

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To Otis College of Art and Design

March 10-13, 2026

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

Table of Contents

Section I – Overview and Context.....	3
A. Description of Institution and its Accreditation History	3
B. Description of Team’s Review Process	5
C. Institution’s Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence	6
Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report.....	7
Subsection A: Response to Previous Commission Actions.....	7
Subsection B: Institutional Essays	11
Standard 1: Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity	11
Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success	14
Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures.....	20
Standard 4: Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement	24
Subsection C: Reflections - Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process	27
Subsection D: Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards.....	28
Section III – Other Topics, as Appropriate (such as Substantive Change) --N/A.....	28
Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations	28
Appendices.....	30
Federal Compliance Forms	30
Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form	31
Marketing and Recruitment Review Form	33
Student Complaints Review Form	34
Transfer Credit Policy Review Form.....	35
Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix	36

Section I – Overview and Context

A. Description of Institution and its Accreditation History

Otis College of Art and Design is a WSCUC accredited private, non-profit 501 (c)(3) Art and Design school, located in Westchester (just north of Los Angeles International Airport). In addition to WSCUC, Otis is also a member of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD), a consortium of 42 independent stand-alone art colleges. The college offers nine undergraduate degrees (BFA) and two MFA degree programs, all of which are accredited by National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). Throughout its history, prominent artists from various fields have been associated with the school (American Clay Revolution, Southern California's Light and Space movement, Los Four, as examples). Otis continues to follow a practice of hiring working professionals as educators, and it is within this “mentor” pedagogical model that its students learn their practices. All Otis undergraduate students take first-year courses in the Foundation program and general studies courses in the Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Required coursework for all undergraduates also includes an interdisciplinary set of three courses entitled “Creative Action: Integrated Learning” (CA:IL) and coursework for a public service project. Approximately 20% of courses offered each semester are distance learning courses; however, there are no fully online degree programs. The institution also offers non-degree continuing education programming for youth and adults, often taught by practicing professionals, through the Extension program. As of fall 2025, Otis had an enrollment of 1,233 full-time students (1.5% are part-time; 75% of students identify as students of color; 35% are first generation; 3% are Veterans; 41% are Pell Grant recipients; 13% are international students from 28 countries while U.S. students are from 40 states, with California predominating; 3.6% of the student body are graduate students). Among the student population, 32% are residential students in two facilities, the Residence Hall (primarily for first year students) and the Park West apartments (a complex located directly across the street, with which the college has a rental agreement). The college’s first-year retention rate (fall 2023) was approximately 74%; and the first-time full-time graduation rate (of fall 2018 cohort) was 66% (among all students; if

transfer students are included it was 68%). The 2024 Alumni survey indicates that from the Class of 2023, of the 91% non-first-generation students in the survey, 79% are employed in Art or Design fields and of the 76% first generation students in the survey, 56% are currently employed in Art or Design fields. It is important to note that in the class of 2023, 56% of students had an internship.

The college's mission is to "educate a diverse community of students to become highly skilled, well-informed, and responsible professionals – empowering them to shape the world." The institution fulfills its mission with a FT and PT staff of 224.6 FTE (2023), 54 FTE faculty as well as 83.6 FTE part-time and 16.5 FTE adjunct faculty (2023), all led by President Charles Hirschhorn. He began his tenure at Otis in 2020, reporting to a board of trustees with 20 members. (There is also a board of governors advisory group consisting of 31 members.) The president has a team of seven vice presidents in his senior team [provost-with six direct reports (two are VPs), finance and administration-with nine direct reports, human resources and development-with four direct reports, institutional advancement-with five direct reports, marketing and communication-with six direct reports, student affairs, and admissions]. Shared governance is organized through an Academic Assembly (with various committees including a Faculty Senate which focuses on faculty-related issues). It is important to note that in January 2017, a collective bargaining agreement was reached with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); and a part-time faculty union was formed, which precludes them from shared governance. The staff regularly meet; their body, called the Staff Council, as well as the Academic Assembly make recommendations from their regularly held meetings to senior staff. Also, the president's council serves to engage the senior team and faculty and staff. The provost (recently hired in fall 2024) convened a series of Town Halls in spring 2025 as one way to communicate with students.

The college began as the first independent professional school of art in Southern California in 1918 as part of a bequest of the original MacArthur Park property to the City of Los Angeles from General Harrison Gray Otis (founder of the Los Angeles Times). Sixty years after its founding, in 1978, the school briefly affiliated with New York's Parsons School of Design for a period of 13 years, re-emerging as the Otis Art Institute of Los Angeles County in 1991 and was moved to a new campus of five-acres in Westchester in 1997. The Westchester campus has a repurposed seven-story office building, an adjacent building designed by Los Angeles architect Fred Fisher,

housing classrooms and studios and other buildings that include a student health and wellness center, computing and making labs and additional fabrication spaces, and a 230-bed student housing building.

In 1956, Otis College of Art and Design was first accredited by WASC as the Los Angeles County Art Institute. In 1962, the institution was re-accredited as Otis Art Institute of Los Angeles County. It was then re-accredited several times over the next 24 years. Otis was, however, issued a warning in 1986 (with probation imposed in 1993 due to financial and enrollment challenges; the probation was lifted three years later). Accreditation was reaffirmed repeatedly with the most recent accreditation visit occurring in 2018. Reaffirmation was granted at that time until 2026, with eight recommendations and two interim reports. In the period since the last accreditation visit in 2018, there have been several programmatic, structural and leadership changes at the institution.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The 2026 Accreditation Visit for Otis College of Art and Design, scheduled for March 2026, began with the formation of a peer review team of four members and a chair that was completed in June 2025. Under the leadership of the team chair, the team began preparations in advance of the Offsite Review (OSR) in September. Once the Otis Institutional Report and related online links became available, team members began reviewing the institution's materials in preparation for completing a team worksheet used in discussion on the team conference call (zoom) prior to the OSR. This review was guided by the WSCUC Standards in the 2023 Handbook of Accreditation (updated in 2025). The team was also provided access to various WSCUC guides and templates (for reports, for the chair and assistant chair, etc.), team professional development webinars (on topics such as remote reviews, etc.), WSCUC-derived information about the institution (its accreditation history, current key indicators, etc.) and the various forms required for reviews (federal compliance forms, peer review team actions, etc.). A team conference call in August was used to finalize team assignments and to discuss strengths, weaknesses and areas of focus for the Offsite Review (OSR) in September. The OSR was then conducted with participants from Otis interviewed by the team via zoom. The OSR outcomes informed the March Accreditation Visit, held face to face on the Otis campus. The team held a final video conference call in February, after completing one more worksheet, which focused on the team's approach to the previously identified lines of inquiry and the AV. The team also reviewed the upcoming visit schedule, which

was prepared in collaboration with the Otis ALO. The schedule included meetings with various members of the institution, including senior administrators, board members, various task forces and committees; staff, faculty, and students in open meetings; and the team toured the campus. After the Accreditation Visit ended on March 13th, the team worked together to have a first draft of a review report prepared by March 27.

C. Institution's Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The Institutional Report (IR) for the reaffirmation of accreditation for Otis College of Art and Design followed the 2023 WSCUC IR template. The report is well organized, clearly written and evidenced based with supporting data and evidence provided in links found in 150 appendices (a combination of Otis websites and documents). The report displayed the institution's understanding of accreditation and its role in fostering institutional improvement, as demonstrated in the report's well-articulated Section C, "Reflections and Synthesis of Insights as a result of the reaffirmation process".

