

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

Business Affairs

Department: Business Affairs

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Business Affairs provides an array of responsive financial support services to students, faculty and staff including accounting, purchasing, grants, contracts, accounts payable and reporting. These services contribute to the enhancement and delivery of the University's primary mission of being a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research and service thereby preparing our students to become productive members of society, promoting economic development, and improving the quality of life in our region.

Business Affairs is dedicated to providing personal, prompt and efficient service to all students and campus offices, support for the University's fiscal operations and accurate and timely financial reporting that is compliant with state and federal guidelines and regulations.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from administrative assessment tools is collected.
- (2) Data is analyzed by the Business Affairs' Department Chair and Coordinator to determine if the Department has met measurable outcomes.
- (3) Results of assessment tools are discussed with the Department's staff and staff is asked for input on improving future outcomes.
- (4) The Department Chair, Coordinator and Committee Members will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, make appropriate changes to improve future outcomes.

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. Provide increased online student bill view and payment process options while reducing the University's paper footprint.

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Service: Student Billing Services

Measure 1.1. - The University has transitioned from paper to electronic bills for students beginning in Spring 2017. This service provides students with 24/7 access to current and historical billings plus payment history and payment processing from their computer and their phone, through the MyNSU mobile app. Academic year 2017-2018 was the first full academic year of only electronic bills, and the target was a 30% usage rate. Our targets are 50% second year, 70% third year, 90% fourth year and 100% at the fifth year. The percentage usage of the online system is quantitatively tracked for future outcome measure adjustments if required.

Finding. Target was 100%.

Analysis. The target was not met for AY 2024-2025. For academic year 2023-2024, the 100% usage rate target was not met. Based on the analysis of the results, the Business Affairs Office actively marketed the electronic bill system to students through bill system email messages, web announcements, the MyNSU portal, and summer Freshman Connection sessions to help further enhance student electronic bill usage rates; however, the MyNSU dashboard has been utilized to see real-time information making the bill statement optional. As a result, in AY 2024-2025, 27% of students billed viewed their electronic bills through the MyNSU portal during the academic year thereby not meeting the 100% fifth year target. Students have access to billing information on the MyNSU dashboard as well as monthly statements. The percentage of the bills viewed continues to be low and other billing measures have been implemented.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the AY 2024-2025 results, in AY 2025-2026 Business Affairs will increase its efforts to actively market the electronic bill system to students, including dual enrollment, through email messages, web announcements and the MyNSU portal. Although 100% of all bill statements are not viewed through the MyNSU portal, the electronic billing system, along with the MyNSU dashboard will continue to be utilized as an efficient means of billing communications with the students. In cases where students are not making payments then paper bills have been most effective.

Measure 1.2. - With the University transitioning from paper to electronic bills for students in Spring 2017, the number of paper bills being processed and mailed, which currently averages 6,000 paper bills per month, will be reduced annually with the goal of 0 paper bills per month once the student population becomes accustomed to viewing the online system. This could take up to 5 years. The target is to decrease paper bills by 20% per year until zero (0) paper bills is reached. The number of paper bills generated will be quantitatively tracked for future outcome measures.

Finding. Target was 100%.

Analysis. The target was met for AY 2024-2025. For 2023-2024, the target met with an average of 7,256 electronic bills generated through the MyNSU portal and mobile app and printed bills being generated to maximize student communication. Based on the analysis of the AY 2023-2024 results, in AY 2024-2025 Business Affairs minimized paper bill usage and actively marketed the electronic bill system to students through bill system

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email messages, web announcements, MyNSU portal announcements, and summer Freshman Connection sessions while also working with the Office of Information Technology Services and the University's third-party online billing and payment provider to implement electronic bill view and payment capabilities using the MyNSU mobile application. As a result, in AY 2024-2025, the target was met with an average of 8,426 electronic bills being generated through the MyNSU portal and mobile app and an average of 0 paper bills being printed.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2024-2025 results, in AY 2025-2026 Business Affairs will increase its efforts with the NSU Dual Enrollment program office to strive to inform high school students, counselors and the students' parents about the online electronic bill and payment option thereby continuing to fully rely on online billing.

