

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW**

### **Mission and history**

Southeast Missouri State University has a mission to provide student-centered education and experiential learning with a foundation of liberal arts and sciences. Southeast embraces a tradition of access, exceptional teaching, and commitment to student success that significantly contributes to the development of the region and beyond.

The University is proud of its long history of supporting students in the Southeast Missouri region. Established by statute in 1873, Southeast was originally known as the "Third District Normal School" with a mission to educate teachers for the public schools from St. Louis to the Bootheel of Missouri. Criblez and Dunn (2018), historians working at Southeast, have published a rich account of Southeast's history, which can be accessed at [www.semo.edu/about](http://www.semo.edu/about).

### **Locations and service area**

Southeast Missouri State University is in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, which has a population of approximately 40,000. Located on the Mississippi River, it is 110 miles south of St. Louis, Missouri, and 160 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee. The University's service area covers a 25-county area extending from St. Louis to the Arkansas border and from the western foothills of the Missouri Ozarks to the Mississippi River bordering Illinois and Kentucky. The University's main campus of over 300 acres includes the 100-year-old landmark building, Academic Hall, situated on a hill overlooking the city and the river. The River Campus, located on the Mississippi River south of Cape Girardeau's historic downtown area, houses the Holland College of Arts and Media and a regional museum. Additional locations include two regional campuses in Sikeston (33 miles from the main campus) and Kennett (95 miles from the main campus), and delivery sites at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff (85 miles), and the Cape College Center in Cape Girardeau in partnership with Three Rivers College and Mineral Area College.

### **Control**

Southeast Missouri State University is a regional comprehensive institution of higher education that derives its authority from the people of Missouri through the Missouri State Legislature. By statute, the

University has an independent six-member board of regents appointed to six-year terms by the governor and representative of the University's service region. In addition, a non-voting student representative is appointed to a two-year term. The board, operating under its legal authority, must approve institutional policies, budgets, proposed budgets, and requests for new programs. The Missouri Department of Higher Education, under the direction of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, is responsible for statewide planning for post-secondary education.

### **Enrollment and fast facts**

Fall 2018 undergraduate enrollment was 10,041 student and graduate enrollment was 1,030 students. Additional facts related to enrollment, the student population, academic offerings, and campus life can be accessed at [www.semo.edu/ir/facts](http://www.semo.edu/ir/facts).

### **ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS AREAS**

Since the University's last Systems Portfolio in 2014, there has been a significant focus on student success, enrollment, and assessment of student learning.

#### **Student success**

The University has a goal to retain 80% of full-time, first-time students (FTFT) and to graduate 60% of students within six-years. A series of focused initiatives including early alert, degree maps, co-requisite remediation programs for math and English, and enhanced academic support, were implemented in the last four years. Freshmen retention rates increased steadily during this time, reaching an all-time high in fall 2017, when the University's FTFT rate exceeded 75%. In 2017, the University invested in Starfish Retention Software (branded SupportNET), which was implemented in Fall 2018, and it formed a University Task Force for Student Success to evaluate and showcase current practices and draft a three-year student success plan.

#### **Enrollment**

The University experienced 20 years of consecutive enrollment growth from 1995 [8,118 students] to 2014 [12,087 students]. Enrollment remained near its high point in 2015 and 2016 [11,987 and 11,978 students, respectively], but declined in 2017 and 2018 [to 11,502 and 11,071 students, respectively]. The University is in the process of analyzing enrollment trends of competitor institutions and developing

strategic goals and action plans to reverse the decline. To grow enrollment, the University recognizes that academic programs and delivery modes must be aligned with anticipated marketplace needs.

### **Assessment of student learning**

In the past four years, the University engaged in two AQIP Action Projects to enhance its work in the area of student learning assessment. The first Action Project focused on developing and assessing course learning outcomes, and the subsequent project focused on developing, mapping, and assessing program learning outcomes. The University now has program learning outcomes and curriculum maps for all certificate, associate, undergraduate, and graduate programs. A process was implemented in 2017 to support academic departments with collecting and analyzing program-level student learning data. In the past year, the University has adopted a revised set of general education learning goals and a new process for assessing these. Also, in August 2018, the University adopted a set of five institutional learning outcomes. A three-year road-map for academic assessment was implemented in 2017 to guide this work.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

Over the last four years, the University has experienced substantive organizational change. Some change has been a result of deliberate efforts to streamline operations, while other changes have occurred due to significant reductions in state funding during fiscal year 2018.

#### **President's office**

Dr. Carlos Vargas became the 18<sup>th</sup> president of Southeast Missouri State University on July 1, 2015. Prior to Dr. Vargas's installation, the University was led by Dr. Kenneth Dobbins, who served as president from 1999 to 2015. Other changes in the president's office have included the appointment of a chief of staff/special assistant for strategy and government relations and a special assistant for equity and diversity/dean of students, both in 2016. Additionally, several reporting lines were changed so that the Offices of University Communications, Institutional Research, and Continuing Education report to the president's office (see current organizational chart at [www.semo.edu/president](http://www.semo.edu/president)).

#### **Provost's office**

In May 2018, Dr. Tamela Randolph took the office of interim provost following the resignation of Dr. Karl Kunkel, who had served as provost since February 2016. Prior to Dr. Kunkel's appointment, the

provost's office was filled by an interim provost, Dr. Gerald McDougall, who served from June 2015 to February 2016. Dr. Bill Eddleman served as provost from January 2014 to May 2015.