The report begins with a description of the collaborative process, among administrators, staff, and faculty that was used to conduct the self-study and develop the report. The current ALO (who serves in the role of Associate Provost for Educational Effectiveness and Enrollment Management) worked with senior leaders from various divisions (and departments within the divisions) to form "Standard Teams" with appointed Standard Leaders (Note: for Standard 2, sub teams were also formed). These teams and sub teams met biweekly throughout 2024-25 focused on WSCUC Standards 2023, previous accreditation recommendations, and the analysis of data and evidence for current Otis' initiatives aligned with the Standards. The ALO synthesized the work of these teams, with drafts of the various essays reviewed by appropriate team leaders. The provost, dean of academic affairs, team leaders and ALO shaped the concluding section of the report. Review of various sections of the report and the final report were conducted by the Standard Teams, the provost, dean of academic affairs, the president and chair of the Board of Trustees, a process that resulted in a report that reflects "institutional alignment and broad engagement" in the reaffirmation process. (In discussions with the board, the team heard that the board's role is to understand its own responsibilities and trust the

college administration to oversee accreditation. While this reflects a collaborative approach, accreditation awareness is also generally considered a board-level responsibility.)

The IR then goes on to describe how the institution has responded to the eight recommendations that the 2018 accreditation review identified as well as the four recommendations from the Interim Progress Report Reviews in 2021 and 2023. These twelve recommendations and the institution's responses were described in this section of the IR. The 2018 recommendations were in the areas of: 1) Academic Advising and Counseling; 2) Program Review and Annual Assessment; 3) Hiring; 4) Student Health, Wellness and Campus Transition; 5) Institutional Research Capacity, Data Disaggregation and Data Governance; 6) Extension; 7) Strategic Plan and 8) Institutional Advancement. The 2021 and 2023 recommendations were in the areas of: 1) Data Governance, Security and Warehousing; 2) Establish assessment metrics for decision-making at the program and institutional levels, including Extension; 3) Deepen assessment and program review with a focus on improving student learning and success and 4) Continue progress on data governance and security, including professional development for faculty and staff and address audits in a timely manner.

See Section II, Subsection A below, for a description of how the institution responded to past recommendations from the Commission.

The remainder of the IR (as specified by the WSCUC template) presented the four institutional essays that review the institution's efforts that align with WSCUC standards and their CFRs. During the Accreditation Visit, senior leaders and WSCUC Steering Committee members noted that the IR and the team's lines of inquiry deepened their understanding of institutional effectiveness. The team confirmed that the IR accurately portrayed the institution's condition and prepared them to conduct more substantive interviews during the visit.

Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report

Subsection A: Response to Previous Commission Actions

What follows is a brief description of each of the eight recommendations from the 2018 accreditation review and the four from review of their 2021 and 2023 interim reports. A short summary of actions taken by the institution are also included.

1). *Academic Advising and Counseling* (and Psychological Services-CAPS)--Refine student advising, counseling and mentoring resources, including faculty assignment and communication strategies to ensure the quality of the student experience and the effectiveness of the process. (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)

Progress was made through: establishing new structures in a model that coordinates advising in the liberal arts and sciences; instituting the use of data informed tools and reports such as Degree Works (with the Plan Ahead tool) and the Academic Progress report; expanding assessment practices to improve student success and persistence (some survey data presented); and hiring an Executive Director of Student Success and a CAPS case manager.

2). *Program Review and Annual Assessment*--Sustain and further refine assessment and program review practices, procedures and schedules with attention to maintaining a culture of ongoing assessment across all divisions of the college. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5,2.7)

From the 2021 Interim Report Review: Item 2). Continue development and implementation of assessment efforts with an emphasis on establishing metrics to connect program-level assessment with decision-making at both the divisional and institutional level while ensuring that the practices of assessment and program review are applied to extension offerings. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7)

From the 2023 Interim Report Review: Item 1) Deepen assessment efforts and program review processes, with attention to how the results of assessment practices are used to improve student learning and success. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7)

Institutional actions on these recommendations: Progress has been made in refining assessment across all divisions through the adoption of new institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), an educational vision statement, and a revised program review process—on track for full implementation by 2026–27. Beginning in 2025–26, a coordinated assessment cycle will align all academic programs and selected support services around shared ILOs and relevant

program learning outcomes. These advances reflect growing faculty engagement and increasingly evidence-informed decision making.

3). *Hiring*--Recruit highly qualified faculty and staff who best reflect the diversity of the student body. (CFRs 1.4, 3.2, 3.3)

Because the 2023 Standards have been updated to no longer include diversity, equity, and inclusion, progress on this recommendation was not reviewed by the team.

4). *Student Health, Wellness and Campus Transition*--While monitoring the transition from commuter to residential campus, carefully consider student health and wellness while making decisions about or maintaining curricular and co-curricular structures and expectations. Issues of scheduling, workload, workspaces, accommodations, technology, transportation, and work/life balance are important factors of student success. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.3)

The Student Health and Wellness Center is now accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Care, with enhanced programming and new student support initiatives. A full-time Disability Services Program Manager/Director was hired. In addition, a 3/6/9 credit hour restructuring was achieved with the goal to assist students to manage their time better and reduce burnout. Additional academic support is provided with a laptop loaner program and Adobe Creative Cloud subscriptions free to all students.

5). *Institutional Research Capacity, Data Disaggregation and Data Governance*--Continue to support further development of institutional research capacity including disaggregating data for effective decision-making. (CFRs 1.7,3.5)

From the 2021 Interim Report Review: Item 1) Prioritize college-wide data governance, data security, and the establishment of a data warehouse. This will include establishing common data definitions across the institution in addition to refining and connecting current data sets within offices, departments, and programs. (CFRs 1.7, 3.5)

From the 2023 Interim Report Review: Item 2) Demonstrate continued progress on data governance and security work, including the continued upkeep of the data dictionary, appropriate training and professional development for

faculty and staff on data governance and safety issues, and continuing to conduct data security audits and fulfilling the recommendations from those audits in a timely fashion. (CFRs 1.7, 3.5)

Institutional actions on these 2018, 2021, 2023 recommendations: Actions taken include expanding use of disaggregated data to inform decision-making, establishing a formal data governance structure, strengthening cybersecurity, and embedding data more systematically into planning and evaluation.

6). *Extension*--As Otis considers expanding its extension offerings (continuing education), ensure that these programs are designed with the mission of the institution in mind and appropriate curricular, pedagogical and resource oversight. (CFRs 1.2, 3.10)

The unit, now led by an executive director reporting to the dean of academic affairs, has added an instructional designer. Non-credit offerings have been discontinued, with the exception of the Summer of Art program, which has been strengthened through expanded faculty involvement in assessment, broader marketing, and improved access for commuter and international students.

7). *Strategic Plan*--Continue the progress of the current and upcoming strategic plans, with a focus on multi-year, institutional planning. (CFRs 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 4.6, and 4.7) A new strategic plan was collaboratively developed with five guiding principles, departmental responsibilities were assigned, and key performance indicators were established.

8). *Institutional Advancement*--Build upon the success of the recent capital campaign and board engagement with an attention to major gifts, alumni engagement and foundation support. (CFR 3.4) Actions include: hiring a VP of Institutional Advancement who strengthened the president's leadership team, led a strategic planning effort and aligned operations to support major gift fundraising, alumni engagement and foundation/corporate relations.

A significant change since the 2018 WSCUC visit was the appointment of a new president, who joined the institution in Summer 2020.

