Student Achievement

Goals and Outcomes

According to the SACSCOC policy statement on institutional obligations for public disclosure, an accredited SACSCOC institution "is obligated to provide to its students, constituents, and the public information about itself that is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient… [including] statements of its goals for student achievement and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success may include reliable information in retention, graduation, course completion, licensure examinations, and job placement rates and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission."

SACSCOC Core Requirement 8.1 (Student achievement) requires an accredited institution to identify, evaluate, and publish goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, nature of students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered, and to use multiple measures to document student success.

As noted in the SACSCOC Interpretation of Core Requirement 8.1:

- Institutions are expected to demonstrate their success with respect to student achievement and indicate the criteria and thresholds of acceptability used to determine that success. The criteria are the items to be measured (and published); the thresholds of acceptability are the minimal expectations set by the institution to define its own acceptable level of achievement (i.e., a minimum target). The institution is responsible for justifying both the criteria it utilizes and the thresholds of acceptability it sets. The items measured and the thresholds of acceptability should be consistent with the institution's mission and the students it serves.
- Institutions not meeting their self-identified thresholds of performance are expected to undertake efforts to meet expectations.
- SACSCOC expects one measure of student success to be graduation rate. Institutions choose one indicator to establish a baseline and compare performance with other peer institutions.
- Institutions whose graduation rates fall below appropriate and acceptable targets are expected to implement ongoing strategies to seek improvement.
- In order to maximize institutional effectiveness in the area of student achievement, institutions should also disaggregate graduation rate data by appropriate gender, ethnic, socioeconomic, and/or other student population characteristics. A rationale for the way(s) in which an institution disaggregates such data is expected. As a result of the analysis of such disaggregated data, institutions should implement strategies to seek improvement in the achievement of at-risk student populations.

Indicator #1: ETSU strives to increase the number of graduates from our programs while maintaining high academic standards.

As noted in the mission statement, ETSU is committed to increasing the level of educational attainment in the state and region. ETSU awards degrees in over 100 baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist, and doctoral programs, including distinctive interdisciplinary programs and distance education offerings that serve students from the region and beyond.

Undergraduate Programs

The strategic plan guides the following two goals related to this indicator of student achievement:
- Goal 1a – Retention Rates: ETSU aspires to retain 85 percent of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students from fall-to-fall.
- Goal 1b – Graduation Rates: ETSU aspires to graduate 60 percent of all incoming degree-seeking undergraduate students within eight years as reported in the IPEDS 8 Year Outcomes measures.

For each of these goals, the threshold of acceptability is based on achieving the baseline peer group average, as determined in 2016, by the final year of the strategic plan (2026). In order to make incremental steps toward achieving the peer group averages, annual thresholds of acceptability are identified each year:
- Threshold of acceptability 1a: The threshold of acceptability is to achieve the baseline peer group average fall-to-fall retention rate of 76 percent by 2026. Reaching this threshold will require an annual increase of 0.5 percent per year. Therefore, ETSU's annual threshold of acceptability for the fall 2020 cohort is 73.5 percent.
- Threshold of acceptability 1b: The threshold of acceptability is to achieve the baseline peer group eight-year graduation rate of 53 percent by 2026. Reaching this threshold will require an annual increase of 0.4 percent per year. Therefore, our annual threshold of acceptability for the 2013-2014 entering undergraduate students is 51.2 percent.

Outcomes for Goal 1a and Goal 1b are provided in Tables 8.1.1 and 8.2.2, respectively.

Table 8.1.1. Undergraduate Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates (First-time, Full-time, Degree-seeking).

Undergraduate Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates (First-time, Full-time, Degree-seeking)				
Cohort	**Rate**	**Threshold**	**Threshold Met**	**Goal Met**
Fall 2012	66.2	N/A	N/A	No
Fall 2013	69.4	N/A	N/A	No
Fall 2014	71.5	N/A	N/A	No
Fall 2015	71.3	N/A	N/A	No
Fall 2016	75.9	N/A	N/A	No
Fall 2017	73.0	72.0	Yes	No
Fall 2018	72.4	72.5	No	No
Fall 2019	77.9	73.0	Yes	No
Fall 2020	66.8*	73.5	No*	No

*Undergraduate Fall-to-Fall Retention was significantly impacted by a temporary shift to an exclusively online format in response to the COVID pandemic.

Table 8.1.2. Percent of Entering, Degree-seeking Undergraduates Receiving a Bachelor's Degree in 8 years or Less

Undergraduate IPEDS 8 Year Outcome				
Cohort	Rate	Threshold	Threshold Met	Goal Met
2009-2010	49.6	NA	NA	No
2010-2011	48.6	50.0	No	No
2011-2012	49.6	50.4	No	No
2012-2013	52.5	50.8	Yes	No
2013-2014	55.2	51.2	Yes	No

Graduate Programs

Consistent with ETSU's 2016-2026 strategic plan goal of reaching a total student enrollment of 18,000 students, ETSU seeks to increase the number of graduate degrees conferred. A third goal related to indicator #1 was developed in 2018 in an effort to ensure goals and outcomes are appropriate to the nature of students served by ETSU and the kinds of programs offered:

- Goal 1c: ETSU seeks to award 1,200 graduate degrees per academic year by 2026. ETSU aspires to reach this goal while maintaining an attrition rate consistent with past performance. Attrition rate at ETSU is defined as the percentage of graduate students who left ETSU without graduating and did not re-enroll in the ensuing academic year.
    - The threshold of acceptability is to exceed the number of graduate degrees conferred from the most recent 3-year average as of 2016 which was 777 degrees.

