

MSCHE Site Visit Guide

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY > MARCH 2-5, 2025



This guide provides information to the Salisbury University community about the upcoming Middle States Commission on Higher Education Site Visit associated with our Self-Study reaccreditation process. It contains general information about what to expect from the Site Visit, as well as more specific guidance for those directly participating.

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY

Make Tomorrow Yours

What is the MSCHE Site Visit?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is Salisbury University's institutional accreditor. As part of their eight-year evaluation cycle, MSCHE requires each institution to prepare a written Self-Study Report demonstrating how the institution meets their Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. During the Site Visit, a team of peer evaluators from other institutions will engage with the SU community to validate the information presented in the Self-Study and gather additional insight. This is the final step in the reaccreditation process.



When is the Site Visit?

The Salisbury University Site Visit takes place from March 2-5, 2025.

Who participates in the MSCHE Site Visit?

The Site Visit is an opportunity for broad engagement with the campus community. MSCHE peer evaluators will meet with various groups, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members. Participants for the focused sessions are selected based on their roles and expertise related to the MSCHE Standards.

How was the Self-Study written?

SU's Self-Study process, which began in fall 2022, has been a highly collaborative effort involving stakeholders from across the institution. Under the direction of the associate provost and associate vice president for planning and assessment, five working groups aligned with SU's Strategic Plan goals and MSCHE Standards were formed. The working groups, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, conducted a thorough evaluation of how SU meets the [Standards and Requirements of Affiliation](#). Their findings informed the development of the [Self-Study Report](#). The final report, available on the [SU MSCHE webpage](#), is the product of extensive research, analysis, and community input.

What did we hope to get out of this process?

The Self-Study presented an invaluable opportunity for institutional reflection, assessment, and improvement in support of SU's mission and strategic priorities. Beyond reaffirming our compliance with MSCHE Standards, our goals were to:

- Engage the SU community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that actively and deliberately involves members from all areas of the campus community.
- Facilitate open and inclusive campus discussions about the University's strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Encourage continuous improvement in the attainment of our institutional Mission and priorities.
- Compose a comprehensive document with a common vision and goals that can be used for future planning.
- Reaffirm that the University meets each of the seven MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and the Requirements of Affiliation, resulting in our reaccreditation.

What comes next?

Following the Site Visit, the peer evaluators will provide a written report of their findings to MSCHE. The Commission will review the report and make a final accreditation decision, which we expect to receive in summer 2025.

Do we **HAVE** to be accredited?

Yes, institutional accreditation is essential. MSCHE accreditation affirms that SU meets rigorous standards of educational quality. It also determines the University's eligibility to administer federal financial aid, which many of our students rely on. Maintaining our accredited status is vital to fulfilling our mission.



INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

We want to express our appreciation to each participant for the time and effort you will devote to this essential process. In these meetings, you serve as the voice of Salisbury University. We recognize that the energy and preparation you put into getting ready will contribute significantly to a successful site visit and, ultimately, our reaccreditation.

Preparing for the Site Visit

To help you feel fully equipped, let's break down what it means to be well-prepared for the visit. The most crucial aspect is being ready with relevant information. Put yourself in the shoes of the site visit team members for a moment. They will have dedicated numerous hours to studying, reading about, and researching our institution. Given their extensive preparation, it's important that we match their level of readiness.

So, what concrete steps can you take to ensure you're well-prepared? Here are a few key actions to focus on:

