinghouse reports for reporting years 2016-2021 are available in the evidence inventory. Each year we conduct an internal assessment of student placement for both employment and continuation to graduate school, the First Destination Survey Outcomes Report (*First Destination Survey Class of 2019, First Destination Survey Class of 2018*). Additionally, we report this information to the USDA Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) reporting portal as well. ESF's Office of Career Services conducts this assessment one year after commencement with a typical knowledge rate (response rate) of around 60%. Looking ahead to our next strategic planning cycle, the Provost has indicated special focus on indicators of student success such as incentives for departments with at least a 95% second year retention rate, reducing time to degree for PhD students from 5 years to 4 or fewer, and incentivizing faculty engagement in increasing diversity in academic departments through competitive awards for faculty.

Improved Delivery of Educational Programs and Services

ESF has made efforts to recognize the importance of honoring student identity to a fulfilling and successful academic experience by implementing a process through the adoption of the Banner information system to include a student's lived/preferred name on class lists and other communication from the College (*Lived_PREFERRED Name _ Title IX _ ESF Administration _ SUNY ESF*). This has been developed by the Lived Names Committee in collaboration with multiple ESF and Syracuse University systems. As the Information Systems team is able to create reports and make them accessible to the faculty, it becomes easier for faculty and staff to meet student needs and ensure adequate and appropriate academic programs and services are available and functioning optimally.

For staff support and faculty professional development, the Title IX Office, Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, and the ESF Teaching and Learning Center provide professional support for in person and online classroom management techniques, instructional design for online delivery of learning material, as well as large group seminars and workshops for graduate students, faculty, and staff. Of note, the Teaching and Learning Center collaborated with the ESF Undergraduate Student Association to develop and deploy a Best Practices document for Teaching with Technology: Best Practices for LMS Use in fall 2021 (*Teaching with Technology: Best Practices for LMS Use*). This collaborative effort between Teaching and Learning Center staff demonstrates the agency students have in their

educational experience at ESF, and the capacity the College must respond to student needs.

General Education Programming:

ESF committed to enhancing general education assessment with the creation of a standalone academic unit in fall 2018. From fall 2018 through spring 2019, the Division of General Education was temporarily housed within the Department of Environmental Studies. In fall 2019, this structure was assessed and the resulting shift in leadership is demonstrative of the challenges in appropriately assessing student learning and program delivery within the context of a research-oriented academic department. Additionally, as a standalone service unit, IDP faculty have opportunities for institutional resources and appropriate faculty development opportunities.

This change to the College's organizational structure was intended to enhance leadership and effective delivery of general education programming, as well as to facilitate the ongoing assessment of general education programming. Beginning in fall 2020, the leadership for general education was combined with the Colleges' Office of Assessment to ensure the purpose of general education programming at ESF is clear and consistent with the institutional mission, as well as providing a solid foundation for student success. The newly created Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (IDP) represents the ESF's Mathematics and Writing, Rhetoric, and Communications Program and the student service centers contained therein: Writing Resource Center (WRC), Math Center, Digital Storytelling Studio (DSS), Public Speaking Lab (PSL), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. These student-facing academic resources reflect a more holistic view of "General Education" at ESF, as well as an expanded concept of General Education at the SUNY System level. Through highlighting that these resources are appropriate for all students, regardless of progress in their degree program or student level, the College is acknowledging the vitality of cross-disciplinary skills to student success. The Division of Interdisciplinary Programs is led by the Assistant Director for Assessment and Institutional Research, which facilitates an assessment-based paradigm for all programs in the Division, and enhances opportunities for alignment of the programs and services offered by the Division with the degree programs offered in other academic units. Housing these interdisciplinary and foundational services in a separate unit, it has provided a sense of identity for the faculty who deliver the material and enhanced their engagement with the process of continuous improvement.

Graduate Program Assessment Plan:

In the fall 2020 semester, ESF has developed a Graduate Program Assessment Plan (*ESF graduate program assessment plan*). We recognized that this is an area of assessment in need of particular attention, as previously responsibility for assessment of graduate programs rested primarily within each academic department and with the departmental faculty. An individual student's experience of the graduate program often rested heavily with the student's advisor and steering committee, with little to no data collected for formal assessment or an appreciable feedback loop to foster continuous improvement. While it is important to the College to maintain the individualized academic experience

for students seeking graduate degrees, it also became evident that there are some benchmarks, particularly in more descriptive programs, such as the MS and PhD. By quantifying and assessing traditional graduate program milestones – appointment of a major professor (advisor) and steering committee, thesis proposal, capstone, etc. – we anticipate gleaning insights to the individual academic experience of a student by degree, program, and department that can be leveraged to improve graduate education at ESF. Furthermore, the co-chairs for Standard 3: Curriculum were able to identify expected learning proficiencies for graduate students that are appropriate to ESF’s institutional mission and relevant to the student’s graduate program of study.

Assessment of Third-Party Assessment Services

ESF does not engage with any third-party providers for assessment services for any academic programs. ESF does maintain licenses with Tableau for data visualization and analytics software, IASystems for student course evaluations, and Qualtrics for survey deployment. However, all data analysis is conducted by institutional staff.

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Assessment Processes

A process of evaluating academic programs beyond those with formal accrediting agencies was developed at the SUNY System level in 2009, and ESF adopted campus-level guidelines in fall 2011 (*ESF Evaluation of UG Program External Review Report*). The change was a result of enhanced undergraduate academic program review expectations and established on a schedule where each non-accredited program would be reviewed every five years. However, Interim Provost Newman and the Assistant Director for Assessment and Institutional Research leveraged the self-study process as an opportunity to assess this timeline and made the choice to expand it to a 6-8-year cycle, in alignment with the accredited program review schedules. Additionally, the Provost’s Office and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research reached an agreement where there would be up to \$3,000 available to support external program review for non-accredited programs in the semester of the evaluation visit. The most recent visit occurred with the Department of Environmental Studies in fall 2019 (*Environmental Studies Undergraduate Assessment Report_2019_Draft_5-20-19 SGJ, 2019_CarlLipoTotalCost*). The Environmental Science undergraduate degree program produced a report in spring 2020 and identified a preferred external reviewer, a number of obstacles have interfered with the completion of that external review and the Director of the Division of Environmental Science chose to wait until an in-person review visit was feasible. Other non-accredited undergraduate programs that have been reviewed since ESF’s 2012 decennial review include: (*Chemistry, 2014; Environmental Biology, 2015*).

We have amended our assessment schedule from a five-year program review cycle to a cycle of six-to-eight years. The professionally accredited programs undergo a re-accreditation review on a longer cycle of more than five years. In examining our process for assessment of programs that do not hold professional accreditation, we determined that five years is not long enough to collect and evaluate data pertaining to programmatic changes. An extended timeline for review of program assessment

data allows for a more robust continuous improvement process, as program coordinators and assessment professionals will have more time to evaluate the outcomes of program improvements and take appropriate action to sustain the assessment efforts. Additionally, some of the non-accredited programs had begun to modify their assessment cycle to reflect this need for more time to complete the data analysis. In order to do this, only three years of data were assessed in the five-year period (*EFB Department Assessment, 2015*). While it is important to do a thorough analysis of the data, having a two-year gap in data collection inhibits the ability to remain nimble and take action on a prompt timeline to meet student needs. In amending the timeline so the periodic review cycle is less rapid, establishing a more consistent approach to program evaluation, and centralizing selected aspects of the program review process, ESF will be able to make strategic decisions about continuous improvement in the academic programs in the coming decennial review cycle.

In addition to amending our non-accredited program review process by expanding the timeline between program reviews, we have also increased the number of programs that hold discipline-specific accreditation. The Environmental Health program was first recognized for accreditation with the Environmental Health Accreditation Council (EHAC) in 2017, and the Sustainable Construction Management BS program completed the application process in 2021 and is listed as a candidate program on the American Council for construction Education (ACCE) website.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

The Teaching and Learning Center and the Open Academy played a critical role in helping the college respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The establishment of the college's online programs and accreditation changes to offer distance education programs provided a foundation to build from, including several faculty members with experience teaching online, as well as resources that were easily adapted to prepare others for teaching online. The Open Academy and Teaching and Learning Center assisted in drafting academic continuity plans prior to the end of in-person instruction in March. Following the decision to end all in-person instruction, the Teaching and Learning Center organized and ran workshops and other sessions for faculty throughout the week of spring break to prepare for finishing the semester in a remote format, and then provided ongoing consultation to faculty when instruction resumed. Over the summer of 2020, the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) also ran a 6-week online course for faculty on planning hybrid and online versions of their courses for the fall. There were over 90 people signed up, and 67 active participants in the course during the summer while most faculty were off contract. Overall, in the emergency response to COVID during the spring and summer of 2020 the TLC ran 22 events/sessions, representing a total of 45 hours (about 2 days) of programming with 375 registrations across all those events.

Despite the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Environmental Science Program was able to complete a full self-study report for the program and is in the final stages of planning to bring an external reviewer to campus to evaluate the program. Another program within the Division of Environmental Science, the undergraduate program in Environmental Health, has applied for reaffirmation of their accreditation following initial accreditation in 2017. We have also started the process to reaffirm accreditation of

the Forest Technology program at our Wanakena Campus, which will be completed this year. The Sustainable Construction Management program has completed their application for recognition by the ACCE and submitted their self-study for initial accreditation on August 1, 2021. The process of seeking programmatic accreditation for majors at ESF, as well as seeking reaffirmation of disciplinary accreditation, benefits all programs at the College by establishing and sustaining a culture of assessment across the academic departments and majors. ESF was successful in overcoming challenges presented by the global pandemic and sustain the program review schedule and support accreditation candidacy for Sustainable Construction Management, and reaffirmation of accreditation for Environmental Health and Forest Technology.

While many ESF graduates successfully secured their post-graduation goals amid the COVID pandemic, it is important to acknowledge the temporary impact the pandemic had on all students, with specific fields and industries experiencing more significant impacts than others.

Additionally, considering the shift to virtual instruction in Spring 2020 the Undergraduate Student Association (USA) and the Open Academy Teaching and Learning Center collaborated to develop a “Teaching with Technology: Best Practices” resource for faculty to improve the efficacy and consistency with which faculty use the Blackboard learning management system, that ESF accesses through our partnership with Syracuse University. This project was initiated by the USA in response to several student concerns about how the use of Blackboard was inconsistent from instructor to instructor. The USA was successful in raising awareness of the challenges students faced, and related to staff of the Teaching and Learning Center in ESF Open Academy, who are primarily responsible for training faculty in best practices. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of collaboration between students, faculty, and staff to solve problems at ESF, and this document is evidence of such a successful partnership.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

In the years since the last self-study, the assessment culture at ESF has improved. The faculty have been able to collaborate with the Assistant Director for Assessment & Institutional Research to support applications for accreditation candidacy, reaffirmation of accreditation, annual reporting data for programmatic accreditation, and sustain a program review schedule for non-accredited degree programs. ESF has been successful in applications for accreditation and reaffirmation of accreditation with each of the agencies responsible for accrediting our programs at the degree level without any requirements to maintain recognized/accredited status.

Areas for Improvement

Especially since the release of the SUNY System Proposed General Education Framework in fall 2021, ESF will be required to establish sustained assessment processes for the administrative units that support the delivery of the student learning experience. While this area of improvement is a clear need, the Proposed Framework indicates a roadmap of sorts to target assessment efforts for units such as Moon Library, the Office of International Education, Office of Student Affairs, and the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and how they deliver the elements of general education programming that are not restricted to a credit requirement or department. Assessment efforts in these areas are established and ongoing, but simply need to be coordinated between the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs and other units that deliver educational content.