In June 2017, an associate provost for academic effectiveness and student success was appointed to fill a newly created position at Southeast. In June 2018, the position of vice provost and dean of graduate studies was eliminated due to budget reductions.

### **Academic restructuring**

In fiscal year 2018, a year-long process of consultation led to the reorganization of colleges and departments into a new model of five colleges, which was approved by the board of regents on May 11, 2018. The new college structure took effect in July 2018 and includes: 1) The Holland College of Arts and Media; 2) The Harrison College of Business and Computing; 3) The College of Education, Health, and Human Studies; 4) The College of Humanities and Social Sciences; and 5) The College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

### **Administrative restructuring**

Since spring 2017, the University has been in a continuous cycle of evaluation of administrative units to analyze process efficiencies and personnel structures. To date, these reviews resulted in the restructuring of administrative departments in all divisions, the elimination of services not integral to the core academic mission of the University, and the elimination of 52 vacant and filled staff positions.

## **INTRODUCTION TO CATEGORIES**

### **Category 1—Helping students learn**

For the last 30 years, the University used its general education program outcomes to articulate its common learning goals. Recent changes in general education programming in Missouri prompted the University to adopt a new set of general education learning goals and a new process for assessing students' learning across the general education program (May 2018). Additionally, the University identified a need to articulate and assess its broader priorities for student learning. With support from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes and Assessment, the University adopted five institutional learning outcomes in August 2018. Two AQIP Action Projects, carried out over the last five years have enhanced the University's ability to report student learning against course learning outcomes and program

learning outcomes. The Three-Year Roadmap for Academic Assessment was implemented in 2017 to guide this work.

Southeast has 34 academic programs with specialized accreditation or certification. A continuous improvement initiative called Enhancing Program Review at Southeast was implemented in 2017 to achieve a more integrated and meaningful program review process. Additionally, a process for the extraordinary program review of low-completer programs was implemented in fall 2017, and a cocurricular program review process was piloted in fall 2018.

An HLC Multi-Location Visit, carried out in October 2018, confirmed the quality of two additional locations. Additionally, all online courses at Southeast are required to undergo quality assurance checkpoints. The University received the Quality Matter 2018 Making an Impact Award for its work in this area.

Academic integrity is embedded into the culture at Southeast. Policies and processes are in place to guide the honest and ethical behavior of students and employees. In fall 2018, Southeast hosted its first annual Integrity Week to provide an emphasis on the importance of ethical behavior in the personal, professional, and academic lives of our students and employees.

### **Category 2—Meeting student and other key stakeholder needs**

Meeting the needs of current and future students and other key stakeholders is accepted and embraced as a priority across the University. Processes are in place to set goals for student retention and completion. Data collection and analysis processes provide insight into the University's process toward these goals. Relationships with internal and external stakeholders, as well as integrated processes to support students' academic and non-academic needs, provide an important resource for Southeast students.

Strategic planning is integral to the institutional success in this area. The Strategic Enrollment Strategic Plan, the Flexible Learning Strategic Plan, and the emerging plan to enhance student success, all play a vital role in moving the University toward its goals.

### **Category 3—Valuing employees**

The University's Office of Human Resources provides oversight of policies and practices for hiring employees. The use of software helps to streamline these processes, and recent initiatives have created processes to help the University attract and retain a more diverse employee population.

Multiple opportunities are in place to recognize employee contributions. In fall 2018, the University implemented a new staff evaluation process that includes a more robust means of goal-setting, reflection, and dialogue. Faculty evaluation processes have remained fairly consistent over the last decade. A new, fully online process for collecting student feedback on instruction was implemented in fall 2017.

Professional development for staff and faculty is provided by multiple units across campus. Plans are in place to continue enhancing staff onboarding and training modules. The Teaching Excellence Plan, which was implemented in fall 2017 has led to a more robust orientation process for new faculty, called Thrive in 5, faculty book studies, and several new professional development certificates for faculty, such as the Faculty Certificate for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

#### **Category 4—Planning and leading**

The University's mission, vision, and values are well-established and articulated in multiple ways. There is evidence that institutional processes align to the mission, and strategic planning provides a clear guide to University operations. The leadership structure of the institution is clearly defined. Communication occurs in a variety of formal and informal ways. The University clearly conceptualizes and communicates its stance on integrity and provides important resources and development opportunities to enhance understanding of honest and ethical practices for all members of the University community. In September 2018, the University hosted Integrity Week, which is now planned to occur on an annual basis.

#### **Category 5—Knowledge management and resource stewardship**

The University has well-established processes for making data available to a variety of users. Clear examples are provided in the Portfolio to show how data are used for informed decision making and planning purposes. Similarly, processes for resource management are integrated into the wider context of institutional effectiveness. The University, through its efforts toward emergency preparedness, preventative maintenance, facilities management, technology infrastructure, and financial management, supports a highly effective campus community.

#### **Category 6—Quality overview**

As an AQIP institution, Southeast has completed more than 18 Action Projects since 2009. These projects have led to significant improvements across multiple areas of the University. The AQIP Steering Committee, Academic Assessment Committee, and Faculty Advisory Committee for Program Review, provide a governance structure to support continuous improvement efforts. Multiple examples of

continuous improvement principles and activities are embedded across the organizational culture. Key AQIP activities, such as Strategy Forum participation, the Systems Portfolio, and Action Projects are integrated in a way that support the Comprehensive Quality Review. A culture of planning and project management across the institution provides a stronger focus on goal-setting, short-term planning, and reflection. The University looks forward to continuing its commitment to quality improvement by adopting another accreditation pathway following its Comprehensive Quality Review in September 2019.

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