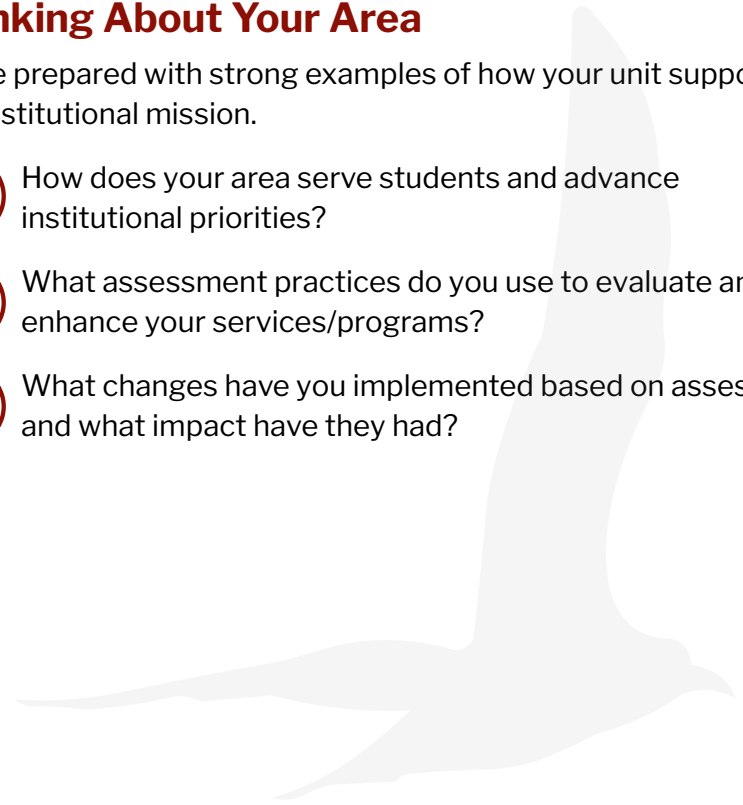
- **Most importantly, thoroughly review the [Self-Study Report](#),** especially the chapters pertaining to your specific area of responsibility. As you review, pay particular attention to the sections that highlight our institutional strengths and ongoing initiatives, as well as the concluding sections that describe opportunities for continued development and improvement. Having a solid grasp of this content will allow you to engage in productive discussions with the visiting team.
- **Take time to deeply reflect on your own unit or department.** In the following sections, you'll find some guiding questions to jumpstart your thinking. The primary goal is to have a set of concrete, illustrative examples at your fingertips. That way, you'll be poised to provide pertinent information whenever the team raises questions.

- **Embrace flexibility and maintain a positive outlook.** While we've made every effort to ensure a smooth visit, unexpected issues can always pop up. We kindly request that you approach any challenges with patience, reflecting Salisbury's resilient spirit.

Thinking About Your Area

Come prepared with strong examples of how your unit supports our institutional mission.

- 1 How does your area serve students and advance institutional priorities?
- 2 What assessment practices do you use to evaluate and enhance your services/programs?
- 3 What changes have you implemented based on assessment and what impact have they had?



Example Questions

Below are example questions the team may ask. These questions are meant to validate the information in the self-study report and to understand deeper context. The questions in your meeting will be focused on your area and on the standards that are addressed in that realm. Please use these example questions as a guide to brainstorm what questions they may ask you of your area. Having a script of questions and answers ready will best prepare you for your meeting.

- The Self-Study mentions the Salisbury Seven priorities. Can you elaborate on how these are being implemented across campus?
- The Self-Study highlighted the new Graduate School. What specific strategies are being considered to grow and then support graduate enrollment?
- The report discusses the new General Education curriculum. How are faculty adapting to these changes?
- What initial outcomes have you seen from the newly created Student Success Council?
- What emerging challenges do you anticipate in achieving institutional goals over the next five years?
- What innovative approaches are being used to increase enrollment?
- How do you envision integrating community engagement more deeply?
- What role do you see technology playing in your future academic and administrative strategies?
- How are you preparing to meet the changing demographics of higher education?
- What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure continuous improvement beyond the accreditation cycle?

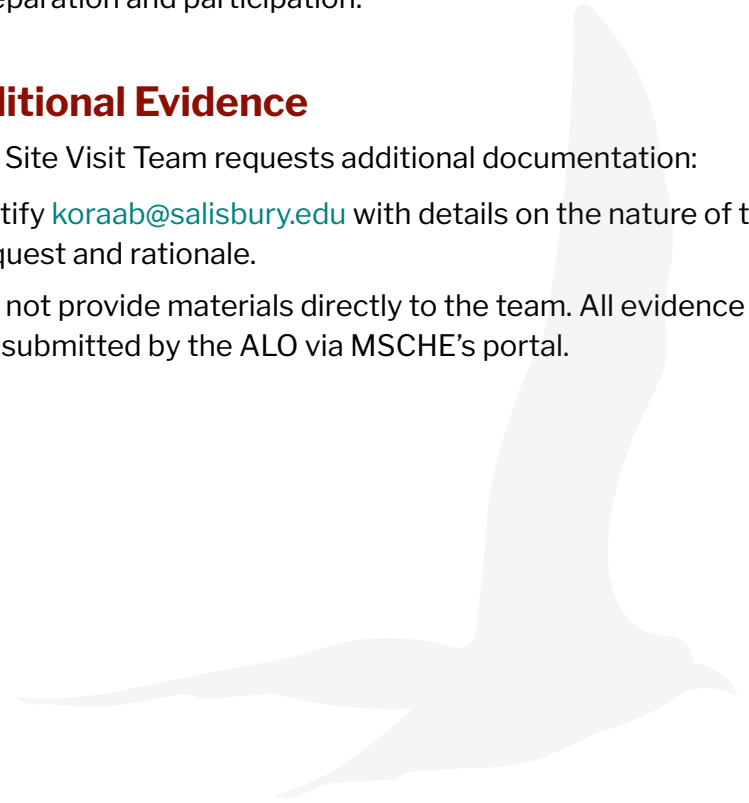
Suggestions for Productive Engagement

- Be open, honest, and proud of SU's achievements, but avoid negativity or speculation.
- Allow everyone a chance to contribute. The team wants to hear diverse perspectives.
- If you are uncertain about a question, offer to connect the team with the appropriate person. If you don't know who that is, contact Kara Raab or Jessica Clark.
- Stay focused on the topics in the Self-Study and your direct experience.
- Demonstrate your commitment to the process through your preparation and participation.