Insights

Looking to the future, we will continue to listen to the changing needs of our students and create new ways to support them. As the assessment culture on campus is improving, it will be essential to work with academic departments that have struggled to leverage their program review reports to inform continuous improvement efforts and curricular change.

STANDARD VI: BUDGETING, RESOURCES, AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Introduction and Institutional Objectives

ESF was created differently from the other SUNY State Operated campuses and reflects a different status in the SUNY structure. For example, the ESF Board of Trustees does not hold fiduciary responsibility for the College and the campus President has all authority for hiring and management of campus operations. This allows ESF to establish institutional priorities in a way that is nimble and allows us to continuously assess at the campus-level our responsiveness to assessment results as campus initiatives support institutional objectives, alignment with institutional mission, and planning and resource allocation efforts. Through the assessment process described in Standard I – Mission and Goals, the self-study team was able to identify three main objectives for the College: to provide an outstanding student experience, to promote academic excellence, and to invest in human resources and physical infrastructure. These objectives were embedded in the prior strategic planning documents, Vision 2020, and Vision 2020 Update, but through the self-study process the self-study steering committee was able to offer campus stakeholders an opportunity to intentionally refine how our institutional priorities are communicated. In addition to the stated objectives, we also discovered through an analysis of the strategic planning documents that each objective was tied to three underlying principles: environmental stewardship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and fiscal responsibility. As ESF engages in a renewed strategic planning process, this document will serve as an assessment of how adequately we achieved those objectives within the context of the three identified underlying principles, and the College’s success in supporting the institutional mission. The following graphic represents who the self-study steering committee visualized how the current self-study process aligns with institutional priorities and principles in support of the ESF mission statement.

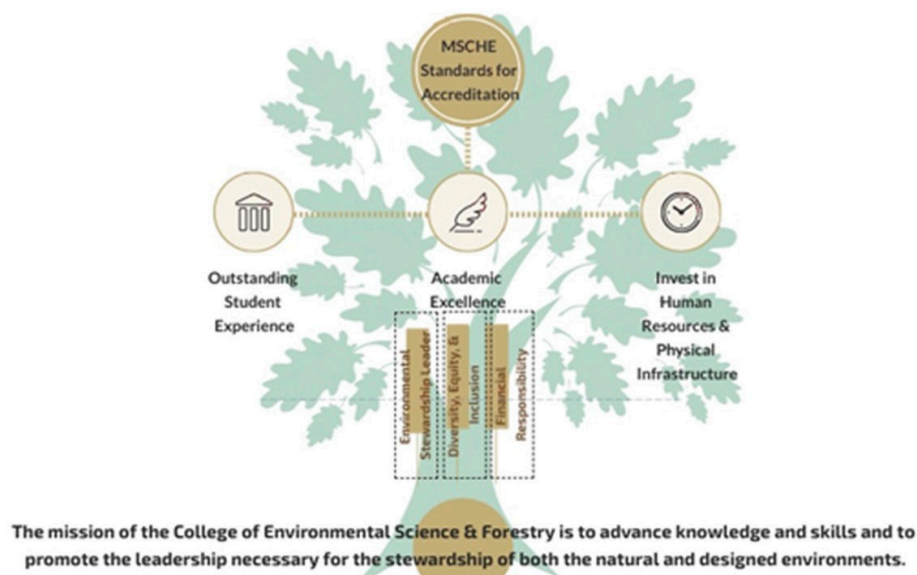


Figure 6: Visual Representation of Institutional Priorities in Context of Self-Study

Leadership Changes and Strategic Planning Efforts

The self-study report process has allowed ESF stakeholders at all levels to reflect on how their unit goals and strategic objectives work to support institutional priorities, and how they reflect and support the underlying themes of ESF's role as a leader in environmental stewardship, commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how the College demonstrates fiscal responsibility. With respect for staffing shortages, the co-chairs for each standard provided structure and guidance for colleagues when we asked them for information relevant to their own scope of work, which is compiled in this report to demonstrate ESF's compliance with Commission Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation.

In consideration of the recent, and rapid, leadership changes at ESF since 2018, the College has not engaged in a formal strategic planning process since the 2016 "Vision 2020 Update Bridging Document," which is available as part of our evidence inventory (*Vision 2020 Update*). One of our priorities in the creation of this self-study report at the current moment in institutional history is to take a critical look at the past decade of institutional progress and continuous improvement considering the future of ESF. Provost Samuel Mukasa, PhD, began his tenure at ESF in November 2021 after several interim Presidents and Provosts. Provost Mukasa brings a wealth of experience in strategic planning to the position and has already begun a qualitative assessment of campus priorities through listening sessions with campus stakeholders, including undergraduate and graduate student perspectives. The data he collected, the Discovery Challenge Initiative, and this self-study report will provide a framework for ESF's upcoming strategic planning efforts that are in an early stage of development. In early conversations about strategic planning with the academic department chairs and unit directors, Provost Mukasa has championed the importance of creating a strategic planning process that is nimble and will allow the College to react efficiently when faced with emerging challenges that may arise in the next strategic planning period in the College's history.

As part of the institutional renewal that has occurred parallel with the self-study report process, the College has engaged in a Student Success Initiative that includes the revitalization of the ESF Retention Committee, a reorganization of the Office of Student Affairs, Office of Research Programs' initiative to organize various groups that supervise/train students in research while simultaneously creating new knowledge. The ESF Retention Council has been reviewing several years of institutional retention data as well as data from the NSSE regarding to High Impact Practices, including student involvement in research. Through this analysis of survey data, the Committee was able to identify a decline in first-year student engagement with High Impact Practices following the closure of several first-year retention programs on campus. Moving forward, the Committee looks forward to leveraging institutional data to promote the creation of programs that will support student success through student engagement on campus and enhanced student-faculty interaction. This is the most recent example of this more focused, data-driven, outcomes-based approach to institutional planning efforts.

Institutional Planning and Improvement Efforts

Faculty Utilization and Workload:

At the conclusion of each academic year, the Office of Institutional Research produces a report of faculty usage statistics known as the Faculty Workload Report for the Provost. This report is also distributed, disaggregated by department, to each academic department chair to supplement their Annual Reporting process. In 2018, the new Interim Provost established a College-wide template for each academic department to use to facilitate the Provost's assessment of the annual reports. These templates included faculty utilization data, student enrollment data, and financial data as well as departmental highlights from the year, research productivity, and notable curricular changes within the department. These annual reports differ from accreditation or program review processes, but they serve as important documentation of decisions made on a short-term cycle, to review as a longitudinal data set at the time of a comprehensive accreditation report or program review, as appropriate to the department and program.

Shared Governance:

Near the beginning of the 2020-2021 Academic Year, a few shortcomings in the Bylaws and Standing Rules governing Academic Governance (AG). Since their last major revision in 2015, the Bylaws and Standing Rules and other procedures of AG had been amended several times usually with supplemental documents and not integrated into the master documents. In addition, a number of committees that were created at the time of the previous major revision, while serving a purpose at the time, had outlived their usefulness, but persisted since they were codified in the bylaws. Several procedures, including the appointment of faculty, staff, and students to search committees and the process of removal of AG officers, were either very cumbersome, ambiguous, or otherwise time consuming.

To address these issues, a committee of faculty, staff, and administration were empaneled to review the Bylaws and Standing Rules and propose revision to Academic Governance. Early in the committee's review, it was determined that it would not be possible to address the multiple issues simply with amendments to the existing documents would not be sufficient. The committee decided to do a complete rewrite of the Bylaws and Standing Rules. Over the 15-month ending with approval of the new Bylaws and Standing Rules in the Fall Semester of 2021. ESF continues to seek opportunities to engage with external accreditation processes, internal program review processes, as well as commercial and SUNY sponsored assessment initiatives. The College also participates in a number of SUNY and NYSED mandated surveys, as well as some campus-sponsored initiatives to assess a variety of campus functions. These survey efforts provide insight to areas of campus operations that could benefit from strategic process improvements, and they illuminate areas that may need additional resources (human resources, fiscal, or infrastructure).

Campus-wide Survey Efforts:

Some of the survey initiatives ESF engages with periodically include the National Survey of Student Engagement (every three years), the SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey (every three years) SUNY Sexual Violence Prevention Campus Climate Survey (alternating years), the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education survey (2017), and the Great Colleges to Work for (2021). The data from these efforts is available in the Office of Assessment & Institutional Research and is shared with the appropriate campus stakeholders once the data are available for dissemination. For student and employee satisfaction surveys, the Assistant Director for Assessment & Institutional Research provides a summary of the data to the Provost once it is released to campuses and collaborates with College leadership to determine the best way to share the data with the broader campus community. The results of the HERI diversity and equity surveys (spring 2019) as well as the NERCHE rubric-based assessment of campus inclusion, diversity, and equity efforts are available from the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (spring 2021) and were summarized and disseminated campus-wide in fall 2019 and fall 2021, respectively. These survey efforts allow for broad campus-wide participation in the assessment of campus climate, processes, and resource adequacy. Detailed information about the results of these surveys are embedded in Standard II: Ethics and Integrity.

Financial Planning and Budgeting Process

ESF has engaged in a variety of campus-level development initiatives and system-level negotiations to address the structural budget deficit the institution is facing. A small number of other SUNY campuses are also facing structural deficit, but ESF is unique in the inability to increase enrollment to offset the deficit. Much of ESF's planning and budgeting processes are governed by SUNY and the State of New York guidelines. ESF engages with planning and budgeting processes within this larger framework by evaluating the needs of each unit, requesting legislative budget requests from unit heads, and aligning the assignment of institutional resources to each unit with strategic initiatives at the College level. In addition to the ESF and SUNY financial planning and budgeting processes, the SUNY Research Foundation (RF) assists ESF and other SUNY campuses with the administration and management of sponsored programs and grant funding (*RF-Brochure*).

ESF offered a few proposals to SUNY to address our structural budget deficit, but our ability to adapt to these challenges in a way that is nimble and responsive is limited by SUNY System policies and procedures. SUNY did permit a slight out of state tuition increase, and the College was able to increase the budget of the College Foundation. During the college-wide update of the Vision 2020 strategic plan in 2016, it was determined that additional philanthropic funding was necessary to increase visibility and opportunities for specific hallmark academic programs. In addition, an increase in unrestricted donations was critical to offset the use of state dollars for student scholarships and other unanticipated needs.

To address these needs, the development staff was reorganized into teams to focus on major gifts for

restricted purposes and annual giving for unrestricted funding. Two new major gift officer positions were created to serve under a senior major gifts officer. Additional expertise was added to the unrestricted giving program through the hiring of a senior development officer for annual giving. Support for all development programs was increased through the creation of a position focused on donor stewardship and engagement. In addition to staffing increases, investments were made in donor prospect research services, increased travel and professional development budgets, and the hiring of campaign consultants.