Table 8.1.3

ETSU Attrition Rate and Graduate Degrees Conferred				
Year	Attrition Rate	Graduate Degrees Conferred	Threshold Met	Goal Met
2016-2017	11.2	906	Yes	No
2017-2018	9.9	851	Yes	No
2018-2019	8.9	926	Yes	No
2019-2020	9.9	965	Yes	No
2020-2021	9.9	905	Yes	No

 *Cohort includes all Graduate students and is not limited to newly entering students.

Indicator #2: ETSU strives to increase the critical thinking skills of our students.

Employers and graduate programs value the ability to think clearly, solve problems, and evaluate arguments, and ETSU is committed to increasing the critical thinking skills of its students. The values and skills developed at ETSU will prepare the institution's graduates to become productive, enlightened citizens who actively serve their communities and the world. ETSU uses the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) to assess the critical thinking skills of our graduating students.

The CCTST is a discipline-neutral assessment for students that is trusted worldwide as a valid, objective, and reliable measure of core reasoning skills. The CCTST is designed to permit test-takers to demonstrate the critical thinking skills required to succeed in settings where solving problems and making decisions by forming reasoned judgments are important. Used throughout the United States and in many countries and languages around the world, the CCTST has been proven to predict strength in critical thinking in authentic problem situations and success on professional licensure examinations.

ETSU has administered the CCTST since 2005, and has the following goal related to this indicator:
- Goal 2a: ETSU aspires to achieve a mean CCTST overall score of at least 19, the minimum range of what the test vendor considers "strong" critical thinking skill.

ETSU's participation in the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's (THEC's) Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) initiative requires the institution to meet or exceed the national average (for four-year college- and university-level test takers) each year as a component for consideration of full funding for the general education assessment standard. THEC's QAF initiative serves as the foundation for the threshold of acceptability for Goal 2a.
- Threshold of acceptability 2a: The threshold of acceptability is to meet or exceed the national average (for four-year college- and university-level test takers) of the CCTST overall score

ETSU students' CCTST performance since 2013-14 is provided in Table 8.1.3.

Table 8.1.3. CCTST Mean Overall Scores, 2013-2020.

CCTST Overall Scores				
Year	National Mean	ETSU Mean	Threshold Met	Goal Met
2013-14	17.0	17.0	Yes	No
2014-15	17.2	17.2	Yes	No
2015-16	17.1	17.2	Yes	No
2016-17	16.2	17.3	Yes	No
2017-18	16.2	17.4	Yes	No
2018-19	15.4	17.1	Yes	No
2019-20	15.4	17.3	Yes	No

Indicator #3: ETSU strives to successfully prepare students for licensure exams.

ETSU's professional programs require state and/or national licensing examinations in order to practice or meet employment requirements. Licensing examinations serve as one indicator of quality for medical and pharmaceutical programs.

ETSU has developed two goals related to this indicator:
- Goal 3a: Students in ETSU's MD and PharmD programs are required to pass state and/or national licensing examinations in order to practice. ETSU aims for 100% of students in the MD and PharmD programs to pass licensure exams.
  - The threshold of acceptability is that ETSU's MD and PharmD programs meet or exceed the appropriate national licensure exam first-time pass rate. Given ETSU's small class sizes (approximately 60-70 students per MD cohort and 70-80 students per PharmD cohort) and the potential for a single result to skew the mean, the three-year rolling average is used to determine the threshold of acceptability for licensure in these programs.

Outcomes for licensure exams are provided in Table 8.1.4 (PharmD, MD).

Table 8.1.4. Licensure pass rates for MD and PharmD programs.

ETSU Pass Rates for MD and PharmD Licensure Exams							
Program	Test Year	Test Type	ETSU Pass Rate (1st attempt)	ETSU Pass Rate (3-year rolling average)	Threshold Pass Rate (3-year rolling average)	Threshold Met	Goal Met
Medicine MD	2020-21	USMLE (step 1)	96%	97%	97%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	99%	98%	98%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	*	*	*	*	*
	2019-20	USMLE (step 1)	97%	94%	96%	No	No
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	95%	96%	98%	No	No
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	96%	94%	95%	No	No
	2018-19	USMLE (step 1)	91%	95%	95%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	98%	97%	97%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	97%	95%	95%	Yes	No
	2017-18	USMLE (step 1)	95%	98%	95%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	96%	96%	96%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	90%	96%	96%	Yes	No
	2016-17	USMLE (step 1)	99%	97%	95%	Yes	No
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	97%	95%	96%	No	No
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	98%	97%	96%	Yes	No
	2015-16	USMLE (step 1)	99%				
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	94%				
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	100%				

	2014-15	USMLE (step 1)	93%				
		USMLE (step 2 CK)	93%				
		USMLE (step 2 CS)	92%				
Pharmacy PharmD	2020	NAPLEX	80.95%	85.75%	88.74%	No	No
		MPJE	82.50%	80.75%	83.98%	No	No
	2019	NAPLEX	90.00%	89.99%	88.58%	Yes	No
		MPJE	91.18%	85.25%	84.18%	Yes	No
	2018	NAPLEX	86.30%	89.27%	87.76%	Yes	No
		MPJE	68.57%	83.43%	84.57%	No	No
	2017	NAPLEX	93.67%	91.64%	88.82%	Yes	No
		MPJE	96.00%	93.18%	88.10%	Yes	No
	2016	NAPLEX	87.84%	93.31%	91.13%	Yes	No
		MPJE	85.71%	93.12%	90.75%	Yes	No
	2015	NAPLEX	93.42%				
		MPJE	97.83%				
	2014	NAPLEX	98.68%				
		MPJE	95.83%				

*The Federation of State Medical Boards and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) discontinued the Medical Step II Clinical Skills examination in 2020-21.