Additional Evidence

If the Site Visit Team requests additional documentation:

- Notify koraab@salisbury.edu with details on the nature of the request and rationale.
- Do not provide materials directly to the team. All evidence must be submitted by the ALO via MSCHE's portal.



RESOURCES TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR ACCREDITATION

2025 Middle States Self-Study

[About Middle States](#)

[Self-Study Timeline](#)

[Self-Study Design Plan](#)

[Self-Study Final](#)

[Steering Committee and Working Groups](#)

[Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation](#)

[Communications and Media](#)

[Salisbury Seven](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

The Site Visit team will want to know how efforts across areas support Salisbury University's Mission and Values. To guide your thinking, please review our Mission and Values and consider your area in relation to them.



Salisbury University Mission

Salisbury University is a premier comprehensive Maryland public university offering excellent, affordable education in undergraduate liberal arts, sciences, business, nursing, health sciences, social work, and education and applied master's and doctoral programs. Our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills, and core values that contribute to active citizenship, gainful employment, and life-long learning in a democratic society and interdependent world.

Salisbury University cultivates and sustains a superior learning community where students, faculty, and staff are viewed as learners, teachers/scholars, and facilitators, and where a commitment to excellence and openness to a broad array of ideas and perspectives are central to all aspects of University life. Our learning community is student-centered. Students learn from professional educators in small classroom settings, faculty and professional staff serve as academic advisors, and virtually every student has an opportunity to undertake research or experiential learning with a faculty mentor. Through our privately endowed Schools and Honors College, and the College of Health and Human Services, we foster an environment where individuals prepare for career and life, including their social, physical, occupational, emotional, and intellectual well-being.

The University recruits exceptional and diverse faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students from across Maryland and the United States and from around the world, supporting all members of the University community as they work together to achieve institutional goals and vision. Believing that learning and service are vital components of civic life, Salisbury University actively contributes to the local Eastern Shore community and the educational, economic, cultural, and social needs of our State and nation.

Key Takeaways from the Self-Study

Through the Self-Study, SU has reaffirmed our commitments to mission-driven education and continuous improvements in teaching, learning and institutional performance. Key impacts include:

- Student learning experiences are enhanced through civic engagement, diversity and inclusion efforts, career preparation, and support services that educate the whole student. (Standard III, IV)
- Revised General Education provides a rigorous, coherent academic foundation aligned with SU's strengths and values. (Standard III)
- Culture of integrated planning established with Strategic Plan metrics and unit-level goals mapped to institutional priorities. (Standard I, VI)
- Comprehensive initiatives in program review, General Education assessment and unit evaluations are generating meaningful data that informs resource allocation and improvements. (Standard V, VI)
- Proactive fiscal stewardship and careful enrollment management are fortifying SU's financial position and maintaining affordability/ accessibility. (Standard VI)



Salisbury University Values

The core values of Salisbury University are excellence, student centeredness, learning, community, civic engagement, and diversity and inclusion. We believe these values must be lived and experienced as integral to everyday campus life so that students make the connection between what they learn and how they live. The goals and objectives of our strategic, academic, facilities, and enrollment plans, as well as our fiscal commitments, reflect our fundamental values. In addition to these principal values, the University embraces, through its shared governance bodies, the long-honored tradition of honesty and mutual regard that is and should be a defining characteristic of higher education.



Important Chapter Summaries

CHAPTER 1: Introduction (Standards I-VII)

Chapter 1 provides an overview of SU's mission, strategic plan, and institutional enrollment. Additional information is provided about the University System of Maryland, the governance group which ensures SU's compliance with State and Federal rules and laws. SU's approach to the Self-Study and our institutional responses to the Commission's recommendations during our 2016 Self-Study are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2: Enrich Academic Success and Student Development (Standards I, II, III, IV, V, VI)

SU's reputation as a premier public, regional, comprehensive university stems from its unwavering commitment to student success. This chapter describes how SU continually strives to best meet the needs of its students in an increasingly complex society. Evidence of this includes the launch of a new General Education program and the recent establishment of SU's graduate school. Effective collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs divisions ensures students have the resources to complete academic programs and thrive in an inclusive community. Regular assessment and review processes, as outlined in **Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience**, guide our continuous improvement efforts across all academic and support programs.