The return on investment in additional development resources of research capacity and staffing has provided several direct benefits. Most notably, total annual fundraising results have increased from a baseline in 2017 of \$2.5 million to a record high of \$4.9 million in 2021. Operational efficiency has significantly improved, enabling more appropriate utilization of staff resources, increased donor contacts and engagement. Most recent initiatives such as the combining of the alumni and development offices, revamping of donor communication materials, and the professional support of campaign consultants leaves the ESF development program well poised for continued growth. Closing departments does not return a significant savings – we have investigated the impact through modeling exercises

Discovery Challenge Initiative

In 2018, Interim President Dr. David Amberg and VPR Chris Nomura initiated a competitive Discovery Challenge Seed Grant program with funding support from the SUNY Chancellor's Office (*Discovery Challenge RFP*). This was aligned with institutional strategic planning efforts and provided an opportunity to synthesize the best ideas for the College into seed grant proposals to initiate highly significant research/scholarship, teaching, and outreach programs that demonstrate viability beyond the seed grant period through extramural grants, programmatic development, and philanthropic donations. These seed grants for cross-cutting initiatives were intended to engage the people, partnerships, and facilities already established at ESF and leverage these investments for a sizeable and sustained return to the College. Additionally, these seed grant proposals must raise the prominence of the institution nationally and internationally and promote new academic, industry, and government partnerships. The proposal initially indicated that three to five seed grants, each up to \$200,000 per year for three years (up to \$600,000 maximum per grant), would be recommended by the Discovery Advisory Group to President Amberg for funding from the SUNY Chancellor's Office. Ultimately, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SUNY Chancellor's Office was unable to meet the original funding commitment and the initial \$3M commitment was reduced to \$800,000 total. In November 2021 the new ESF Provost and Executive Vice President and the Vice President for Research engaged the SUNY System Provost-in-Charge to ensure that the remaining funding, comprising half of the \$800,000 total be allocated from SUNY to resume work on the five projects, which are funded through 2023.

The Discovery Challenge (DC) process allowed ESF faculty and administration to collectively identify numerous areas for research strength and collaboration, to guide strategic institutional planning

and resource allocation efforts (*Discovery Challenge Report*). Of the proposals generated through the DC call for pre-proposals, the five projects that were awarded funding built on existing institutional research strengths. These projects have been productive despite the reduction in original award amount, and we are using these projects as a foundation for future research center development and faculty cluster hires. Furthermore, the DC also contributes to institutional planning through collaboration with the College Foundation. DC project leaders have been working with Foundation staff to identify potential funding sources and initiatives to fund that will capture the imagination of potential funders. In the case of the Restoration Science Center DC project, the fundraiser hired through the project was later transferred to the College Foundation as a regular staff member when DC funding was cut. This has been a successful strategy for the College, as this staff member continues to do capacity building for the initial project and others. Looking ahead, the DC award winners are using the remaining portion of the SUNY award (years three and four) to complete projects that will leverage external funding for the efforts. During the last funding allocation round in 2022, DC teams were combined into three larger project teams for better position in seeking competitive funding awards. Three of the five original projects consolidated in the areas of climate change detection and mitigation through natural solutions (e.g., bioenergy and net zero carbon construction). To ensure effective delivery of Office of Research Programs initiatives, including the DC projects, ORP will be hiring a research development director to lead the research initiatives through supporting collaborative faculty proposal efforts including DC project team coordination.

Adequacy of Physical Resources and Facilities

Given the physical constraints on the Syracuse campus of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, space is at a premium. We are bordered on all sides by a highway, a cemetery, and our partner institution, Syracuse University. There is no land left onto which to expand, so every square foot of campus must be utilized as effectively as possible. There are several construction and renovation projects underway on campus to improve campus teaching and learning spaces, which will be detailed later in this chapter. However, there is no student center or similar space on the ESF Syracuse campus, and as recognized by the College's executive leadership and articulated in the Facilities Master Plan, in order to maintain enrollment, the College will need to focus more on student success and retention and put students first. Conversations are underway to look at ways the College can repurpose the Gateway Center, currently housing administrative staff in Undergraduate Admissions and the Open Academy, to function as a student center that will provide space for students to gather, relax, eat, study, and meet as well as relocate student-facing staff and functions within this building to bring life to the campus and to enhance the student experience.

However, ESF has been able to make some changes and improvements to student-facing spaces. When the College's first ever Chief Diversity Officer was hired in fall 2017, discussions began about the need for gathering space for underrepresented and marginalized students, faculty, and staff. This idea was one of many under consideration as the development of a Facilities Master Plan relative to space usage on campus was refined. In fall 2019, ESF students, in solidarity with Syracuse University students and like many college campuses across the country, was dealing with racial unrest and responding to demands from students. One of the demands put forward at this time was a request for

a “brave space” dedicated for use by underrepresented and marginalized students. At about this same time, the Undergraduate Student Association (USA) received a significant anonymous monetary gift that directed only that it be used for whatever ESF students need most.

USA determined to use that financial gift, along with additional financial support from the College, to support the creation of a brave space, a vacating their office space to allow for the renovation of that space for this purpose. The Brave Space was dedicated and opened during fall semester 2021.

Adequacy of Fiscal and Human Resources

ESF is down a number of positions since 2019, and considering the pandemic it has been difficult to fill those vacancies. The College reported 425 FTE employees in April 2020, and was down to 390 FTE employees in fall 2021. College leadership acknowledges that ESF is too small to cut our way out of the financial constraints, so with new executive leadership the College is exploring strategies to change structure to address the circumstances under which the deficit persists. However, despite the SUNY System constraints, ESF’s membership in the State University of New York provides a backstop of sorts while we explore strategies to minimize the budget shortfalls over time. ESF’s processes in terms of creating, announcing, and filling positions on campus is standardized and operates within the context of New York State expectations and guidelines. Faculty, staff, or MC vacancies are managed through ESF’s access to the Interview Exchange platform following approvals from several individuals, including the Director of Business Affairs, the CFO, and the President. In the case of faculty positions the process also includes the Department Chairperson and College Provost, which helps ensure alignment with strategic initiatives. ESF has recently engaged in some targeted, strategic assessment of the workload for administrative assistants at ESF, which illuminated some areas that could enhance institutional efficiency, support faculty through more efficient deployment of staff resources, and an overall increase in productivity across campus.

The Administrative Assistant Project was a six-month research-intensive study that took place from March 1 - September 30, 2021, on the administrative shadow work complaint from faculty that surfaced as a common theme through complaints received by the administrative ombudsperson. After learning of this issue, President Mahoney asked administrators in the Human Resources Office and the Office of the President to investigate how administrative assistants could play a key role in streamlining and increasing productivity across campus. Over the course of the six-month period, in depth interviews were conducted with 46 individuals to understand duties, responsibilities and expectations of the supervisor and the administrative assistant. We were looking for ways to optimize their time, offer suggestions on streamlining processes, share best practices, educate individuals on proper resources and to get a better understanding of what additional resources would be needed either in the form of training or other means to obtain proficiency goals to alleviate faculty administrative shadow work.

Observations and recommendations on the research findings were presented to the President and the College's Academic Council in October, 2021. Implementation of the recommendations will commence in the first quarter of the 2022 calendar year. Position openings and alignment of search approvals with strategic initiatives.

Adequacy of Technological Infrastructure

Through funding from State and Federal grants, student technology fees, Capital expenditures, and a higher level of college budget support to IT, ESF has been successful in several recent enhancements to the Information Technology unit at the College. Beginning in 2018, ESF began implementation of a new Student Information System to replace the existing and associated legacy system. To align better with SUNY requirements, Ellucian Banner serves as the core of the new system with ancillary systems, such as Technolutions Slate CRM to serve admissions and enrollment management functions, and other reporting, work-flow management, and document management functions. This project is anticipated to be complete by the end of summer 2022 and all legacy student information system components will no longer be supported. This initiative will align ESF's information management and reporting systems with most of the rest of the SUNY system campuses. To support these initiatives, ESF also invested in a new IT Services Management system to streamline processes and enhance services available to ESF systems users.

The role of CIO has recently been filled at ESF. This position will serve to better align disparate IT silos with the college's mission to support the delivery of programs more fully and effectively and better meet the administrative goals of the institution. This position also serves the role of IT leadership liaison with both the greater SUNY system and Syracuse University. The CIO at ESF now oversees all previously separate IT operations at ESF including Information Systems, Instructional Technology, Infrastructure, and User Services with the goal to build and support the infrastructure and systems that will foster the use of current and future technology toward the enhancement of teaching and learning across all programs.

IT staffing has recently made strides toward sufficiency. The Computing and Network Services Help Desk has gained three full-time regular employees supported by three tier two full-time employees. These, in turn, are supported by three tier three technicians. As a result, student workers are only used as backup during regular business hours and evening/weekends. This results in greater consistency of message from support staff. Efforts are underway to enhance Information Systems staffing through shared SUNY resources and an additional local regular employee. This will serve to more fully support the back-end administration of campus run Student Information System components and needed reporting functions.

Additionally, ESF has begun a three-year effort to become NIST 800-171 compliant by the end of 2023. These security enhancements directly affect the student experience, because as we recognize the increasing sophistication of data security threats, so enhancing our ability to safeguard student personal data as well as institutional data will directly support ESF in ensuring student success

and fulfilling the institutional mission. Furthermore, the installation of a new virtual computing infrastructure, including the capacity to support administrative, academic, and research computing loads will also ensure that ESF continues to support student achievement and faculty productivity. Further accomplishments include a total replacement of network infrastructure across all campuses, including renovation and recommissioning of server spaces to better meet the needs of modern computing and data loads and support the connection of hybrid/cloud systems. Aligned with the enhanced network infrastructure, ESF has invested in improved information security at all campuses by implementing internal partitioning firewalls, new Endpoint Detection/Response system, and a Privilege Access Management system, among others.

Responsibility and Accountability

President Mahoney is working with college Executive leadership to clarify assignment of responsibilities and accountability hierarchy. While the decision-making processes at ESF are relatively well established, in fall 2021 President Mahoney requested that her executive team establish evaluation benchmarks for their leadership positions. Additionally, President Mahoney has initiated a livestream “Campus Conversations” video series where she periodically reports on recent developments that affect the ESF community, both locally and at the state and system-wide levels. These taped podcasts also include the President talking with selected members of the faculty and administration about institutional projects and initiatives. This podcast project has enhanced executive level transparency and provided a visible framework for decision-making and accountability at the College level.

Commitment to Sustainability Integrated with Comprehensive Planning

As articulated in the College’s most recent strategic plan, the Vision 2020 Update: Bridging from 2016 to 2020 and Beyond, sustainability is central to ESF’s mission. The Vision 2020 Update continues by clarifying that ESF’s ever-evolving understanding of sustainability’s many dimensions, causes the College to continuously undertake a full-scale evaluation of its sustainability commitment. As framed in its 2011 re-accreditation assessment in regards to sustainability, the College proclaimed that “sustainability begins with an obligation to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” This refers to the long-term viability of the entire ESF institutional system – including its facilities, infrastructure, and technology – in regards to the successful integration of economic/financial, social, and environmental goals, and a clear understanding of related constraints.

In sum, sustainability is an overall guide for the College as it addresses facilities, infrastructure, and technology needs, and as it develops its priorities related to operational, critical maintenance, and capital investments.

It is essential for ESF to quantify its sustainability commitments and actions over time, and benchmark against other colleges and universities to stay informed and to lead with best practices. To do this,

the College commits to an annual cycle of assessment, planning, and implementation, guided by the third-party verified, industry-standard for measuring campus sustainability: STARS—Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). In 2015, ESF committed to viewing STARS as its primary roadmap for sustainability, and incorporating STARS key performance indicators into its operations. For instance, there are 199 specific credit categories grouped around five primary areas: Academics, Engagement, Operations, Planning & Administration, and Innovation & Leadership. The College uses these five areas as a guide. Its strategic plan set a target for to move from its previous STARS Gold rating to Platinum—the highest level. This goal was achieved in 2021.