SO 2. The Business Affairs' Department will complete all fiscal reporting and audit requirements accurately in compliance with state and federal guidelines and regulations.

Service: Fiscal Operations

Measure 2.1. - Every other year the University is audited by the Louisiana Office of the Legislative Auditor for compliance in the accuracy of the University's financial records, reporting, and compliance with all state and federal guidelines and regulations. The outcome of this SOM will be the number of audit findings related to financial activity received by the University. The target is zero (0) audit findings related to the financial activity.

Finding. Target was met.

Analysis. The target was met for fiscal year 2024-2025 as the University received zero (0) audit findings related to the financial activity for fiscal year 2023-2024 according to the Management Letter received in 2024 from the Louisiana Office of the Legislative Auditor. The next audit rotation will be in fiscal year 2024-2025 with the management letter issued in fiscal year 2026.

Decision. The Business Affairs Office will closely monitor the University's financial records to ensure zero (0) audit findings related to financial activity for the combined audit of fiscal year 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 that will be conducted during the fiscal year 2024-2025 audit rotation. Based on the results of the fiscal year 2024-2025 audit, the University will make efforts to educate the University community on the importance of compliance with fiscal policies. All changes to policies and procedures as well as reporting regulations will be disseminated via messenger as well as be updated in the online user manuals which are available to the University community. Internal controls have been implemented to reduce the risk of unauthorized access, as well as prevent unauthorized changes in direct deposit information. Effective communication has been found to be the most effective tool for maintaining financial compliance and zero (0) audit findings related to financial activity.

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SO 3. Adequate utilization, knowledge, and training of staff among each unit of the Business Affairs' Department to provide efficient and responsive service and action/conclusion to the student, parent, and campus inquiries and concerns.

Service: Student and Campus Support

Measure 3.1. - Business Affairs staff will be evaluated on its customer service through a Student Satisfaction Survey administered every other year by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Human Resources (OIEHR). The target is to be at or above Level 5-Somewhat Satisfied and above the National Four-Year Publics Satisfaction Ratings.

Finding. Target was met.

Analysis. The target was met for 2024-2025. According to the 2025 Student Satisfaction Survey administered every other year by OIEHR, the University received a 5.99 satisfaction rating which was .79 above the National Four-Year Publics satisfaction rating of 5.20. The satisfaction results were maintained, and there was a slight increase above the national average. Based on the 2025 results, Business Affairs will provide high quality customer care to students, parents, campus employees and customers through staff training and evaluation, streamlined processes, and continuous review of policies and procedures. Additionally, the University will actively market the electronic billing system to students through bill system email messages, web announcements, MyNSU announcements, and summer Freshman Orientation sessions. The satisfaction results slightly decreased over the 2023 survey results.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025 survey, the University will provide high quality customer care to students, parents, campus employees and customers through staff training and evaluation, streamlined processes, and review of policies and procedures. Additionally, the University will strive to actively market the electronic bill system to students through bill system email messages, web announcements, MyNSU announcements, and summer Freshman Orientation sessions. Furthermore, the University's Office of Information Technology will work with the University's third-party online billing and payment provider to implement billing and payment services available through the MyNSU mobile application to further increase student electronic bill and payment usage rates, and Business Affairs will coordinate efforts with the NSU Dual Enrollment program office in 2024-2025 to better inform high school students, counselors and the students' parents about the online electronic bill and payment option. Since this survey is only performed every other year, the next year for analysis will be during academic year 2026-2027 during Spring Term 2027.

Measure 3.2. - Satisfaction with billing policies and reasonableness will be evaluated on the Student Satisfaction Survey administered every other year by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Human Resources (OIEHR). The target is to be at or above Level 5-Somewhat Satisfied and above the National Four-Year Publics Satisfaction Ratings.

Finding. Target was met.

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Analysis. The target was met for 2024-2025. According to the 2025 Student Satisfaction Survey administered by OIEHR, the University received a 5.51 satisfaction rating for “Billing Policies are Reasonable.” This rating was .54 above the National Four-Year Publics satisfaction rating of 4.97. The 2025 satisfaction results slightly decreased over the 2023 survey results. Based on the 2025 results, Business Affairs provided high quality customer care to students, parents, campus employees and customers through staff training and evaluation, streamlined processes, and continuous review of policies and procedures. Additionally, the University began actively marketing the electronic bill system to students through bill system email messages, web announcements, MyNSU announcements, and summer Freshman Orientation sessions.