During development of the Self-Study, the working group reflected on two internal recommendations related to enriching academic success and student development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create more opportunities for sharing assessment results and best practices to inform program development and support student success.

2. Create an assessment strategy for First Year Seminar and Experiential Learning courses.

CHAPTER 3: Inspire a Campus Culture of Inclusive Excellence, Support, and Collaboration (Standards I, II, III, IV)

SU's core values include diversity and inclusion in recognition of the considerable educational benefits that can be gained from engaging with people and ideas from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. SU is committed to providing the campus with the tools and resources needed to ensure that SU is a welcoming and inclusive living and learning environment. This chapter provides information on the various policies and procedures implemented by SU to ensure a welcoming and inclusive campus environment. Additionally, this chapter describes the financial and strategic planning processes used for institutional improvement. The linkage between various unit-level plans and the University's 2020-25 Strategic Plan are provided and supported with SU's goals and metrics for evaluating achievements. The chapter further discusses institutional priorities and how the internal budgeting process is designed to align with those priorities. During development of the Self-Study, the working group reflected on three internal recommendations related to inspiring a campus culture of inclusive excellence, support, and collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop centralized staff onboarding processes to more effectively welcome new employees.
2. Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for inclusion, access, and belonging.
3. Utilize the upcoming strategic planning process to configure a planning committee to prioritize institutional needs, recommend strategies for achieving our goals, and track and communicate our progress.

CHAPTER 4: Support Access, Affordability, and Academic Excellence (Standards I, II, IV, V, VI)

An important part of SU's mission is to provide an affordable education to its students. Given the changing landscape of higher education, Chapter 4 provides evidence of how SU uses trend data to forecast enrollment goals and how the careful development and re-evaluation of financial aid strategies is necessary to maintain the University's affordability. Chapter 4 provides evidence of transparent policies and procedures related to admission and financial aid in support of our University mission. Additionally articulated is how SU ensures the accuracy of this information and its communication to potential students in marketing materials. This is supported by data demonstrating graduation rates and graduate outcomes.

During development of the Self-Study, the working group reflected on two internal recommendations focused on student success and achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create collaborative opportunities for offices that contribute to student achievement and success and provide centralized oversight to assess outcomes.
2. Develop communication strategies to promote student successes, outcomes, and achievements.

CHAPTER 5: Deepen Engagement with Our Community (Standards I, VI, VII)

Community engagement and sustainability are key components of SU's mission. This chapter explores how SU leverages its academic programs, student volunteerism, innovative research, and community-based projects to address the educational, economic, cultural, and social needs of the Eastern Shore and beyond. Drawing on evidence from institutional centers, collaborations, initiatives, and assessment practices, the chapter illustrates SU's multifaceted approach to fostering partnerships, promoting civic responsibility, and cultivating a sustainable future. Discussed in detail is SU's 2020 designation as a Community Engaged Campus by the Carnegie Foundation and the integration of civic engagement and environmental sustainability courses into the new General Education program.

During development of the Self-Study, the working group reflected on four internal recommendations related to deepening engagement with our community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Generate clear, measurable outcomes for institutional priorities and planning documents.
2. Centralize information and resources for more efficient collection and dissemination of community engagement and environmental sustainability opportunities and efforts.
3. Establish campuswide awards for community engagement for faculty, staff, students, and community partners.
4. Improve support systems for faculty, staff, and students to engage with communities via externally funded grants.

CHAPTER 6: Standard VII and Requirements of Affiliation

Chapter 6 demonstrates SU's compliance with the MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and **Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration**. SU's organizational structure and the six primary divisions are described as well as the five governance groups that share a role in reviewing and creating policies and setting institutional goals. Additional details are provided about the system and state-level oversight that ensures SU is fulfilling its institutional mission effectively and efficiently.

During development of the Self-Study, the working group reflected on two internal recommendations related to document management and change implementation:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Build and continually update a digital repository of key compliance documents used in the Self-Study that can be used by the broader campus community.
2. Develop effective change management principles to navigate the significant pace of change experienced as a result of the implementation of new ideas and initiatives and ensure that the changes continue to yield desired results.

SU is an Equal Opportunity/AA/Title IX university and provides reasonable accommodation given sufficient notice to the University office or staff sponsoring the event or program. For more information regarding SU's policies and procedures, please visit salisbury.edu/equity.