To put this achievement into some context and perspective, consider that ESF's score (85.66) placed the College at number eight out of only 10 institutions that had achieved this level from the 674 institutions that had a rating. Two were from Canada. ESF was one of only eight US institutions that have achieved this level, and of those, the College came in at number seven. Those ahead of ESF included Colorado State, Stanford, Arizona State, Cal Irvine, UConn, and New Hampshire. When one considers the size and resources of those colleagues, this further elevates the significance of this achievement for ESF.

Additional sustainability-related commitments made by ESF during the last six years include:

- American Zero Carbon Action Plan
- Bicycle Friendly University
- Choose Action Network
- The Earth Charter
- Fair Labor Association
- Higher Education Sustainability Initiative
- ISCN-GULF Sustainable Campus Charter (International Sustainability Campus Network – Global University Leader Forum)
- New York State Large Scale Renewable Energy Initiative
- New York State Reforming Energy Vision Campus Challenge
- Paris Climate Accords (supporting commitment)
- Post-Landfill Action Network Break Free From Plastics Pledge
- Project Inclusion
- SDG Accord (UN Sustainable Development Goals)
- Second Nature Commitment to Global Engagements
- Second Nature Climate Leadership Integrated Climate Commitment
- Smoke- and Tobacco-free Campus
- Strategic Energy Innovations, Climate Corps
- The Talloires Declaration
- UN Global Compact
- White House Climate Change Commitment
- We Are Still In (America Is All In) Paris Climate Accord Pledge

- Zero Waste International Alliance Zero Waste Hierarchy

These commitments and the STARS Platinum designation helped the College meet its Vision 2020 Update objective to become a nationally recognized “green College.”

ESF recognizes that sustainability uniquely involves linking academic and physical operations of the institution for the purpose of mutually beneficial interactions. The College considering its facilities as “living laboratories” is one an example of this. The College continues to improve teaching and research by opening up and investing in operations, infrastructure, and processes, continuously improving the physical, financial, and social fabric of the College, based on the overall framework of sustainability.

Focus on Infrastructure Planning and Improvements

The Vision 2020 Update:

Bridging from 2016 to 2020 and Beyond strategic plan recognized that “The people comprising the ESF faculty and staff are the college’s most important resource, and the campus infrastructure supports all their initiatives.” It envisioned that the College’s facilities would increasingly “demonstrate state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly technologies in construction and maintenance.” Some related targets included:

- Implement facilities planning to include new and renovated spaces, and achieve comprehensive accessibility;
- Incorporate renewable energy resources and energy management systems;
- Develop a fully automated building/environmental monitoring system; and
- Increase and enhance technology infrastructure, including WiFi accessibility and bandwidth in teaching and learning spaces.

Facility Master Plan (Syracuse and Wanakena Campuses)

Since 2010, ESF has made a significant investment in campus facilities. Centennial Hall was constructed in 2011, the Gateway Center opened in 2013, and comprehensive renovations to Marshall Hall – its second oldest building, and a primary instructional location – are currently underway. Additional investments are required, however, to support growing academic programs and student life initiatives, and the evolving expectations of incoming students and new faculty. Late in 2017, ESF leadership identified the need for a new Facilities Master Plan (FMP). In 2018, the College, in conjunction with the State University Construction Fund, made the commitment to update its previous 2013 master plan recommendations to better support new strategic, academic, and research priorities. The new comprehensive plan was completed in October 2020, and its recommendations align with the project goals, campus needs, and priorities as identified in the College’s active strategic plan at the time (*Vision 2020 Update*). The primary goal of the new FMP was to integrate strategic, academic, research, and financial considerations into a single, comprehensive plan. Strategic

priorities represent the vision of ESF and the goals required to achieve that vision. They allow the College to align academic programs and research initiatives with its strategic plan. Academic planning combines strategic priorities with programmatic needs and campus facilities. Research initiatives support strategic priorities and academic programs by creating an environment of experimentation and discovery. Financial planning helps the institution set realistic capital investment goals based on strategic aspirations.

The new FMP was intended to identify current deficiencies, recommend strategic improvements, and establish a framework for the next fifteen years of campus development. In general, the scope of work included:

- A detailed space audit to verify room number, room description, space type code, department assignment, net assignable square feet, number of occupants, room configuration, type of seating, and instructional technology;
- A comprehensive building condition survey to identify critical maintenance projects, building code issues, and accessibility concerns;
- A space utilization study to assess how instructional space is scheduled and research space is allocated;
- Meetings with faculty, staff, and students to gain a better understanding of current and future space needs;
- The development of concept options to explore how buildings can accommodate the identified space needs; and
- The preparation of proposed concept plans, space programs, phasing strategies, and cost estimates.

In order to verify existing space data and establish a baseline for space projections, a detailed space audit was conducted by the planning team. The audit included 509,443 net square feet of academic and research space on ESF's Syracuse campus. The planning team also conducted a comprehensive review of the six major buildings on the Syracuse campus and the main building at the College's Ranger School in Wanakena, NY. The facilities conditions assessment included interviews with facilities personnel and building walkthroughs that focused on the condition of building systems, suitability of existing space, opportunities to improve energy efficiency, and compliance with the New York State Building Code and ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Building deficiencies and deferred maintenance projects are identified in the final report and incorporated into the FMP recommendations.

Meetings with faculty and staff were critical to understanding project goals and prioritizing space needs. An online survey gave students the opportunity to provide input on how FMP recommendations could improve the student experience. Top priorities for students include updating the class labs and research labs, creating more study space, and reducing the carbon footprint of the College. A detailed analysis of classrooms, class labs, research labs, and faculty offices identified opportunities for improved utilization on the main campus.

Based on the results of the study, there is capacity to hold additional course meetings in existing classrooms and class labs. Research labs and faculty offices should be right-sized to better support research initiatives and provide equity among all departments. And, underutilized space should be repurposed to create additional meeting rooms and soft seating areas. Information gathered as part of the space audit, facilities conditions assessment, programming interviews, student survey, and space utilization study formed the basis for a space program. Enrollment projections provided by the College were used to determine future space needs.

In sum, the FMP goals were:

- **Students first!** In order to maintain enrollment, the College will need to focus more on student success and retention.
- **Sustainability.** Sustainability is central to academic, research, and community outreach programs. A new sustainability center should be created to support these programs. As existing buildings are renovated, building systems should be selected based on the recommendations in the Clean Energy Master Plan under development. Special consideration should be given to reducing the institution's reliance on Syracuse University steam and becoming a net-zero-carbon campus.
- **Academic Success.** Existing classrooms and class labs should be right-sized to accommodate proposed section sizes. New class labs should be created and the Academic Success Center should be consolidated and centrally located.
- **Focus on Research.** In addition to dedicated research space, three interdisciplinary research centers should be created to support faculty research, academic programs, and Discovery Challenge initiatives.
- **Sense of Place.** A new campus entrance building should serve as a gateway and improve the visibility of the College. The new campus entrance, along with a new pedestrian plaza and improved main quad, should have a consistent language that creates a sense of place and an institutional identity.
- **Movement and Accessibility.** Faculty, staff, and students identified accessibility as a priority for the FMP. The recommendations include universally accessible routes throughout the Syracuse campus.

Forest Management Plans

ESF is one of the largest academic institutions in the US in regards to overall property holdings. This is primarily due to the 25,000 acres of forest properties it manages. The main purpose of these properties is to support the College's academic and research programs. In 2018, the College formed a faculty-led Forest Properties Advisory Committee, with the primary purpose of aligning the use of the properties with the academic needs and goals of the institution. One recommendation was to complete forest management plans for both the substantial northern forest property holdings in the Adirondack region of New York State, and the properties south of Syracuse, in Tully, NY. Inventory work to provide the background forest health, species make-up and growth data to fuel these plans is under way. In January 2021, operation plans to guide activities over the next five years were completed. The specific intent of each plan was to provide direction for ESF's forest properties through 2026 in regard

to overall project planning. Due to a number of unforeseen constraints and factors (e.g., weather, personnel, faculty/staff requests, and budget constraints) it was recognized that these plans were dynamic and should be reviewed periodically and adjusted accordingly.

Three criteria were identified and prioritized that will guide the forest planning process:

1. Ensuring the long-term health, viability, and productivity of the College forests;
2. Promoting and facilitating the teaching, research, and demonstration conducted by faculty, students, partners, and other stakeholders; and
3. Creating/maintaining a diversified revenue stream from both forest operations/products and ecosystem services.

Satellite Properties Facilities Master Planning

With the intent to replicate the extremely successful Facility Master Plan (FMP) completed for the College's Syracuse and Wanakena campuses, College leadership early in 2021 requested that the State University Construction Fund secure a firm to complete a similar plan for its remaining satellite campuses and research/experimental stations at Clayton, Cranberry Lake, Lafayette Rd. (Syracuse), Newcomb, Tully, and Warrensburg, NY. College leadership saw this as a valuable process to go through to prepare for a post-COVID era, and to begin to enhance a focus on long term strategies for recruitment and retention, and fund development. This Satellite Properties FMP will be complete by August 2022, and is expected to provide the College with a roadmap for possible investments at its remote facilities and properties.

Clean Energy Master Plan

Since its founding in 1911, ESF has been committed to teaching, developing, researching, and implementing sustainable practices across a range of fields. For over a decade, this commitment has included making improvements to ESF's Syracuse campus and regional properties to reduce energy use, transition to renewable energy sources, and lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Energy conservation and efficiency, on-campus energy systems, green building standards, and facilities stewardship programs have been successfully implemented and have reduced energy use, utility costs, fossil fuel dependence, and GHG emissions. ESF has demonstrated the College's commitment to clean energy practices through the formation of the Office of Sustainability, building and commissioning the Gateway Center combined heat and power (CHP) plant, hiring the College's first Energy Manager, creating an Energy Conservation, Development and Controls Team, and successfully integrating campus clean energy projects with curriculum and student and faculty research. These efforts have been fostered by strong support from ESF leadership and many collaborations across campus, and opportunities exist for further advancements.

In 2017, ESF was awarded a grant from the NYSERDA Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) Campus Challenge to create a Clean Energy Master Plan (CEMP). Building on ESF's 2009 Climate Action Plan,

the CEMP was completed early in 2021. It provides a snapshot of historical energy and GHG emission trends, and a roadmap for further reductions in energy use, fossil fuel dependence, utility costs, and GHG emissions. A team of ESF staff, faculty and students worked closely with a team of engineers from Ramboll to create the CEMP and engage ESF leadership, the campus community, the State University Construction Fund and other key stakeholders in the process. The CEMP takes a comprehensive approach to energy management with strategic focus areas in energy efficiency, resiliency, renewables, stewardship, and engagement.

Energy utility data, audit results, feasibility studies, and plans for current and future energy and construction projects provided the basis for the CEMP analysis. ESF's clean energy efforts to date (late 2020) have reduced GHG emissions by 25% since increasing campus sustainability efforts and committing to dramatically reduce GHG emissions. Total campus energy use and energy use per square foot have also decreased over that time. ESF's biggest opportunity for deep decarbonization over the long term is finding alternatives to natural gas and purchased steam to heat the Syracuse campus buildings during cold winters and shoulder months. The CEMP provides recommendations that can be implemented in a phased approach in sync with the College's Facilities Master Plan (FMP).