Decision. Based on the analysis of the 2025 survey, the University strived to provide high quality customer care to students, parents, campus employees and customers through staff training and evaluation, streamlined processes, and review of policies and procedures. Additionally, the University continued to actively market the electronic bill system to students through bill system email messages, web announcements, MyNSU announcements, and summer Freshman Orientation sessions. Furthermore, the University’s Office of Information Technology will work with the University’s third party online billing and payment provider to implement billing and payment services available through the MyNSU mobile application to further increase student electronic bill and payment usage rates, and Business Affairs will coordinate efforts with the NSU Dual Enrollment program office in 2024-2025 to better inform high school students, counselors and the students’ parents about the online electronic bill and payment option. Since this survey is only performed every other year, the next year for analysis will be during academic year 2026-2027 during Spring Term 2027.

SO 4. Within the Bursar’s Office, provide students with a responsive customer service experience by performing administrative functions and disseminating information related to billing, appeals, exemptions, and direct deposit. Direct students to other departments when necessary. Ensure that third-party vendors are paid for funds collected on their behalf. Perform all functions in a consistent and timely manner.

Service: Student and Campus Support

Measure 4.1: The Bursar’s office will review and remit third party collections by preparing reports and submitting AP vouchers for processing. The target is to remit payments once a month to all applicable vendors, except during those months when no collections have been received.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis: The target was met for 2024-2025. Upon review of third-party payments and accompanying reports, the University remitted collections to applicable vendors in a

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timely manner. Based on these results, the Bursar's Office performed efficiently and consistently in this administrative function.

Decision: Moving forward, the Bursar's Office will strive to prioritize quality and efficiency in its remittance of payments to applicable vendors. The processing of these payments will be monitored to ensure that each step is being performed in accordance with standard procedure. By doing so, the University will ensure continued accuracy and effectiveness in its administrative functions. Additionally, the Bursar's Office will communicate promptly with third parties and provide all relevant information related to payments remitted.

Measure 4.2: A primary function of the Bursar's Office is to communicate our department's services and policies to both incoming and current students. The Bursar's Office will attend on campus functions to disseminate information. The target is four events per calendar year.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis: The target was met for 2024-2025. The Bursar's office attended four campus events and was able to disseminate information and communicate with current and prospective students. These events were held in the summer. Based on these results, the Bursar's Office is achieving its objective of providing a responsive customer service experience to students.

Decision: Moving forward, the Bursar's Office will seek out opportunities to meet with students at events on campus to assist with questions and concerns, and share information related to billing, appeals, exemptions and direct deposit. The Bursar's Office will coordinate with other departments to be sure that communication is streamlined, and students are as informed as possible.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results. *The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2024-2025. These changes are based on the knowledge gained from analyzing the AC 2023-2024 results.*

1. Actively marketed the electronic bill system to students through web announcements, the MyNSU portal, and summer Freshman Connection sessions to help enhance student electronic bill usage rates.
2. Eliminated printing and mailing of paper bills each month.
3. Educated the University community on the importance of compliance with fiscal policies by disseminating via messenger all updates to university policies and procedures that affect University financial activities as well as updated online user

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manuals.

4. Provided high quality customer care to students, parents, campus employees and customers through staff training and evaluation, streamlined processes, and continuous review of policies and procedures.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

1. Work with the University's third-party online billing and payment provider to implement billing and payment services available through the MyNSU mobile application to encourage usage of student electronic bills and to increase payment usage rates.
2. Educate the University community on the importance of compliance with fiscal policies. All changes to policies and procedures as well as reporting regulations will be disseminated via messenger as well as be updated in the online user manuals which are available to the University community.
3. Maximize marketing efforts to provide reasonable, high quality billing services to students and to make more parents aware of the MyNSU bill statements.
4. Update equipment, including computers and printers, and continue to work within the budgetary constraints of the University to work towards that necessary goal while still providing the best customer service to students, faculty, and staff.