Subsection B: Institutional Essays

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity

Institutional Purposes (CFRs 1.1, 1.2)

Otis College of Art and Design has a very clear sense of its mission and purpose. Its educational vision statement drives the curriculum and focus of the institution. The vision reads, “Through its commitment to a fully inclusive and career-oriented education, Otis College of Art and Design prepares a diverse community of emerging artists and designers to become change-makers within creative fields, finding novel solutions to the challenges of the 21st century.” The institution has noted that accessibility is strong, evidenced by the 31% of fall 2024 students who are the first in their family to attend college. The Otis website articulates a series of educational principles, which emphasize learning design by doing, in a milieu that values both theory and practice, competence and critique. The institution has been intentionally located in the global, urban, cultural, creative arts hub of Los Angeles, California and so is well positioned for this educational vision. The current strategic plan has been captured in the acronym ARC—admissions, retention, and careers—and is clearly understood across the institution as capturing the key priorities. (CFR 1.1)

To offer external validation of its degrees, the institutional report noted that in *The Economist*, the 2015 US Department of Education College Scorecard data was used to rank Otis #5 in the country for graduates exceeding expected earnings. In 2022, a Georgetown University report ranked Otis in the top quartile with respect to return-on-investment measures. In its contribution to the public good, Otis has conducted an annual survey, “Otis Report on the Creative Economy,” since 2007. The college holds an annual exhibit of student work and regularly highlights contributions its alumni are making. (CFR 1.1)

In living out its design mission, Otis College of Art and Design has creatively responded to the definition of learning outcomes. The five institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) are: Grow, Dare, Reflect, Connect, Shine. Each of those is defined with a set of bullet points. For example, the ILO “Reflect” is defined as:

Otis students will demonstrate:

- Self-awareness
- Capacity to communicate (orally, written, and/or visually) about their practice
- Capacity to seek, assemble, evaluate, and ethically apply information and ideas from diverse sources
- Analysis of both ethical and aesthetic impacts of art and design

In other words, they have embedded many of the typical core competencies of institutional learning outcomes in a larger context that is clearly aligned to their mission and purpose. Further, the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are being aligned with the ILOs, each ILO being further defined with respect to the specific program. (CFR 1.2)

Otis has a fully developed set of handbooks (faculty, employee, and student) and a set of institutional policies, easily accessible on the website, including consumer, FERPA, and complaint policies. The student complaint process is managed by the dean of student affairs. Each complaint is responded to on receipt, a meeting scheduled with the student, and follow up as appropriate. The staff indicated that the institution typically receives one or two complaints per month, and they had three open complaints not yet resolved at the time of the visit. The team found the staff to be careful and attentive to student needs and viewpoints. (CFR 1.2)

One of the key institutional principles involves supporting the unique needs of each individual student. The institution has a typical range of student support services, including residential services, disability services, and career placement. Student service offices are located adjacent to the central part of campus, very visible and accessible to students. (The faculty Teaching and Learning Center was moved to a less desirable campus location prior to the visit in order to place the student services, which are utilized at a higher rate, into that central location. During the visit, many faculty and staff expressed dissatisfaction with this move, but it seemed to the team to be a reasonable decision, with an appropriate rationale, although advanced communication to faculty and staff was needed.) The institutional report noted challenges in first-to-second year retention and steps the institution is taking to address this challenge. (See Standard 2 below for additional discussion.) Career readiness is a key element of program design; the current viewbook boasts a 96% career placement rate for recent graduates. (CFR 1.2)

Integrity and Transparency (CFRs 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8)

The team found both the team report and the institution's personnel to be forthright and honest in sharing the institution's strengths and challenges. For example, the institutional report noted, "The College also recognized a need for more direct student input into academic initiatives and decision-making (p. 33)." Consequently, the new provost (who arrived in fall 2024), in cooperation with the office of institutional research and effectiveness and the division of student affairs, conducted a series of town hall meetings with students in spring 2025. An extensive report, called the "Student Experience Report Spring 2025," delineating the feedback from students was produced by the office of institutional research and effectiveness. Strong student participation was documented, along with themes in general and in student majors/programs. The final list of findings included seven points: disconnect between students and administration, curriculum gaps and lack of structure, faculty quality and turnover, lack of industry preparation and industry engagement, community and collaboration challenges, cost and resource access, and mental health and workload. The team noted that that report was strong on data collection and reporting but lacked interpretation and an action plan. The team strongly encourages the institution strengthen its follow up. Much good data is collected; however, the institution can do more to utilize data to create meaning, direct action, and evaluate that action against intended outcomes. (See Standard 4 for further discussion of this issue.) (CFR 1.3)

In keeping with its mission, the website has extensive and well-designed information available for students regarding program outcomes, requirements, services, and costs. The institution files an annual audit, which helps to verify that business operations and processes are appropriate and timely. (See more in Standard 3 below.) The institutional report, follow up, and campus visit all reflected genuine candor and a serious commitment to the accreditation process. (CFRs 1.3 1.4, 1.5, 1.8)

In the discussion of academic freedom in the institutional report, the institution acknowledged inherent tension between the arts' critical orientation and industry alignment, framing these differences as opportunities for dialogue rather than suppression. The team observed a relevant example in real time: a robust, student-driven debate about AI's role in education. Given that many faculty are working industry professionals, some disciplines now require AI tools in student projects — a practice generating a wide range of student responses. The institution responded

constructively, gathering broad input and developing a draft policy slated for campus review and board consideration in June. The team viewed this as a healthy model of institutional deliberation. (CFR 1.6)

Two examples regarding how the institution communicates with its constituencies regarding important issues include their Freedom Wall which has been recognized by Inside Higher Ed, for students to post opposing viewpoints with respect, and their Restorative Practices framework, which helped guide campus listening groups. The website is used extensively to publish events and news. Students receive weekly institutional email highlighting campus activities, deadlines, and news, achieving a strong 30% click rate. Staff receive a comparable, role-adapted version with similar engagement. (CFR 1.7)

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success

Degree Programs (CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

Otis provided evidence that degree programs are appropriate in content, educational objectives, and standards of performance, and relevant to the fields of study consistent with its naming and mission. (CFR 2.1)

All undergraduate students begin the program by completing a foundation year before entering their major in their sophomore year. This structure recognizes that students enter the institution with varying levels of prior artistic and technical preparation and provides a common foundation for skill development during the first year. The foundation year program has a dedicated chair and faculty and focuses on both technical skill development and supporting students' transition to college. Students are introduced to the majors through informational events in the fall and spring and also take an elective in their declared major during their second semester.

The degree programs provide students with integrated courses of study and immersive learning experiences that support the achievement of both core and career-focused competencies. (CFR 2.2) Institutional materials outline curricular structures that align with NASAD expectations and emphasize scaffolded development of artistic, analytical, and professional competencies across the undergraduate experience.

Institutional materials provided to the team describe the recent implementation of a standardized 3/6/9-credit model across BFA programs. The standardization was designed to align credits, workload, and degree requirements.

These revised curricula allow students greater flexibility for interdisciplinary experiences, as they can now more easily enroll in elective courses outside their majors. The 3/6/9 credit model was approved through faculty governance processes and a NASAD substantive change. (CFR 2.3) The 3/6/9 credit redesign prompted several curricular shifts; for example, Product Design introduced and integrated Rhino and SolidWorks earlier and more consistently, and Fashion Design adopted a more cautious approach to protect outcomes amid reduced instructional time.

With the guiding theme of admissions, retention, and careers (ARC), and recently revised institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), Otis has articulated institutional priorities and standards of performance. (CFR 2.3) The college evaluates these priorities using multiple sources of evidence, including survey data, employment outcomes, retention and graduation rates, and course grades. One example shared with the team relates to the college's goal of supporting students' entry into the creative economy after graduation. The college has begun developing dedicated internship courses within the majors, citing data showing that students who complete internships secure employment more quickly and at higher starting salaries than those who do not.

Alignment between the revised ILOs and program learning outcomes is described as an ongoing effort, with evidence indicating intentional work to create coherence across curriculum and assessment processes. While institutional expectations for student learning and assessment are well developed, the team observed a lack of systematic implementation of direct assessment of student work across academic programs. (CFR 2.3)

Otis has developed a meaningful and collaborative academic program review process. Academic program review is led by academic department chairs and centers on two primary documents: a "Key Issues" analysis informed by internal research and stakeholder input, and a comprehensive self-study drawing on enrollment trends, assessment data, course evaluations, alumni outcomes, and a centralized Data Dashboard provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE). Completion of the self-study is followed by an external review, which, along with the self-study findings and the key issues analysis, informs the development of a multi-year Action Plan. (CFR 2.4) Examples provided in institutional materials indicate that review findings have informed tangible resource investments, including faculty hires in Product Design, a new Director role in Illustration, and support for the development of a three-year degree in Digital Fashion Design. At the same time, the level of formality and

consistency across program review samples varied. Greater clarity regarding expectations for style, documentation, and review structure may strengthen institutional coherence and improve usability across audiences.