ESF's CEMP is a living document that provides a vision and pathway for transitioning to a low-carbon campus that showcases and benefits from a mix of proven clean energy technologies and operational strategies that increase energy independence and resilience. With a continued comprehensive approach to energy management, the College has the potential to reduce energy use, transition to a blend of renewable sources, and cut GHG emissions by 40% in the near term, and 80% or more over the long term. At the same time, these practices will continue to reduce utility costs and fossil fuel dependence, making the College more financially and operationally sustainable. The CEMP supports ESF's expanding potential to serve as a clean energy leader for SUNY, NYS, and beyond, while creating new opportunities for student and faculty engagement and collaboration. The CEMP strengthens the foundation for a growing suite of clean energy tools and initiatives at ESF, leading the way toward the sustainable, zero-carbon institution of the future.

Tactical Energy Plan

Using information from the nearly complete CEMP, late in 2020 the College's Energy Conservation Development and Controls Division developed a shorter-term Tactical Energy Plan (TEP). The two-year TEP involves all aspects of energy conservation, greenhouse gas reductions, and efficient operations. The purpose of the TEP was to present the College's executive leadership with information regarding proposed initiatives and opportunities regarding energy management and operational efficiencies, so that informed strategic decisions could be made to further benefit the institution. The TEP illustrated opportunities available to the College, strategic goals, and associated recommendations. Goals highlighted in the TEP included: large-scale renewable energy, blended green energy, renewable energy credits, green revolving fund, related policies, and other energy management strategies.

Building-level Environmental Management

In 2016, the College made a substantial investment in a state-of-the-art, cloud-based building management platform, Lucid BuildingOS. Lucid was installed in all of the College's Syracuse campus primary buildings, including its lone residence hall. Lucid is the leading cloud-based building management platform that integrates, organizes, and aggregates portfolio-wide building performance data and asset information for simple, collaborative analysis. Once data is centralized into the hardware-agnostic building operating system platform, the intuitive suite of Lucid applications then helps ESF building management teams drive action from data, guiding them in decisions about building optimization, planning, and occupant engagement.

A key component of Lucid BuildingOS is its interoperability and breadth of integration capabilities and experience. This Lucid tool is able to take data from nearly all relevant data sources including the College's utility providers all the way down to individual plug-loads and circuit-level energy monitoring. The approach is to assess the College's overall building-level goals and objectives, and existing infrastructure in terms of metering and other energy data systems and utility relationships.

Annual Independent Audit and Management Letter

ESF does not have an institution-specific Bond rating, Single Audit, or USDE composite score letter. These documents, as appropriate, are generated at the SUNY System level rather than for each SUNY Campus individually. Consistent with the roll-up of finances to a single State University of New York consolidated audited financial statement, any management letter would be generated at the SUNY level. The attached FY 2020 Audited Financial Statement includes both the independent auditors report with Opinion, as well as the system-wide analysis of the findings of the audit. In sum, the State University of New York – College of Environmental Science is not considered a separate entity from the State University of New York for financial purposes, thus our institutional financial position is rolled up at the system level. The information that would be contained within an institutional management letter can be found within the system-wide audited financial statement submitted as part of the Evidence Inventory.

Adequacy and Utilization of Institutional Resources

Under the current fiscal constraints and operating under a structural budget deficit, it has been a unique challenge to assure the adequacy of resources, particularly in the midst of the pandemic. Fortunately, as state-operated campus within the SUNY system, ESF has a backstop within the context of the system-wide resource allocation model. However, in order to ensure responsible use of institutional and state funds, ESF employs a SUNY-approved state purchase request process and requires annual internal controls training for employees who have the authority to make purchases. Since the beginning of the pandemic, this process has additional layers of approval, up to and including the Chief Financial Officer of the institution being responsible for final approval of any purchases over a certain dollar amount. Currently, purchases over \$1,000 must be approved by the College's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Vice President for Administration after approval by the unit

head or department chair. Purchases under \$1,000 are reviewed by the Business Office. At present, there is not expected timeline for returning to a system where the department chair or unit head will have the authority to finalize purchases without submitting to the CFO.

While ESF engages in a variety of internal controls and fiscal responsibility protocols, the College still projected a \$5.9 million shortfall at a Board of Trustees meeting this year, and projected \$7.3 million shortfall next year. This is illustrative of the College's ongoing structural budget deficit where ESF experiences no change in state support, but labor and non-labor operating costs continue to increase. Unlike similarly sized comprehensive institutions, the majority of ESF's state operating revenue comes from state support allocations. While the average SUNY state-operated campus relies on 30%-35% state appropriations, 62% of ESF's state operating revenue (\$22.6 million) is from state support. At ESF, only 38% of the College's operating revenue is from tuition (\$13.0 million, net of financial aid) (*CFO Presentations*). Additionally, ESF's academic and research programs are relatively costly to administer, as they are all heavily lab-based STEM courses. ESF has been working to establish lower-cost programs such as those through the Open Academy, online and in person graduate certificate programs, and others that are not as costly to deploy and maintain as the traditional, residential, STEM based undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Recent Institutional Leadership Renewal

After our previous self-study reaccreditation report and site visit, President Cornelius B. Murphy retired from the role in 2013. Following a national search, the SUNY Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Quentin D. Wheeler to the role of President. However, ESF's shared governance structure issued a Vote of No Confidence in President Wheeler's leadership in spring 2016. At that time, ESF had an Interim Provost; later in 2016, the College engaged a search firm to lead a nationwide search for ESF's next Provost and Executive Vice President. In 2017, the College welcomed Dr. Nosa O. Egiebor. In 2018, ESF's fourth president, Dr. Quentin D. Wheeler, resigned and ESF welcomed Interim President Dr. David Amberg to campus from Upstate University Medical Center. Following President Amberg's appointment to the ESF Presidency by SUNY System, Provost Egiebor resigned from this role in 2019, at which time the College conducted an internal search for an Interim Provost. Dr. David Newman was selected for the role. Interim President Amberg's appointment had a definitive period from the outset, so on May 31, 2020 he returned to his role as Vice President for Research at Upstate and CFO Joseph Rufo served as the Officer in Charge until November 2020 when Ms. Joanne Mahoney was named ESF's next President. Ms. Mahoney had served as Chief Operating Officer of the College since 2018. In November 2021, ESF welcomed a new Provost and Executive Vice President, Dr. Samuel Mukasa, following a national search led by an executive search firm. This refreshed senior leadership after several years of instability and turnover positions the College well for the next cycle of strategic planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal. The self-study steering committee offers this self-study report as a resource for the College's Executive Leadership team as they lay the groundwork for the next round strategic planning.

In addition to renewed leadership at the President and Provost level, the Office of Research Programs

(ORP) identified a new Vice President through a nationwide competitive search process in 2021 as well. In August 2021 Dr. John Stella was named Vice President of Research; previously he served on the faculty of the Sustainable Resources Management department at ESF and as Chair of the Committee on Research. Due to the Change in ORP Leadership, there has been an initiative to continue the evaluation of our processes around ethics and integrity in research to meet and exceed federal guidelines. Prior to submitting a conflict of interest disclosure, all investigators charged with managing research awards administered via the Research Foundation for SUNY are required to complete Conflict of Interest training in The CITI program. CITI Program has been at the forefront of online research ethics and compliance training since its founding in 2000. The training modules include Financial Conflicts of Interest: Overview, Investigator Responsibilities, and COI Rules, Institutional Responsibilities as they Affect Investigators and Conflicts of Commitment and Conscience. The initiative we are continuing this year is in the evaluation of disclosures. As we have done in the past, we did a thorough review of disclosed relationships to determine if a management plan or mitigation plan was required. We are also in the process of reviewing our Responsible Conduct of Research Training guidance and updating procedures to continue to ensure that all trainees working under federal awards are appropriately trained in accordance with federal mandates.

Resource Availability

In addition to SUNY System budget allocations and tuition and fees revenue referenced above, ESF has made a concentrated effort to invest in the College Foundation's ability to attract philanthropic gifts. Successful fundraising activities rely on extensive research to identify prospective donors, the development of relationships, proposal generation and solicitation, and ongoing stewardship and engagement. An analysis of ESF's long-term philanthropic funding needs, existing donor prospect pool, and staffing led to investments in both development infrastructure and staffing. These investments have increased fundraising performance, and will be the building blocks for ESF's next comprehensive fundraising campaign. Going forward, Academic Departments will have greater support from the College to partner with the College Foundation in order to maximize funding for research priorities in a coordinated and organized fashion. Considering the College's structural budget deficit and challenges associated with generating more funding through tuition and fees within the context of a public university system, renewed coordination between academic departments and institutional development officers emerged as the greatest area of potential for securing institutional resources.

Assessment of Resource Allocation

ESF has engaged in a number of assessment efforts regarding the availability of resources (*CFO presentations to ESF Campus; CFO Presentations to ESF BoT*). The SUNY Preliminary Enrollment Survey each semester provides the Business Office with some insight on what to expect for state allocations and other enrollment driven indicators (*Preliminary Enrollment Survey Forms*). Additionally, ESF's Executive Leadership team has engaged in assessments to determine where to invest resources to maximize benefits to the College, and has allocated resources to the College Foundation, to

the academic departments for external research funding, to Communications and Marketing and Enrollment Management in efforts to attract and retain more students, and toward online programs including an AS-to-BS degree completion program in Sustainability Management that is entirely online and online Graduate Certificates in Environmental Leadership and Science & Environmental Communication and Public Relations Management.

Online programs may offset the high cost of delivering STEM-based degree programs while generating revenue for the College. The strategic resource allocation in these areas is a strong foundation for future strategic fiscal planning at the College. Along with these programmatic investments in development, competitiveness for external grants, and enhanced educational offerings, ESF has also invested in the technological infrastructure necessary to support these initiatives. ESF has been primarily occupied with resource allocation and resource availability in the context of the structural budget deficit, and has engaged in several mitigation strategies to slow, and eventually reverse, the financial challenges we are facing.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SUNY announced additional funding constraints, tightened approval processes, and enhanced justification requirements for all purchases. Additionally, some funding academic departments were relying on was reduced or eliminated as the System engaged in an assessment of how to respond to the financial challenges presented by a worldwide pandemic. Over time, some funding autonomy has returned and ESF has been successful in advocating to SUNY to honor their commitment to the Discovery Challenge Initiative, at least in part. ESF received funding from the CARES act and was able to deploy that money in direct support of student achievement. While ESF was well into the process of deploying enhanced computing resources and technological infrastructure prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden shift to an entirely virtual workspace illuminated the need for Improved Virtual Desktop Infrastructure and remote access capacity. The work at ESF and SUNY system is ongoing as we adapt to an increasingly virtual environment, but the computing resource investment has been instrumental in supporting the current virtual and hybrid work models students and employees are navigating. Related to the technological infrastructure to support ongoing College functions through the pandemic, ESF was able to leverage our enterprise license for Qualtrics survey software to meet needs for documentation in a paperless format as it related to SUNY expectations for campus operations when employees returned to campus work locations.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

ESF has a renewed leadership team that brings a unique combination of backgrounds, skills, and interests that will converge to successfully lead ESF into a new era of higher education. The leadership team features professionals with a long history of partnering with state and local governments, national and international research organizations, local and regional philanthropists, and global leaders in environmental conservation and sustainability. Because of the experience the Executive Leadership team brings to the institution, ESF has the opportunity to leverage important relationships both locally and globally in order to advance the College mission, vision, and values.

