

Day 11: Did you know about staff members' qualifications and support for their professional development?

[HLC Criteria 5.A.1, 4] Staff are appropriately qualified and trained. AND

[HLC Criteria 3.C.6] Student support staff are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported through professional development.

Revenues from [enrollment growth](#) and a commitment to continuous improvement have enabled increases in the allocation of funding for instruction and related support areas, the institution's top priorities. This commitment has resulted in the hiring of additional full- and part-time faculty and staff in response to growing enrollment pressures. Full-time equivalent (FTE) [instructional appointments](#) increased by 18.3% over the five-year period since FY 2012-13. The FTE reduction in part-time faculty over that timeframe reflects the institution's goal of undergraduates engaging primarily with full-time faculty, but yet continuing to benefit from professional experience that part-time faculty can bring to the classroom. It also supports CMU's commitment to [smaller class sizes](#) - approximately 88% of class sections in Fall 2016 had enrollments of fewer than 40 students, 45% enrolled fewer than 20, and about 1% had 100 or more students - thereby promoting student-student and faculty-student interaction.

The University also recognizes the importance of [staffing academic, instructional, and student services](#) to meet the needs of a growing student population. In recognition of this commitment, CMU has increased funding for academic support by 40.0% since FY 2012-13, resulting in a growth in FTEs by 31.8% for the same timeframe. Instructional support experienced a more modest gain in hires (10.6%), but support for student services experienced a noteworthy FTE expansion over the five years by 30.8%.

The institution continuously strives to hire the best-qualified and most effectively trained employees to assist students with their academic and non-academic needs. [Most support unit directors or coordinators](#) are master's degree qualified or higher, while all support staff have a baccalaureate degree or higher (see attachment). Subsequent to their hiring, academic and student support staff are given training specific to their responsibilities, summarized below:

- The [Financial Aid Office](#) has a comprehensive training manual of protocols and procedures used in training so that staff can successfully respond to student needs regarding their aid package.
- Staff in the [Office of Student Success](#) are trained by the Coordinator on key aspects of advisor duties. Peer coaches also must complete training before interacting with students.
- Support in the [Tutorial Learning Center](#) primarily is student peers who are trained by office staff. They complete an orientation and training to be certified by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). Certification requires completion of ten training sessions at each of four levels through which the tutors can progress: Certified, Advanced, Master, and Expert, with levels based on hours of tutoring experience and additional training.

- The [Academic Advising](#) staff are trained to assist students with selecting a major, placement and registration for appropriate classes, understanding program sheets, resolving holds, and numerous other questions to help insure students' success.
- [Educational Access Services](#) holds training sessions that include ADA rules, hypothetical scenarios related to student disability and their resolution, and campus protocols on accommodations.
- [TRiO-SSS](#) (Student Support Services) provides training for Peer Mentors including a resource guide and handbook, covering topics including responsibilities as peer coaches, professionalism and accountability, ethics, communication, and information on University policies such as FERPA.
- The [Testing Center](#) has training in the areas of test administration, scheduling, customer service, protection of confidential information, testing integrity, and security and identity protection.
- [Career Services'](#) detailed handbook describes policies and guidelines for the office's service delivery.
- [Residence Life](#) staff schedule training for the Resident Assistant student leaders, which focuses on building community and providing a safe and engaging environment.
- While retaining their faculty appointment, Academic Department Heads perform administrative functions that are outlined in its [Manual](#).

Professional staff development opportunities cover a broad mix of topics (see attachment). Off-campus opportunities ensure currency by attending professional conferences that are specific to an office. [On-campus workshops](#) often focus on topics that are of more general interest, scheduled throughout the year, and frequently offered by University staff. The high quality of support staff work is reflected in the results of 739 student evaluations of these services in the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#). Not only are the averages for these offices above a 5 on a 7 point scale, with 7 being the highest rating, but in most cases, the 2016 average is higher than that for 2014.

To learn more, log into MAVzone and click on the document link found in the CMU Assurance Argument for HLC channel (top left on the Home tab) for the full text of CMU's Assurance Argument. Links to supporting evidence are identified by underlined words but are not available through the PDF version.

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