Faculty (CFRs 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8)

The self-study demonstrated the institution's commitment to ensuring that faculty have the capacity and scale to design and deliver the curriculum and to evaluate and improve student learning and success. (CFR 2.5)

The institution's practice of hiring working professionals to teach aligns with the emphasis on the creative economy by bringing relevant industry experience into the classroom.

Faculty development is supported through grants, sabbaticals, and resources provided by the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), which promotes pedagogical innovation and experimentation. (CFR 2.8) The TLC offers a variety of training options to support working professionals who may lack teaching experience. The TLC partners with academic chairs to ensure their faculty have the support necessary for success in the classroom. Examples of offerings include the "Bricks and Clicks" 6-week online teaching course, for which faculty receive a \$600 stipend upon completion. The institution supports ongoing faculty professional development through more than 30 workshops offered each semester. Participation is tracked, and faculty who attend four workshops within a semester receive a \$400 stipend. Faculty CVs are updated annually to document relevant professional activity.

Recent efforts to strengthen faculty capacity were highlighted, including the hiring of 14 full-time faculty members and 2 academic department chairs since 2022, with key appointments in Animation and Game and Entertainment Design.

Otis faculty are responsible for creating and evaluating student learning outcomes and establishing the expected standards of performance. (CFR 2.7) The institution shared that they are currently revising program and course learning outcomes to ensure alignment with the recently revised institutional learning outcomes – a process that was clearly faculty-led.

During the visit, the team learned that programmatic assessment relies primarily on faculty surveys regarding observed student performance and on the submission of student work samples, rather than systematic direct assessment of student work. Assessment reports did not consistently identify specific changes or improvements resulting from assessment findings. The team found that grading benchmarks and performance expectations appear

to vary across programs, such as the use of a grade of C as a benchmark in the Liberal Arts Capstone, while Animation rubrics identify C as developing and B as meeting expectations, suggesting opportunities for greater clarity and consistency in defining achievement standards. This finding was reinforced during the visit when the team learned that grading schemes and philosophies vary from program to program. Given the variation in grading practices across programs, particularly for interdisciplinary coursework, greater consistency in defining achievement standards and expanding the use of signature assignments and aligned rubrics may strengthen the institution's efforts to directly assess student learning.

The team found discrepancies between how faculty governance was described in the self-study and how it was characterized during the site visit. The self-study described the faculty governance structure as consisting of the Faculty Senate, the Academic Assembly, and seven Academic Assembly subcommittees. During the visit, however, both institutional leadership and faculty indicated that more than 100 committees operate across the institution. Faculty also reported that it is not uncommon for individuals to serve on three to five committees simultaneously. The team's findings suggest that while faculty engagement in governance is extensive, the committee structure, purpose, and expectations for faculty participation are not clearly articulated in the Faculty Handbook. The number of committees and the level of faculty participation may pose challenges in maintaining clarity regarding decision-making roles, lines of responsibility, and relationships among governance bodies.

The team recommends that the institution clarify and codify faculty governance roles and responsibilities in a manner appropriate to the institution's size and scope. (CFR 2.6) This effort should be developed through a collaborative process that draws on both faculty expertise and institutional leadership to ensure that governance structures, committee responsibilities, and decision-making processes are clearly defined and consistently understood across the institution.

Student Learning (CFRs 2.9, 2.10, 2.11)

Expected levels of achievement for each degree program are established by academic department chairs in collaboration with program faculty. Beginning in 2025–2026, the college plans to implement a five-year assessment cycle in which all academic programs assess a shared Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) annually, building on a trial assessment of the research/information literacy ILO conducted in 2022–2023. During the visit, the team found

limited evidence of systematic direct assessment of student work outside of the Liberal Arts and Sciences program. Programmatic assessment was described as relying primarily on faculty surveys regarding student performance, review of course grades, and the submission of student work samples. Expanding the use of systematic, direct assessment of student work may strengthen the institution's ability to evaluate student learning across programs, particularly in interdisciplinary degree programs that enroll students with varying levels of preparation and aim to prepare graduates for highly competitive careers in the creative economy. The team recommends that Otis build on current assessment efforts to formalize and systematize programmatic processes to ensure consistent, direct assessment of student work across all academic programs. (CFRs 2.3, 2.7, 2.9)

Otis demonstrated a clear commitment to improving student retention and graduation rates in both the self-study and during the site visit. According to the WSCUC Key Indicator Dashboard (KID), the institution's most recent 6-year first-time, full-time freshmen graduation rate and 8-year outcome measure rate are both above their WSCUC-selected peer group: 66% vs 56% for the 6-year graduation rate and 64% vs 61% for the outcome measure rate. (CFR 2.10) The institution has set general retention and graduation rate goals using its Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD) peer average as a benchmark.

The team notes that student characteristics may influence graduation outcomes and encourages consideration of additional benchmarks when evaluating institutional performance. As an institution that admits 90% of undergraduate applicants and serves a Pell-heavy population, Otis may face demographic-specific retention and graduation rate challenges that are unique among its AICAD peers. Adding additional benchmarks, such as the WSCUC-selected peer group, to the discussion may help broaden the conversation around student achievement.

When compared to AICAD peers of the fall 2016 cohort, the graduation rate was 52% compared to 67%; for fall 2017, the gap narrowed somewhat to 61% (Otis) versus 74% (AICAD) but remains notable. Transfer students graduate at higher rates than first-time, full-time students, with a 73% graduation rate reported for the fall 2018 transfer cohort compared to 63% for FTFT students.

The institution identified first-to-second fall retention as its largest drop-off in student retention and has made several changes to improve retention from the first to the second fall. The institution has created an Academic

Response Team (ART) that meets weekly to review student-level data and discuss how to support individual students identified as at-risk based on early indicators, including attendance reports and faculty-submitted grade-alert reports.

In fall 2023, the college launched a Retention Task Force to coordinate initiatives, identify the root causes of attrition, and implement a data-informed strategic plan. Institutional materials describe several cross-divisional interventions intended to support student success, including curricular and pedagogical revisions and improved advising practices.

Otis College monitors alumni achievement across multiple relevant data points, including external indicators and an Alumni Career Success Survey. (CFR 2.11) External indicators cited include *The Economist*/DOE ratings, Carnegie Foundation data, and the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analyses. According to the WSCUC Key Indicator Dashboard (KID), 64–66% of Otis students from the 2018–2020 cohorts earned more than a high school graduate six years after enrollment, with the 2018 and 2019 cohorts exceeding national averages. These outcomes align with the institution’s stated goal of preparing graduates for careers in the creative economy and provide evidence that alumni are achieving positive employment and earnings outcomes following graduation.

Student Support (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)

Otis provides clear program requirements and structured advising processes designed to ensure students receive timely, accurate, and comprehensive information about their academic pathways. (CFR 2.12) The recent curricular updates associated with the 3/6/9-unit model are intended to support clearer program pathways. The Advising Co-Curricular Program Review highlighted strong advising practices, including clearly defined goals and ongoing efforts to strengthen student support. Data in the annual assessment report indicated consistent growth in student use of the self-registration tool from 2020–2024, with participation rising from 74% in fall 2021 to over 85% each fall since 2022.

Otis’ students receive holistic academic, social, and career support. (CFR 2.13) Co-curricular programming at the institution is led by the division of student affairs and focuses on inclusion, leadership development, holistic health and wellbeing, and student engagement beyond the classroom and studio. Programs are informed by student feedback, institutional data, and national best practices. Student leaders are trained across departments to deliver

peer-driven initiatives. Student support resources include an accredited Student Health and Wellness Center providing medical and counseling services, a laptop loaner program and free Adobe Creative Cloud access, and the Student Learning Center (SLC), which offers coaching and academic tutoring.

The co-curricular program reviews demonstrate the institution's commitment to assessing the effectiveness of its student support and co-curricular programs and to using the results for improvement. (CFR 2.14) The co-curricular assessment and program review samples from advising, the Learning Centers (student and teaching), and the Health and Wellness Center demonstrate the use of relevant data and thoughtful analysis to inform actionable recommendations. Assessment approaches include tracking attendance, usage, and satisfaction metrics. The assessment and program review formats are clear and user-friendly, and they appear to support actionable goal setting and the practical use of data for continuous improvement.

Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures

Faculty, Staff, and Administrators (CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

The faculty, staff, and administrators at Otis demonstrate a strong and evident commitment to the institution's mission. Faculty allocations across academic departments are appropriately structured to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum and maintain the quality of the academic program. Staffing levels similarly provide adequate support for faculty operations as well as for students' co-curricular engagement and development. In addition, the availability of on-campus housing has strengthened the institution's overall student services infrastructure, enabling more comprehensive support for the entire student experience.

Otis' faculty members demonstrate a strong personal connection to, and deep commitment toward, professional practice. This close alignment with the career pathways that students aspire to pursue remains central to the institution's continued success. This is seen in Otis' Educational Vision Statement which states, "Through its commitment to fully inclusive and career education...". Otis continues to maintain these priorities at the forefront of its institutional initiatives. (CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

Otis' human resources policies and practices continue to align with—and effectively support—the institution's mission and educational goals. The institution has demonstrated a clear commitment to investing in its workforce by prioritizing professional development opportunities and implementing wage increases, even as many higher-education institutions face budgetary constraints and reduced investment in these areas. Examples of these efforts include the 2024 Leadership Development Series and the implementation of the New Faculty Performance Review process, both of which reflect dedication to cultivating a well-supported, high-performing faculty and staff community. (CFRs 3.2, 3.3)

Financial (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)

The budgeting process is consistent and demonstrates strong alignment with Otis' strategic priorities. Since the 2018 reaffirmation of accreditation, Otis has diversified its revenue streams—Extension and Housing income has helped offset deficits in the core business. Otis has had deficits in nonconsecutive multiple years (2023 and 2025) in the core business. During the visit, it became clear in various meetings that Otis employs a unique approach to budgeting over the years with forecasted deficits. Otis understands that when a budget shortfall is anticipated, reducing budgets at the very beginning of the fiscal year could disrupt core processes and negatively impact the community early on. Instead, Otis delays budget reductions until later in the fiscal cycle to avoid early operational disruptions. The team observed that this practice is well understood and accepted from the board level through senior leadership. Otis is budgeted to have a net surplus in fiscal year 2026. (CFR 3.4)

Otis continues to be fiscally stable although tuition dependent. Its diversification of income sources has allowed for this stability. Otis has received unqualified, independent financial audits. It has sufficient unrestricted cash reserves to remain confident in its financial position. Otis has initiated a \$35 million capital campaign to support its strategic infrastructure enhancements. As of December 15, 2025, the campaign has secured nearly 50% in funding. Otis' financial strategy reflects a clear institutional commitment to continuous improvement while avoiding the accumulation of additional debt. The institution maintains a designated sinking fund (which has already been built up to \$12 million) to ensure full coverage of the 18-million-dollar balloon payment associated with an existing loan maturing after 2030. This proactive approach demonstrates prudent long-term planning and fiscal stewardship. Both the board of trustees and senior leadership fully understand and support this disciplined financial posture, reinforcing commitment to responsible resource management. Otis' board of trustees and senior leadership—comprised of the

board audit committee and the finance team—have concluded that the current size of the endowment precludes the use of a recurring annual draw as a dependable source of operating revenue. Although favorable market performance may, at times, make endowment spending appear viable in the near term, leadership has determined that such a practice would be imprudent over the long run and potentially detrimental to principal preservation, risk management, and intergenerational equity. In response, Otis is actively advancing a multi-pronged strategy to develop and diversify sustainable revenue sources (e.g., enrollment growth aligned with capacity, philanthropic support, strategic partnerships, and mission-consistent auxiliary enterprises). This approach is integral to maintaining liquidity, strengthening balance sheet health, and ensuring the institution’s continued ability to deliver on its mission and academic objectives irrespective of market cyclicity. (CFR 3.4)

Physical, Technology and Information Resources (CFR 3.6)

The Otis campus occupies a five-acre property in Westchester, on the west side of Los Angeles, and is organized around a repurposed seven story office building that now serves as the institution’s central academic and administrative hub. Adjacent to the original structure is a facility designed by Los Angeles architect Fred Fisher, which currently houses upper division classrooms and studio spaces. The campus further includes a student health and wellness center, computing and maker laboratories, additional fabrication facilities, and a 230-bed residential housing complex. In addition to its on-campus residence hall, Otis provides students with supplemental off-campus housing options to accommodate demand and support the institution’s growing enrollment.

Otis acknowledges its infrastructure investment responsibilities, as reflected in Guiding Principle E of the 2025–29 Strategic Plan: to plan for new facilities that foster a safe, welcoming environment, and to upgrade existing facilities and systems to meet curricular, technological, accessibility, and sustainability goals.

The 2024 Gordion Report and Pangea Consultants provide a solid footprint with cost assessment needed to achieve these two goals. These infrastructure improvements will be funded by the \$35 million capital campaign.

The Data Governance Council serves as the institution's central data governance body, with established data standards, a data dictionary, and domain steward and custodian policies. A February 2022 Cybersecurity Assessment

by an external consultant praised the college's robust network configuration and segmentation and its advanced antivirus protection. The consultant's findings and recommendations are actively being addressed. (CFR 3.6)

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making (CFRs 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11)

Otis operates under the direction of the president who reports to the board of trustees. According to the most recent organizational chart, the senior leadership team consists of the provost and seven vice presidents overseeing academic affairs, finance and administration, human resources and development, institutional advancement, marketing and communications, student affairs, and admissions and financial aid. Otis' president, senior leadership, and key administrators possess the qualifications and professional expertise necessary for effective institutional management. The board of trustees conducts an annual evaluation of the president, and senior leadership undergoes yearly performance reviews based on measurable progress toward institutional and departmental goals.

Otis' leadership has access to data which, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE), supports informed decision-making. Additionally, minutes from operational meetings provide insight into how Otis utilizes the data collected to guide institutional practices.

The team observes a critical need for the institution to develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year enrollment management plan that aligns with current best practices in strategic enrollment management. This plan should directly address Otis' specific enrollment challenges and priorities, including thoughtful consideration and planning to achieve the goal of reaching an enrollment of 1,400 students. Otis currently limits its enrollment projections to a single academic year. The institution indicated that it is pursuing international recruitment initiatives through a combination of recruitment agents and alumni engagement in select strategic markets, including South Korea and India. Otis also employs an external financial aid consultant; however, it remains unclear how the consultant's services are being utilized to support the development of a multi-year financial aid model. The adoption of a comprehensive multi-year enrollment plan would enhance and support these ongoing recruitment and financial aid efforts. (CFRs 3.4-3.11) The team recommends that Otis develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year enrollment management plan that reflects current best practices and addresses the institution's specific enrollment challenges and goals. (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)

The Otis board of trustees provides strong institutional support through active fundraising efforts, including individual contributions and leadership in major campaigns, and through consistent engagement in its standing committees. The board's strategic approach to recruiting highly qualified members from the art and design fields further enhances its capacity and expertise. This sustained focus on board development contributes to its long-term effectiveness and vitality. Otis benefits from a well-functioning governance structure that includes an engaged board of trustees with active committees and also a board of governors dedicated to fundraising. Board members demonstrated strong knowledge of institutional priorities and meaningful involvement in governance and development initiatives. Per Otis, "The board engages in annual self-assessment practices, including individual interviews with board affairs committee members, self-evaluations by board members, and committee effectiveness reviews by committee chairs. Findings are synthesized by the board affairs committee and shared with the full board." The team learned that the board affairs committee conducts an evaluation every two years. The last full board evaluation was completed in 2023 with a total of 18 questions with comments. A perfect score would be 90, the average score was 76.3. Otis' board is set to complete another review in 2027. Otis' board bylaws might want to reflect the frequency of the board's self-assessments. (CFR 4.6)

Standard 4: Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

Otis College of Art and Design has several quality assurance processes in place to assess the functions and services of their academic and non-academic areas. Weekly meetings of the provost's team and tri-weekly meetings of the Chairs Council provide a forum for regular discussions across departments. Academic program review and the annual assessment cycle are the primary means of evaluation for the academic areas.