Areas for Improvement

While ESF has made consistent use of internally developed and externally sourced assessment instruments within units, establishing some opportunities for more interactive input from campus stakeholders could be beneficial. Sharing and discussing the results of these tools more broadly will be important as ESF goes forward into the next decennial assessment period. The ESF Retention Council's engagement with the myriad of institutional data and the work that committee is doing to synthesize the data in an effort to effect institutional change can serve as a model for other working groups, task forces, and committees in the coming years.

Insights

With the campus re-invigoration that can come with renewed leadership, so too does a level of uncertainty. Engaging in the self-study process amidst such significant changes on campus, with those changes spanning the entire two-year timeline, has offered both opportunities and frustrations. Many of the individuals we had identified for our working groups separated from the College and engaging colleagues and students in these conversations proved challenging at times. However, the self-study evidence collection, working group structure, and drafting the report narrative has facilitated the development of important professional relationships and engaged campus stakeholders in understanding the scope of work unique to our expertise, and how that work aligns with the overall institutional resource allocation and planning process.

STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION

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

Introduction

This chapter describes how SUNY ESF meets each of the five criteria, all the sub-criterion, and the two related Requirements of Affiliation (Numbers 12 and 13) within this Standard.

Governance Structure

SUNY ESF is committed to shared governance and processes which allow for the support and advancement of its mission and goals. Contributing to the shared governance of the institution are the ESF Board of Trustees (BoT), the President, the faculty, and the student body.

ESF Board of Trustees (BoT)

Pursuant to New York State Education Law § 6003, the Board of Trustees (BoT) consists of fifteen (15) members. Nine voting members of the Board are appointed to serve six-year terms by the Governor of the State of New York, by and with the advice and consent of the State Senate. In addition, one voting member is elected by the students of ESF with membership rotating annually between the ESF undergraduate and graduate student association(s). The remaining five Trustees include the New York State Lieutenant-Governor, the State Commissioner of Education, the State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor, the State Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Chancellor of Syracuse University.

The board is currently chaired by William Fisher with vice chair John Bartow. There is one outstanding vacancy in the board's composition (Board of Trustees - ESF). All members of the Board serve without compensation.

When there is a vacancy in any of the appointed member positions, the College President makes recommendations to SUNY System's Director of Local Government and Legislative Affairs. SUNY then works with the NYS Governor's Appointments team to identify and vet candidates for nomination or re-nomination. Once candidates are vetted and accepted by the Governor's team, nominations are forwarded to the Senate to be confirmed.

The ESF BoT bylaws outline the roles and responsibilities of the ESF President.

President

SUNY ESF’s administration is led by its President, Ms. Joanie Mahoney, who was appointed in November of 2020 and is the first woman to lead the institution. Ms. Mahoney is supported by a group of ten well-qualified senior level administrators, including an Executive Vice President and Provost. Eight academic units and departments and six administrative divisions and departments report to the Provost (*ESF College-wide Org Chart - Figure 7*).

Faculty

Members of the faculty have within their purview the management of educational policy and curriculum through membership in Academic Governance (AG). Academic Governance at ESF serves a variety of roles as defined by the SUNY Board of Trustees. Primarily, ESF’s Academic Governance serves to help facilitate the initiation, development, and implementation of the college’s mission and educational programs. Academic Governance membership is composed of faculty members, 30 representative professional staff, and student Presidents of the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Associations. The membership and function of Academic Governance are clearly expressed in the Academic Governance Bylaws (*AG_Bylaws*).

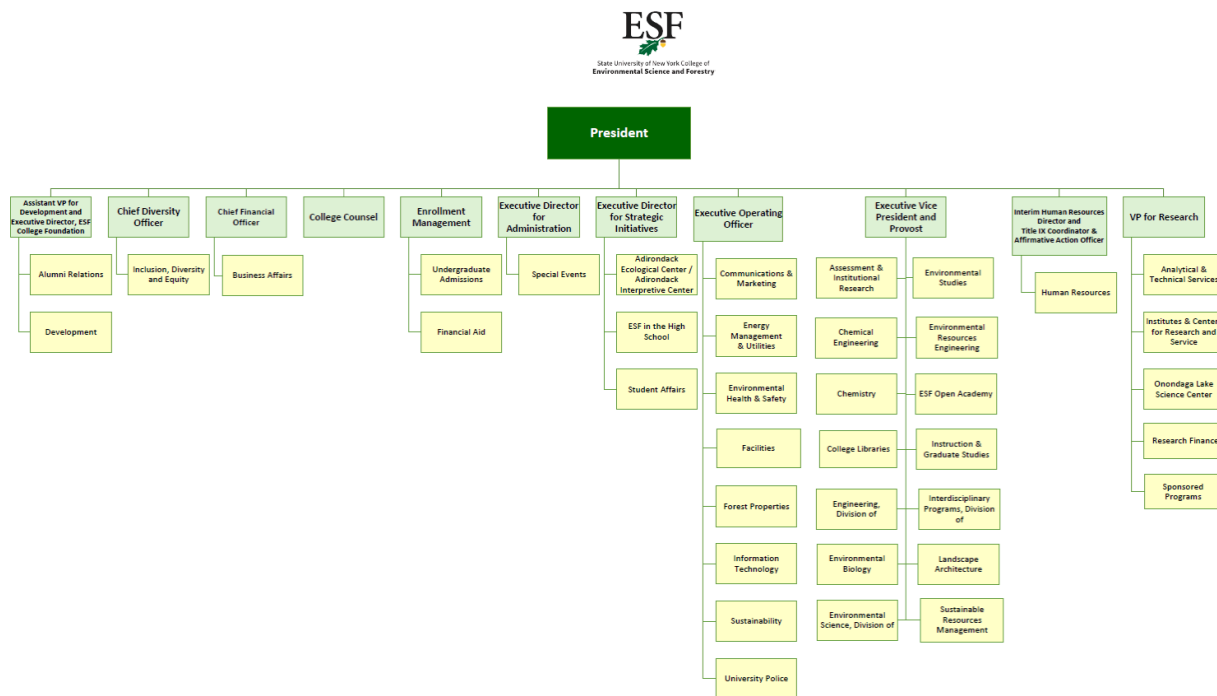


Figure 7: ESF College-wide Organizational Chart

Students

The Undergraduate and Graduate Student Associations, USA and GSA, have elected bodies governed by independent constitutions and bylaws whose membership and function are described in these governing documents. USA and GSA members participate in self-governance through their established executive boards and committee structures. These student associations also submit reports to the ESF BoT, College President, and Dean for Student Affairs, and other college professional staff (*USA-Bylaws & GSA_Bylaws*).

Governing Body

SUNY ESF is a specialized, doctoral-granting institution within the State University of New York system (SUNY). Established by New York State Education Law (*NYS Ed Law Article 121 Sections 6001 to 6007*), SUNY ESF is guided by the SUNY Board of Trustees (BoT) (*Board of Trustees - SUNY*), which provides a clearly organized governance structure (*BOT-education-law-article 8*). Unique, however, is that ESF is the only institution of the SUNY state operated campuses with a separate and distinct BoT instead of a Governing Council (*SUNY_BOT_Policies*). The ESF BoT's authority is set by statute within New York State Law 6001-6007, article 121 (*NYS Law Section 6004 - College BoT*).

The ESF BoT is responsible for the overall governance of the College and as such is designated with the following general powers and duties as outline in the bylaws and corresponding New York State Education Law section 6004 (*ESF BoT Bylaws & NYS Law Section 6004 - College BoT*):

- Confirming of degrees and personnel appointments, promotions, and terminations;
- Recommending a set of Presidential Candidates to the state university trustees for appointment;
- Reviewing all major College plans, including physical operations, strategic planning focused on enhancing the academic and student experience, naming of buildings and grounds, and approves plans for expansion and restriction of student admissions and student activities; and
- Reviewing of the College budget

The ESF BoT adopted modified bylaws and amendments on December 14, 2018 to clarify how the BoT organizes itself and conducts its business pursuant to the powers and duties specified in New York State Education Law 6004 (*ESF BoT Bylaws*).

The BoT includes a uniquely qualified membership appointed by the NYS Governor with advice and consent of the NYS Senate (*NYS Law Section 6003 - College BoT Organization*). In addition, the ESF BoT has several ex officio members: the NYS Lieutenant-Governor, NYS Commissioner of Education, SUNY Chancellor, NYS Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Syracuse University Chancellor (*NYS Law Section 6003 - College BoT Organization*).

In 2021, the Board elected as its chair, William (Bill) Fisher. Bill serves on the Joint Commission on

Public Ethics (JCOPE) and is vice chair of the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority. As a part of Bill Fisher's transition to chair, he has assisted in the follow through and support of the following critical advances: supporting the transition and training of new board members as a part of recent board appointments, confirming board responsibilities and current priorities, advancing the creation of a standalone Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Standing Committee, formalizing a new subcommittee on fiduciary responsibility and overarching improvement to all committee charges and duties. The work of the Board of Trustees is performed at regularly scheduled meetings connected to the College's academic year, as well as at committee meetings scheduled between meetings of the full Board of Trustees.

In the past several years, several vacant positions on the Board of Trustees have been filled by new appointees. New Trustees have received board orientation materials and training to accelerate their integration into Board operations and processes. The Board has four standing committees: Governance; Sustainable Finance; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Facilities. The Governance committee regularly reviews the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board of Trustees' work, while the three standing committees actively review the plans of the President and Administration with the specific areas in which each committee operates.

With the appointment of a new President in November 2020, from a list of three candidates submitted to the SUNY Chancellor with the full endorsement of the Board of Trustees, it was critical that the Board work closely with the new administration to ensure a seamless transition in leadership and to help guide the institution to a stable future.

In the first quarter of 2021, the Board made it a priority to assist in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion through the formation of a new Board Committee solely focused on this effort. According to Dr. Malika Carter, ESF's Chief Diversity Officer and presidential liaison to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Standing Committee, issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) run throughout all policy areas and functions of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, including the College of Environmental Science & Forestry (ESF), and are inextricably tied to both student success and to the growth and effectiveness. Harnessing the transformative power of diversity requires an inclusive and equitable climate and the ESF Board of Trustees takes our campus efforts for DEI seriously and want to recognize a need for this to be pursued at the highest level of policy and program development at ESF. To seize the moment to lead by building a campus not only committed to academic excellence but accessible to all regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or class, the ESF Board of Trustees established a standing committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at its January 15, 2021 meeting, and approved bylaw revisions accordingly in May. Like all standing committees of the BOT, this committee is comprised of a minimum of two Trustees.

In addition, the BOT has appointed representatives of students, faculty and staff, the greater university community (Syracuse University, Upstate Medical University), and the broader Syracuse and ESF satellite property communities. The Committee considers policy and procedure issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the College and within the greater campus community.

Where appropriate, the Committee works in collaboration with other Board Committees and campus organizations, particularly Academic Affairs, Finance and Administration, Research and Economic Development, and Student Life; as well as the President and his/her/their administration.

The Board of Trustees (BoT) also established a Facilities committee at its December 10, 2021 meeting. At its February 9, 2022 meeting, the Governance Committee will discuss what duties and charges will be given to the Facilities Committee and then bring a recommended change in the Board of Trustees By-Laws for review and approval at the next full Board meeting.