The new Faculty Performance Review process, first implemented in spring 2024, provides an extensive and comprehensive framework that includes faculty self-reflection, peer discussion, faculty feedback to chair and performance review discussion with the chair. It also includes evaluation benchmarks across multiple dimensions. Since the process is new and is based on a two-year cycle, it will be important for the college to evaluate its effectiveness once the first group of faculty has completed the first cycle of implementation. (CFRs 4.1, 4.6)

The Institutional Report referred to the provost student town halls several times. The town halls began in spring 2025 with the arrival of a new provost the preceding fall 2024. The report indicated that an action plan was developed in summer and fall 2025. The team reviewed the “Student Experience Report – Spring 2025.” The report is rich with feedback from students and the common themes that surfaced from the town halls but did not include any future plans. (CFRs 4.1, 4.3)

Academic service departments including the Library, Teaching and Learning Center, Student Learning Center, and Academic Advising also engage in self-evaluation, although it is unclear whether they have a standardized structure for program review. Reports provided from the departments listed above were in different formats, however, but they do indicate the use of data to inform decision-making. (CFR 4.1)

The Institutional Report describes how non-academic areas assess their effectiveness. Areas mentioned include admissions and financial aid, finance and operations, human resources, student affairs, communication and marketing, and institutional advancement. All areas have regular meetings wherein their discussions include evaluation and assessment. The manner in which they engage in self-evaluation seems to be well aligned with the functions and purposes of their work. (CFR 4.1)

Overall, Otis College has processes in place for assessment, evaluation, data collection and reporting. However, there is a lack of evidence of in-depth analyses and the decisions made, or even future plans of how to act on the data. In the Otis Institutional Report, it is acknowledged that “while access to data has improved, the capacity to interpret and act on data remains uneven (p. 79).” During the Accreditation Visit, several individuals expressed the same desire to improve both data capacity and data analyses in order to drive improvement in student success measures such as retention and graduation.

The team recommends that Otis leverage existing institutional data collection to share insights and drive analysis, decision-making, planning, monitoring, and accountability. (CFRs 3.10, 4.5)

Institutional Improvement (CFRs 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) provides a plethora of data reports. As an example, data packages used in program review provide disaggregated data on enrollment, retention and graduation. The data provide support for decision-making such as curriculum revisions, advising and well-being resources for

first-year students. (CFRs 4.2, 4.4) In addition, OIRE has developed different Tableau dashboards to track enrollment, course success, retention and completion over five years. The OIRE also provides results from the provost town hall meetings and internal surveys and administers (in collaboration with student affairs) external surveys such as NSSE, HEDS, and Healthy Mind. Given the amount of work produced by OIRE, with additional Strategic Plan responsibilities recently added to the office, and the increasing demands of federal reporting, the team wonders whether the level of staffing (with only an executive director and assistant director) is sufficient and sustainable. (CFR 4.4)

Otis College has established a Data Governance Council that has developed a Data Dictionary and a Data Standards Policy. It has also identified data domains, data stewards and custodians. Further, the college has improved its data infrastructure by implementing a Security Operations Center and developing data and cybersecurity training. Annual audits by an external consultant ensure that Otis remains compliant and continues to address emerging issues. Otis College recognizes the need for continuous improvement in this area, stating in the Institutional Report, “while data access has improved, continued development in data interpretation skills across the institution would enhance the effectiveness and consistency of evidence-informed decision making (p.74).” Furthermore, Otis has identified four priorities: development of user-friendly dashboards; integration of co-curricular and academic outcomes; expanded training in data literacy, analysis, interpretation, and storytelling; and early alerts to support proactive, equity-minded interventions. (CFR 4.5)

The board of trustees is highly engaged and invested in the mission and success of Otis College. Members are involved in several committees such as the external engagement committee, the finance & risk management committee and the student engagement committee and task forces, like the extension and career-outcomes task forces. (CFR 4.6)

In 2023-2024, Otis College embarked in a participatory process to develop the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. The process included listening sessions with various groups campuswide (including faculty, staff, students, and trustees), use of feedback tools and engagement by the president and his leadership team. The plan includes Baseline Metrics and KPIs, biannual progress reviews from across the campus, continuous feedback loops and reporting to campus constituencies. (CFR 4.8)

During the Accreditation Visit, the team learned that many units and departments across the institution are collecting their own data. However, there is no systematic way to share data across departments and divisions. A few areas indicated sharing information in an *ad hoc* way or on a case-by-case basis. This seemed to lead to uneven awareness of what was happening institution wide. For example, retention has been a priority at Otis, and many areas are actively focusing their own work on increasing retention. Recently, retention of first-time full-time students increased by an impressive 6% - the fall 2024 to fall 2025 retention rate was 80%, up from the prior 3-yr average of 74%. At several meetings during the visit, attendees were asked to identify some possible institutional strategies that may have contributed to this rise, so that they might consider continuing them. The answers received did not demonstrate knowledge of specific institutional strategies but described their own efforts within their area. Moving away from silos and towards a more centralized system (e.g., a data warehouse or data lake) to collect and share data would allow for more access, deeper analyses and clearer insights about students collegewide. As noted earlier in this report, Item 1 in the 2021 Interim Report Review included the establishment of a data warehouse. The team recommends that Otis integrate data collection and analysis efforts across divisions so that information flows freely, supports collaboration, and informs strategy at every level. (CFRs 3.10, 4.5)

Subsection C: Reflections - Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process

It was apparent to the team that the self-study process at Otis was meaningful in furthering the development of a collaborative and caring, data-driven organizational culture highly focused on the institutional mission and the professional success of its students. During the visit, campus members indicated:

- Improved campus climate for collaboration since the 2018 WSCUC visit
- Renewed focus on career outcomes as a result of enhanced collaboration
- Greater engagement of senior leaders, staff, and faculty with data, including WSCUC KID data
- Increased visibility and name recognition of the institution
- Shared institutional language and frameworks, including ARC (Admissions, Retention, and Career Outcomes), a new educational vision statement, institutional learning outcomes, ART (Academic Resources Team), and a career outcomes strategic plan
- Meaningful engagement with current higher education issues, including AI and enhanced use of technology to support operations and student learning
- Clearer sense of progress made since 2020 and of current priorities
- Recognition that newly launched initiatives now require tracking and impact evaluation

- Advancement toward a data-driven culture, with acknowledgment that broader community engagement remains a goal
- Wide engagement across the board, senior team, middle managers, and staff in understanding the institution's tuition-driven model, with emerging ideas for revenue diversification.

The team visit revealed that a coherent understanding of the current status of the institution and what needs focus in the future has emerged as a result of the accreditation process. Cited in their Institutional Report and affirmed by the team were these illustrative conclusions verified by the team: 1) that “The College has clarified its priorities, built strong institutional frameworks, and cultivated a reflective mission driven culture;” 2) that the self-study process “revealed that some recent changes are already showing real, measurable results, offering proof that alignment between people, resources and purpose can remove hidden barriers and improve student outcomes.” And 3) that “The self-study confirms that the institution has the vision, tools and collaborative spirit needed to meet its aspirations but sustaining progress will depend on deepening capacity to learn from itself, committing to data informed action, appropriate structural mechanisms to ensure accountability, equity and agility.”

Subsection D: Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards

Otis completed the WSCUC Compliance Guide. The team found no areas of non-compliance. The team evaluated evidence to determine the level of compliance with each standard in the sections above. The team’s finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with the Standards. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Section III – Other Topics, as Appropriate (such as Substantive Change) --N/A

Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

The team commends Otis for:

1. Demonstrating clear institutional coherence, anchored by a clear and consistent understanding of its mission and identity, with ARC — Admissions, Retention, and Careers — serving as a unifying thread across all areas of its work.