Finally, the Board spent a substantial amount of time serving on task forces in the following areas: advising, certifications, internships and career opportunities and the last one was charged with looking at ESFs relationship with Syracuse University and recommending ways to enhance and strengthen this partnership between our two universities.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Because ESF's trustees are appointed and confirmed by the New York State Senate, they are "public officers" under New York State law and subject to all applicable rules and responsibilities. All public officers in New York State are required to file a sworn Oath of Office and an acknowledgment of receipt of a set of provisions from within Public Officers Law Article 4, describing ethical limitations on activities by state officers: §§ 73, 73-a, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 78 (*New York Consolidated Laws, Public Officers Law - Article 4 & Oath_Affirmation of Public Officers*). Sections 73 and 74 each place limitations on activities for state employees and officers that may conflict with duties owed to the public arising from their service. In addition to the ethics provisions governing state officers, the ESF BoT must follow the policies and procedures established by the SUNY BoT, including the Code of Ethical Conduct for University Officers ("Ethics Code") (*Code of Ethical Conduct for University Officers-SUNY*).

This Ethics Code limits outside activities for SUNY public officers who serve without compensation, such as the members of the ESF BoT (*NY Edu Law 6003*). Such public officers must not make decisions that are motivated by self-interest, rather than the public interest. The enumerated prohibitions include, by way of example, a limitation on the acceptance of gifts that are reasonably intended to influence the public officer or otherwise reward the officer for actions taken. Another example is a restriction on the types of contracts that can be entered into between firms in which the public officer has an interest or receives profit and the state agency to which the public officer owes a duty.

To enforce the Ethics Code, the SUNY BoT has a process for receiving alleged violations and referring matters out to JCOPE when warranted and for developing internal ways of addressing the issue. Additional investigation and enforcement may be had from the NYS Office of the Inspector General (*Offices of the Inspector General*). The NYS Office of the Attorney General (*New York State Attorney General*) and Office of the NYS Comptroller (*Office of the New York State Comptroller*) are involved as oversight agencies for state contracts and payments.

Through the SUNY Office of the University Auditor, reports of suspected fraud or irregular activities

may be made and investigated (*Report Fraud - SUNY*). This is consistent with the SUNY BoT policy on Fraud and Irregularities (*Fraud and Irregularities - SUNY BoT*) and the reporting and reviewing procedure (*Procedure on Reporting and Reviewing Fraud and Irregularities*).

The ESF BoT has a practice of its members announcing potential conflicts that may arise related to an action under consideration and recusing themselves from voting or participating in deliberations. The ESF BoT may also seek and receive advice from the SUNY General Counsel's office, a system of attorneys who represent the campuses and SUNY Administration. To further support the ESF BoT within the ESF administration, there is an Internal Control Hotline for reporting fraud (*Reporting Fraud _ ESF Administration*). The Office of Human Resources handles SUNY ESF's ethics reporting obligations for its compensated officers (*Human Resources _ ESF*).

Chief Executive Officer

The ESF President is appointed by the SUNY Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the ESF BoT. According to the ESF BoT bylaws, the ESF President is the chief executive officer of the College, and a member of the College faculty. The President shall exercise such administrative direction and supervision as to permit the proper operation and development of the College. At any time during the period of appointment, the BoT and the SUNY Chancellor may evaluate the services of the chief administrative officer (*SUNY BoT-Policies*).

In the spring of 2020, the Board of Trustees was given the responsibility to form a Search Committee to conduct the search for the new president (*Search Process _ ESF President*). The Search Committee consisted of representatives from campus constituencies including Academic Governance, faculty, students, ESF Alumni Association, ESF College Foundation, the Board of Trustees, and professional staff. Also serving on the committee was a member of the Chancellor's senior staff designated by the Chancellor and two Chancellor's representatives who served as non-voting members. The search firm of WittKieffer Inc. was retained to assist with the presidential search.

The first phase of the search was to develop the job description and the required and preferred qualifications for the ideal candidate to serve as the 5th President of ESF. In addition, a campus prospectus was developed that described the college, including its current strengths, opportunities, and challenges and information about the SUNY system.

In November of 2020, ESF welcomed its fifth president and first woman to lead ESF, Ms. Joanie Mahoney. Ms. Mahoney joined ESF in November 2018 as Chief Operating Officer. In this role, she has served on the senior leadership team where she was instrumental in the Discovery Challenge process, expansion of ESF as an instrumental partner with government to address pressing issues like climate change and intrusion of invasive species in our waterways, and functions as point person on COVID-19 matters and preparedness.

Prior to ESF, Ms. Mahoney served as Onondaga County Executive for 11 years and oversaw all aspects

of a county government, which served 460,000 residents.

During her tenure as county executive, she earned national recognition for her environmentally friendly stewardship. Before her elective office, Ms. Mahoney worked as an attorney both in private practice with the Harris Beach law firm and for five years as a criminal prosecutor in the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office. Ms. Mahoney received her bachelor of science degree from Syracuse University's School of Management and her juris doctor from SU's College of Law.

Administration

The ESF's President's staff, senior leadership, and administrative teams are shown in Figure 7.1 of the college's organizational chart within ten distinct units. President Mahoney leads her executive cabinet members who serve as an advisory board on setting policy, strategic initiatives, institutional priorities, and financial decisions. The Executive Cabinet meets monthly and includes nine of her 10 direct reports to the president, with the addition of the Vice Provost and Dean for Student Affairs, all who have the qualifications and experience to fulfill their roles and support the college (*Executive Cabinet Bios*). President Mahoney began a process in June of individual presentations by each cabinet member as a report out and highlight of progress and activity updates on goals and priorities. Shortly after her appointment, President Mahoney began to organize a process for performance feedback among her executive team. This included the creation of performance programs for each of her direct reports and individual one-on-one meetings to evaluate progress and confirm future goals.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs has oversight for academic and student affairs. Each of the eight academic units is supported by a Chair/Director and the six administrative divisions all have Vice Provosts or Directors (*Organizational Chart Provost*).

The Provost presides over the Academic Council which meets once a month. The Provost also meets bi-weekly with each department chair and administrative unit head. Inclusion of the student experience comes through monthly meetings from student government and the Vice Provost and Dean for Student Affairs.

The Undergraduate Student Association (USA) and Graduate Student Association (GSA) advocate for their respective student memberships through formal and informal interactions with Administration and Faculty (*USA-By-Laws & GSA_bylaws*). Both USA and GSA maintain voting positions on Academic Governance and various standing committees. USA has a dedicated voting position on the ESF BoT to represent the concerns and perspectives of students. USA also has a position on the ESF Alumni Association Board and a position as an ex-officio representative on the ESF College Foundation Board. In 2021, in an effort to build philanthropic opportunities and better advantage synergies and the inclusion of alumni in the evolution of the College, the Alumni Relations Office was made a direct report to the Assistant Vice President for Development and Executive Director for the ESF College Foundation (*Alumni Association - Bylaws & College Foundation Board - Bylaws*). The SUNY ESF Development Office and ESF College Foundation Inc. are committed to helping the College achieve

its mission of education, research and public service through resource development and fund management. The recent reorganization enhances the ability for all to build lasting relationships with alumni, parents, friends, students, faculty, staff and other benefactors and partners whose support positively impacts thousands of ESF students every year.

At the time of this draft, ESF was engaged in a search for the next Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. ESF secured WhittKieffer Inc. to assist with the search and beyond providing leadership for the academic programs and urgency surrounding climate change and overall planetary health, the new Provost will be charged with the following: leading in difficult financial times, accelerating diversity within the faculty ranks and the study body, increasing student retention, and creatively fostering new program, funding, and revenue development.

Systematic Procedures For Evaluating Administrative Units

Over the past decade ESF has made considerable progress with the assessment of academic units, which are evidenced in previous chapters of this self-study. Leveraging the successes of evaluating academic programs as a model, President Mahoney has committed to the assessment of her leadership team, which will establish a formal and sustainable assessment process for administrative units. Currently, much unit-level assessment occurs including the creation of annual reports, needs assessment surrounding human capital and physical and technological infrastructure, and external reporting to state and federal agencies. ESF also participates in a collection of broad based assessments like: Academic Careers in Higher Education (2017) and the Great Colleges to Work For (2021) surveys.

Beyond program level advancements seen each year, a mission critical example of this evaluation process was the assessment, implementation, and creation of the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity strategic plan. In April of 2016, the College launched its first campus-wide committee focused on equity and inclusion with its initial goal being the development of an Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Strategic Plan. With this footing and the support of a SUNY mandate for the creation of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) on every campus, ESF then engaged in the process of hiring its first CDO in the Fall of 2017 (*IDE-Strategic-Plan*). The CDO was designated as a senior member of the campus administration and as such was made as a direct report to the President.

In March 2019, JMZ Architects and Planners was retained by the State University Construction Fund (SUCF) to prepare an update to the 2013-2023 Facilities Master Plan. With a change in campus leadership, development of several new academic programs, and implementation of Discovery Challenge initiatives, the State University Construction Fund (SUCF) determined that it was time to update the master plan recommendations to better support the new strategic, academic, and research priorities of SUNY ESF. The SUCF and College's primary goal in creating this update was to integrate strategic, academic, research, and financial priorities into a comprehensive campus plan. Strategic priorities represent the vision of an institution and the goals required to achieve that vision. With so many changes at the College, the master plan update identifies current deficiencies, recommends

strategic improvements, and establishes a framework for the next fifteen years of campus development (*Facilities Master Plan Update 2020*).

Assessment of Leadership, Governance, and Administration

Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration occurs through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms with the goal of enhancing operations. Below are current examples of assessment initiatives and resulting outcomes benefiting the governance, leadership, and administrative capacity at the College.

Academic Governance

ESF has grown participation in the academic governance process from low-double digit meeting attendance a decade ago, to now high double-digit numbers and even breaking 100 attendees in a recent meeting. While a necessity initiated during covid, the remote attendance option is now the norm. It has facilitated much greater attendance and participation.

In the latter half of the 2020-21 AY, President Mahoney (The Chair of Academic Governance) expressed frustration with the slow pace at which business moved through the academic governance committee process. This frustration was shared by the Interim Provost, Library Director, and a few other individuals. Additionally, there had been numerous attempts over the past three years to start an update and revision process of the bylaws to address inconsistencies and clarify processes. An ad-hoc committee was formed by the Academic Governance Executive Committee in the spring of 2021 and it worked over the summer to collect past proposed updates/revisions, review our processes and needs, and devise a new structure that is hopefully more nimble, allows broader opportunity for participation, while also decreasing obligatory service burden.

The major structural change resulted in reducing the number of standing committees, keeping regular business in those standing committees, and shifting emergent issues to temporary task-based ad-hoc committees which are populated by people vested in an issue, create opportunity for participation by those not on the committee, and ultimately disband once the matter is resolved. These ad-hoc committees would be formed by either the most relevant standing committee or the Academic Governance Executive Committee. The revised bylaws were proposed for adoption and vote in the October 2021 Academic Governance meeting (*AG_Bylaws*).

Creation of the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (IDP)

In fall 2018, then Provost Egiebor worked to address current and pending SUNY General Education expectations with efforts to enhance the experience of students and their opportunities for meeting these degree requirements. The first step toward improvement included the relocation of the Math and Writing courses from the Department of Sustainable Resources Management to the Department of Environmental Studies for an incubation period of two years. Within that two-year period, informal

and formal assessments indicated that the needs and priorities of the Math and Writing faculty were distinct from those of the faculty in the Department of Environmental Studies. Assessment results identified the uniqueness of supporting faculty who were actively engaged in research, versus faculty whose primary role was teaching.