2. Applying design thinking principles throughout its work, evident in the creativity of its website, the uniqueness of its Institutional Learning Outcomes, and innovative classroom design.
3. Maintaining an intentional focus on career preparation, reflected in robust alumni and community engagement and exceptional career placement outcomes — 96% placement rate.
4. Demonstrating exceptional institutional stewardship by strengthening financial resilience, infrastructure planning, and risk management — leveraging both external expertise and internal fundraising during a period of enrollment decline.
5. Cultivating collaborative, mission-driven leadership across both administration and the board of trustees.
6. Establishing an effective Staff Council that meaningfully contributes to and enriches institutional decision-making.

Recommendations

The team recommends that Otis:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year enrollment management plan that reflects current best practices and addresses the institution's specific enrollment challenges and goals. (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)
2. Building on current assessment efforts, formalize and systematize programmatic processes to ensure consistent, direct assessment of student work across all academic programs. (CFRs 2.3, 2.7, 2.9)
3. Leverage existing institutional data collection to share insights and drive analysis, decision-making, planning, monitoring, and accountability. (CFRs 3.10, 4.5)
4. Integrate data collection and analysis efforts across divisions so that information flows freely, supports collaboration, and informs strategy at every level. (CFRs 3.10, 4.5)
5. Clarify and codify faculty governance roles and responsibilities in a manner appropriate to the institution's size and scope, developed through a collaborative process that draws on both faculty expertise and institutional perspective. (CFR 2.6)

Appendices

Federal Compliance Forms:

- Credit Hour and Program Length Review
- Marketing and Recruitment Review
- Student Complaints Review
- Transfer Credit Review

Distance Education Form

Federal Compliance Forms

Overview

There are four forms that WSCUC uses to address institutional compliance with some of the federal regulations affecting institutions and accrediting agencies:

1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form
3. Student Complaints Form
4. Transfer Credit Policy Form

As part of the institutional report preparation, the institution completes these forms and submits them with the institutional report. During the visit, teams validate the information on the four forms and add them as an appendix to the Team Report. Teams are not required to include a narrative about any of these matters in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations section of the team report.

Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form

Under federal regulations, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's credit hour policy and processes as well as the lengths of its programs.

Credit Hour - §602.24(f)

The accrediting agency, as part of its review of an institution for renewal of accreditation, must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours.

1. The accrediting agency meets this requirement if-
 - i. It reviews the institution's-
 - A. Policies and procedures for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for courses and programs; and

- B. The application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and coursework; and
 - ii. Makes a reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.
- 2. In reviewing and evaluating an institution's policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments, an accrediting agency may use sampling or other methods in the evaluation.

Credit hour is defined by the Department of Education as follows:

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Credit Hour Policy.

Program Length - §602.16(a)(1)(viii)

Program length may be seen as one of several measures of quality and as a proxy measure for scope of the objectives of degrees or credentials offered. Traditionally offered degree programs are generally approximately 120 semester credit hours for a bachelor's degree, and 30 semester credit hours for a master's degree; there is greater variation at the doctoral level depending on the type of program. For programs offered in non-traditional formats, for which program length is not a relevant and/or reliable quality measure, reviewers should ensure that available information clearly defines desired program outcomes and graduation requirements, that institutions are ensuring that program outcomes are achieved, and that there is a reasonable correlation between the scope of these outcomes and requirements and those typically found in traditionally offered degrees or programs tied to program length.

Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? In all syllabi and on the website: https://www.otis.edu/life-otis/student-support-services/student-affairs/handbook/academic-policies/graduation-information.html
	Comments:

Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: All credit hour assignments were reviewed during the 3/6/9 credit restructure in 2021 – 2023. Chairs review students' self-reported homework hours from the course evaluations each semester.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Fall 2025 Schedule of Courses: https://wascsenior.box.com/s/3vfaa7zr0zerzp3a9rg2ockmamjme1jt
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 4 (2 BA, 2 MA)
	MFA Final Studio - https://app.box.com/file/1943097510225?s=0l7410m0569cwl12qr0od03mj8wbyqoy
	AHCS 650 - https://app.box.com/file/2098447410211?s=hmhaxapdmpg6sskvsfvpb6jfxlpxvgue
	AHCS 222 - https://app.box.com/s/ywb8xe8ut34suzimwic921ykp2ztdj2i/file/2098459153859
	ANIM 320 - https://app.box.com/file/2098447192258?s=bj98hgut7svobd2a1k5uhya0u088iw7y
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Hybrid
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☒ BA/BS ☒ MA ☐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Fine Arts
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☐ ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Otis provided a description of how up-to-date, consistent classroom policies are delivered to all students in all classes: https://wascsenior.box.com/s/9yrooujm3h25mpx728lu8r1y3teoswmz
	How many syllabi were reviewed? 3
	What kinds of courses? 2 Writing Lab, 1 Internship
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☒ BA/BS ☒ MA ☐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? English, Fine Arts
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:

	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Otis has 11 Bachelor's Degree Programs and 2 MFA programs Course Catalog PDF: https://www.otis.edu/catalog/current/catalog.pdf Online Course Catalog website: https://www.otis.edu/catalog/current/programs/index.html

Review Completed By: Maria Narvaez

Date: 03-11-26

Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) provides data on the college website for 6-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen and transfer students. OIRE also provides disaggregated data. The institutional course catalog has the breakdown of the credit distribution requirements for all majors and minors. The Retention and Graduation Rates are published on the website: https://www.otis.edu/about/otis-glance/student-outcomes/retention-graduation-rates.html The institution's website below uses tables detailing the cost of attendance for all undergraduate and graduate majors: https://www.otis.edu/admissions-aid/tuition-aid/cost-attendance.html
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The institution's website provides a detailed academic program page for all of its programs that include a section on careers. For example: Animation: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-animation/careers.html Fine Arts: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-fine-arts/careers.html

	Fashion Design: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-fashion-design/careers/index.html Game and Entertainment Design: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-game-entertainment-design/careers.html Product Design: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-product-design/careers.html Toy Design: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-toy-design/careers.html Graphic Design: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-graphic-design/careers.html Illustration: https://www.otis.edu/programs/undergraduate/bfa-illustration/careers.html
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*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Mauro Diaz

Date: 08/17/2025

Student Complaints Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records. WSCUC [Complaints and Third-Party Comments Policy](#) requires that an institution have a process for receiving and handling complaints and grievances by institutional personnel or students. Records of complaints and grievances are to be retained by the institution until the next scheduled comprehensive review to allow the review team an opportunity to review the records, as appropriate. WSCUC 2023 Standards of Accreditation, Standard 1, CFR 1.4, requires institutions to maintain appropriate operating policies and business procedures, including timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances.

Material Reviewed	Institution provides locations of materials to be reviewed	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
Policy on student complaints	Link to policy for handling student complaints: Complaint Procedures Student Affairs Otis College of Art and Design and Incident Reports Otis College and Otis College Student Handbook	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? __X__ YES __ NO If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? __X__ YES __ NO If so, where? Complaint Procedures Student Affairs Otis College of Art and Design Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Link to procedure for addressing student complaints and evidence of adherence to	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? __X__ YES __ NO

	procedure: Complaint Procedures Student Affairs Otis College of Art and Design All student complaints are received by the VP for Student Affairs or designee and there is a protocol in place designating who to involve depending on the nature of the complaint, and how to move toward resolution as swiftly as possible.	If so, does the institution provide evidence that it adheres to this procedure? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments:
Records maintenance and tracking	Link to description of how and where student complaints are maintained and tracked/monitored over time: The complaint process is tracked and managed within a third-party software, Maxient, which houses all student conduct, title IX, CARE, and disability complaints or reports. They also track cases based on case type to easily pull reports and analytics	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, where? Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments:
Records retention	Link to description or policy regarding retention of records of complaints and grievances: Complaint Procedures Campus Policies Otis College of Art and Design	Does the institution retain records of complaints and grievances at least until the next scheduled WSCUC comprehensive review? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: Complaint Procedures Campus Policies Otis College of Art and Design

*§602.16

Review Completed By: Cheryl L. Ney
Date:3-13-2026

Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, is the policy publicly available? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, where? https://www.otis.edu/life-otis/student-support-services/student-affairs/handbook/academic-policies/transfer-credits.html

	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? x YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Requires grade C or better. Limit on transfer units, 63 UG, 15 GR.