A further reorganization occurred in the fall of 2020, when interim Provost Newman formed the Division of General Education with the expressed responsibility for general education programming and assessment, delivery of math and writing courses, and management of the math minor and writing, rhetoric, and communications minor. In addition, the collection of related student support offices were also brought into this cluster and included: the Writing Resource Center, Math Center, Public Speaking Lab, Digital Storytelling Studio, and ESOL Center. This next iteration brought many advances toward the goal of a common set of general education experiences and opportunities for students. However, assessment results from students and faculty uncovered the feeling that the title “general education” suggested a shared academic experience that students did not understand. Finally, in early fall of 2021 the decision was made to form the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (IDP). The IDP would engage students in their first two years of undergraduate study, as the SUNY System model required 30 credits of approved General Education coursework to be completed within this timeframe. The collection of student support services would be further organized under this Division offering all students support in quantitative reasoning, written and oral communication, digital literacy, and global awareness. This modified organizational structure also allowed the Division to craft Promotion & Continuing Appointment guidelines appropriate for teaching-intensive faculty, who typically are in 100% teaching appointments (*Promotion & Tenure Guidelines v4 SGJ*). This structure allows the program to make curricular decisions that pertain to General Education assessment, propose course and learning outcome changes designed to align with all major programs of study at ESF and that will fulfill the newly approved SUNY General Education Advisory Committee Framework (*SUNY GEAC Framework*). Additionally, this unit looks forward to serving as a “hub” for General Education assessment, with an interest in collecting co-curricular work products from students to minimize the need to develop new coursework to meet System General Education learning objectives. Finally, this administrative structure provides a clear path to ensure teaching faculty are assessed using fair and appropriate standards with regard to their teaching appointments and contracts.

Assessment of University Staff and Faculty

Article XII, Title C, Section 1 of the SUNY Policies of the Board of Trustees (*SUNY BoT-Policies*) states that it is the policy of the University to evaluate on a regular basis the performance of all professional employees and to give such employees consideration for promotion. University Staff and Faculty are represented by a collective bargaining agreement formalized by United University Professionals (UUP) and are assessed annually. Every UUP employee has an annual performance program and performance evaluation. The expression of short and long term goals comprise the yearly planning and evaluation process (*Performance Program & Evaluation*). A process of secondary source evaluations are included in this review where a predetermined set of constituents with whom the

professional works will be asked to provide evaluative feedback at the end of the year. Employees are provided with written feedback and an overall evaluation rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Institutional Response to COVID-19

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, then Interim President David Amberg formed an Executive Planning Team to manage the safety of students, faculty, and staff and the communication of a state-mandated transition to remote learning. This group has evolved into the COVID Response Team, whose oversight includes establishing processes and practices for testing, tracing, and communicating information to all members of the campus community. This group meets weekly and is comprised of stakeholders representing many areas across campus.

Testing has been managed in partnership with Syracuse University from the beginning. After the immediacy of a transition to remote learning and the return to on-campus instruction, a new hire (Campus COVID-19 Coordinator) was made to assist in managing the day-to-day contact tracing and associated communication with members of our community. A web-based dashboard and dedicated website were developed to manage information sharing and current planning. Here, real-time data on testing results, constituency-based resources, and current information are maintained. The continued commitment to the health and safety of all members of the College community stands as a goal for continuous improvement and monitoring all aspects of this ongoing human health crisis. A more recent example of continuous improvement is evidenced by the creation of the COVID Alert System. In partnership with Syracuse University, a color-coded, four-level masking framework was developed to update in real time specific on-campus requirements relative to masking. At the time of this report, more than 98% of our students, faculty, and staff are fully vaccinated against the COVID virus and there has not been a single documented instance of transmission in a classroom or laboratory.

Strengths, Areas of Improvements, and Insights (SII)

In an effort to recognize strengths in the current work surrounding compliance within each standard, while keeping an eye toward continuous improvement and feedback with concise results for action, the Strengths, Areas of Improvement, and Insights (SII) method for assessment reporting is being used.

Strengths

After this critical review and analysis of information surrounding governance, leadership, and administration structures and practices at ESF, it has been made evident that the College meets the criterion for MSCHE Standard VII accreditation. Our review also supports that ESF is in compliance with the identified Requirements of Affiliation (ROA) numbers 12 and 13. The College has a clearly articulated and legally constituted governance structure with appropriately credentialed administrators and faculty for which to carry out its mission and goals.

The review found the following to be the major areas of strength within this standard:

- 1) ESF BoT repopulation, formalization of duties and responsibilities, and formation of active standing committees and subcommittees.
- 2) ESF BoT formalization of a new subcommittee on fiduciary responsibility and the creation of a standalone Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion standing committee.
- 3) The creation of an office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity has taken a central role in advancing the work of inclusion, diversity, and equity at the College and the pursuit of success.
- 4) Shared governance is an active part of campus leadership and success and the continued investment in meeting current and future needs as evidenced by AG's assessment and review of working committee structures.

Areas for Improvement

The above outlined strengths and success are tied to the College's commitment and previously stated institutional priorities surrounding diversity, financial responsibility, and visibility. With this as a foundation, the significant changes in leadership at the College, as outlined above, represent a need for continuous assessment and evaluation of administrative structures and personnel to meet revisions to institutional goals and priorities.

Success in this rapidly changing environment can be enhanced through purposeful communication strategies and adopting a voice for administration, faculty, staff, and students to organize and gather as a collective around common goals and objectives.

Insights

ESF finds itself at a time and place where change is the norm and the path forward is prime with opportunities to honor the traditions of the College while forming the base for a future uniquely suited for an institution focused on science and the environment and preparing students to "Improve Your World."

CONCLUSION

This self-study has provided ESF with the opportunity to review and engage in a data driven assessment of the College. This report is the result of multiple years of work and reflects the ongoing efforts to advance the College's mission and provides evidence that ESF is in compliance with the Middle States Standards for Accreditation. In addition, this report also identifies valuable areas for improvement, which are listed below by standard:

Standard I

We have been recovering from a climate of uncertainty and distrust culminating with the College president who resigned in 2018 after four years and two votes of no confidence. We had an interim president who started the healing process and hired a new college president in November, 2020, who is committed to continue this process. Enhancing the collegiality that is being fostered with stabilized leadership will help the outcomes of this self-evaluation move the College forward.

ESF has a history of combining experiential learning at the undergraduate and professional graduate program level with applied to basic science undergraduate and graduate degree programs all focusing on the environment. This is related directly to ESFs stated Vision and Mission. The identified strategic structure Vision ↔ Mission ↔ Priorities ↔ Guiding Principles developed because of this self-study report will provide the foundation for a living not static plan to move ESF forward and demonstrate its commitment to environmental stewardship.

ESF is known as a premier environmental college. To maintain and enhance this strength will require ongoing engagement and collaboration with external stakeholders, educators, and researchers as well as collaborating across departments within ESF to enhance our scholarship and visibility as an authoritative source on environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts nationally and internationally. This will require strategic resource allocations.

ESF has a small school advantage appreciated by our students. However, this small school status has fiscal challenges given the nature of our degree programs and research. ESF recognizes the improvements that can be made with a well-implemented assessment plan. This is moving forward with our undergraduate degree programs, many of which have their own professional accreditation. However, this is just starting at the graduate level with a recently developed graduate program assessment plan.

Standard II

The robust and detailed policy creation and revision process that was developed in 2018 allows a mechanism for the Office of Enrollment Management to further clarify their strategies to ensure honesty in recruitment and retention materials. The current procedure of working with the Office of Communications and Marketing and verifying data shared with internal and external audiences does

ensure that the College is providing trustworthy information to both current and prospective students and their families. Working toward the creation of some policy guidance that is easily available to the staff in that office will provide additional assurance that ESF is meeting our public honesty obligations. The College Assessment Committee has an opportunity to make better use of the SUNY-sponsored student satisfaction surveys (SUNY SSS, NSSE, etc.) and other campus-wide surveys, such as the SVP and employee satisfaction survey instruments to make timely recommendations. Rich data are contained therein, but it has been a challenge to dedicate staff and faculty time to process the data in order to provide any meaningful recommendations to campus leadership. Reviewing these survey efforts for this purpose has provided some insight into how the information could be presented to the Assessment Committee and other College committees, task forces, or working groups in targeted/ manageable portions in order to support the related work these groups are doing in the interest of continuous improvement at the College.

As the campus adapts to a new information system and query platform, it will be important to assess progress in the availability of standardized reports and the capacity to produce ad hoc reports in a timely manner. Many of the Legacy standardized reports did not allow for adaptation to align with ad hoc data requests, so as these reports are generated in the new system it will be vital to ensure each one contains commonly requested attributes; for example, race, sex, citizenship, state of residence are commonly requested data points that are difficult to capture in a single, comprehensive report. Adequate capacity in the Information Systems unit will be vital in order for accurate disclosure of institutional data to internal and external constituencies to be maintained. The Assistant Director for Assessment & Institutional Research is currently in the process of converting much of the online Fact Book data to be sourced from our internal system.

Standard III

ESF continues to design and deliver STEM undergraduate and graduate programs reflecting the College's vision, mission, three strategic priorities, and three guiding principles. This strength will be enhanced through continued internal assessment and closing the assessment loop and external accreditation by professional societies and other external peer review processes. Designing and delivering these programs requires hiring and keeping well-qualified faculty. While sometimes challenging given our fiscal constraints, our faculty have demonstrated high levels of scholarship. Data management continues to be an area for improvement. Academic data collected in administrative silos continues to be a challenge, although some of this is unavoidable due to reporting regulations. More easily accessible databases will allow for better strategic planning due to the outcomes from assessments.

Standard IV

The identified strengths and success in this standard are tied to the College's goal of providing an outstanding student experience. With this as a foundation, the College should formalize and accelerate its attention and work on advancing the recommendations of the recent Advising Task Force.

Standard V

Especially since the release of the SUNY System Proposed General Education Framework in fall 2021, ESF will be required to establish sustained assessment processes for the administrative units that support the delivery of the student learning experience. While this area of improvement is a clear need, the Proposed Framework indicates a roadmap of sorts to target assessment efforts for units such as Moon Library, the Office of International Education, Office of Student Affairs, and the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and how they deliver the elements of general education programming that are not restricted to a credit requirement or department. Assessment efforts in these areas are established and ongoing, but simply need to be coordinated between the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs and other units that deliver educational content.

Standard VI

While ESF has made consistent use of internally developed and externally sourced assessment instruments within units, establishing some opportunities for more interactive input from campus stakeholders could be beneficial. Sharing and discussing the results of these tools more broadly will be important as ESF goes forward into the next decennial assessment period. The ESF Retention Council's engagement with the myriad of institutional data and the work that committee is doing to synthesize the data in an effort to effect institutional change can serve as a model for other working groups, task forces, and committees in the coming years.

Standard VII

The identified strengths and success in this standard are tied to the College's commitment and previously stated institutional priorities surrounding diversity, financial responsibility, and visibility. With this as a foundation, the significant changes in leadership at the College, as outlined above, represent a need for continuous assessment and evaluation of administrative structures and personnel to meet revisions to institutional goals and priorities.

Success in this rapidly changing environment can be enhanced through purposeful communication strategies and adopting a voice for administration, faculty, staff, and students to organize and gather as a collective around common goals and objectives.

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
1 Forestry Drive, Syracuse, NY 13210 | 315-470-6500 | esf.edu