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

1. Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
2. Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Judith Maxwell Greig
 Date: March 12, 2026

A. Distance Education Review form

Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix

Institutions must have WSCUC approval to utilize distance education in the delivery of any of its programs in any amount, and are required to seek WSCUC approval for programs where 50% or more of the program can be completed through distance education. The institution's use of distance education in the delivery of its programs is reviewed as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the institution including an Accreditation Visit or Seeking Accreditation Visit.

Distance Education is defined as:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support **regular and substantive interaction** between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband, fiber optic, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
- Audioconference;
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition

In keeping with federal expectations, WSCUC requires institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs to demonstrate “Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction” and “Academic Engagement” as defined by the federal regulations (see Code of Federal Regulations §600.2).

Regular and Substantive Interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- (i) Providing direct instruction;
- (ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- (iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- (iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- (v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -

- (i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- (ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Academic Engagement requires active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that -

(1) Is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency;

(2) Includes, but is not limited to -

- (i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;
- (ii) Submitting an academic assignment;
- (iii) Taking an assessment or an exam;
- (iv) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
- (v) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or
- (vi) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters

Please complete either Section A for institutions that offer distance education programs approved by WSCUC or are 100% distance education institutions OR Section B for institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs that do not rise to the level of a WSCUC approved distance education program.

Institution: Otis College of Art and Design

Type of Visit: Reaffirmation On-site review

Name of reviewer/s: Rachel Lawrence

Date/s of review: 3.10-3.12.2026

Section Completed: __ A OR X B

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all comprehensive visits and for other visits as applicable. Teams can use the institutional report to begin their investigation, then, use the visit to confirm claims and further surface possible concerns. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

SECTION B: For Institutions Without Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Courses reviewed (as appropriate; please list)
 - a. HyFlex
 - i. BFA: Fall 2024 ENGL 108 N Writing As Discovery: Thought Lab I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/24174>
 - ii. BFA: Summer 2025 LIBS 214 A Time Travel Storytelling - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26655>
 - b. Blended
 - i. MFA: Fall 2025 AHCS 650 A Art, Theory, Practice I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26968>
 - ii. BFA: Fall 2026 ANIM 230 D Animation Basics - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27002>
 - iii. BFA: Fall 2025 ANIM 450 B Animation Senior Project I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27533>
 - iv. BFA: Fall 2025 CAIL 301 F Disability Arts - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27370>
 - v. BFA: Fall 2025 TOYD 452 A Professional Development I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27572>
 - vi. BFA: Spring 2025 INTR 330 A Interdisciplinary Career Paths - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/25822>
 - vii. BFA: Spring 2024 LIBS 314 G Elocution - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/21406>
 - c. Online
 - i. BFA: Fall 2025 AHCS 224 C Theories and Trends - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27157>
 - ii. BFA: Fall 2025 AHCS 228 B History of Animation - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27011>
 - iii. BFA: Fall 2025 ANIM 320 C Des & Drawing for Animation II - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27279>

- iv. BFA: Fall 2025 FNDDT 101 H Color and Design - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27176>
- v. BFA: Fall 2025 FSHD 234 A Digital Design I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27451>
- vi. BFA: Fall 2025 FSHD 425 A Digital Design IV - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27654>
- vii. BFA: Fall 2025 GAME 310 C Intro. To Blender - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27575>
- viii. BFA: Fall 2025 LIBS 314 C Human Nature - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/27681>
- ix. BFA: Fall 2025 LIBS 440 I Capstone - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26788>
- x. BFA: Fall 2025 LIBS 440 Q Capstone - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26810>
- xi. MFA: Fall 2025 LIBS 774 A Thesis I - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26977>
- xii. BFA: Summer 2025 LIBS 314 A / SSCI 210 A Changing American Dream - <https://lms.otis.edu/d2l/home/26647>

- 2. Nature of review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)
 - a. The following materials were examined: syllabi; footprint in the Learning Management System, which can include coursework activities (assignments, discussions, quizzes), announcements, content units, gradebooks, rubrics, and content reports (demonstrate learner engagement with posted materials) as needed.
 - b. The Teaching/Learning Center staff work closely with faculty to support effective instruction and were tasked to provide the information below.

See completed form below.

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>Nature of Online Learning Courses.</i> How do faculty use distance learning options in face to face courses e.g., blended learning, hybrid learning, hybrid flexible (hyflex), flipped classroom, or other instructional strategies that allow student/instructor separation? How extensive is distance learning in the curriculum?	Faculty incorporate distance-learning practices into face-to-face courses to enhance flexibility, engagement, and student success. Instructors integrate online components—such as readings, videos, and discussion forums—into traditional classroom structures. Instructors use the learning management system to distribute materials, collect assignments, facilitate discussions, evaluate coursework, and communicate with students. Tools such as Zoom further extend student-instructor interaction. Instruction primarily occurs on campus. Approximately 20% of courses offerings each semester are distance learning courses. The spring 2025 graduating class completed an average of 74% of their coursework on campus.	

<i>Faculty and Student Preparation for Distance Education.</i> What training is offered to faculty who incorporate distance learning in their courses? Can students request a distance learning option for onsite courses? How is their placement in the option determined? What orientation to distance education do students receive?	Faculty who have not previously taught online are required to complete a 6-week online competency-based pedagogy course facilitated by the Teaching/Learning Center. Faculty are compensated with a \$600 stipend for completion of the course. Only in the instance of a required accommodation can a student make a formal request to attend an on-campus course remotely. During Orientation, new students are introduced to the LMS and are encouraged to join a virtual training session led by TLC staff before the term starts.	
<i>Quality of the Distance Education Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	Yes, Otis has been using the Brightspace LMS (powered by D2L) since 2019, which provides a variety of options for peer-to-peer and instructor-student interactions. Otis faculty also supplement distance education offerings with collaborative tools in Google Drive and Zoom. Yes, support is provided internally at Otis through the Teaching and Learning Center and externally through a vendor provided 24/7 chatbot. Peer tutors are also available to support students. The institution has identified Google Classroom as the back-up.	

<i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”?	Faculty are trained to design courses that include predictable, scheduled interactions and active instructor presence throughout the term. Compliance is monitored through departmental oversight, including syllabus review, peer observation, and program-level assessment. Substantive interactions can include: Synchronous class sessions via Zoom Providing instructional content through explanations, demonstrations, or facilitated discussions. Direct feedback on assignments, assessments, or student work through the LMS or during in-class critique. Individualized support, outreach, or guidance related to course content.	
<i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?	Required activities and content are clearly outlined in course syllabi. Courses are designed to promote active participation and measurable learning. Compliance is monitored through: Departmental oversight, including periodic audits and program-level assessment Course evaluations Brightspace usage data Activities that contribute to academic engagement include: Completing coursework Participating in weekly discussions and critiques	

<i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution's process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?	All users are provided with a unique login credential specific to their user account and ID, which grants access to Otis College systems. User accounts require 2 factor authentication. The institution protects its technology systems—both internal and outsourced—through multiple safeguards, including firewalls, data encryption, network monitoring, regular security audits, and vendor compliance reviews. Third-party systems used for instruction or administration must meet institutional security standards and comply with state and federal data-protection regulations. IT staff conduct routine vulnerability scanning, patch management, and incident-response planning to prevent and mitigate intrusions. The institution does not impose additional student charges for identity-verification systems. Any required verification processes (e.g., LMS login) are provided at no extra cost and are clearly disclosed during registration and enrollment as applicable.	
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<i>Quality Assurance.</i> What processes are in place to collect data from courses that use some type of remote learning? How are the findings used to improve instruction?	Data is collected automatically by Brightspace, which has a variety of reporting options. The college uses data available in Brightspace to track usage and interaction methods and also collects data on distance education courses via course evaluations, grade distributions, course retention, and periodic course review. At the course level findings are used to adjust instruction methods or practices to improve student satisfaction, interaction, and learning. At the college level findings are used to inform faculty development offerings for faculty teaching in distance education modalities.	
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Revised April 2023