

Missouri Western State University

Faculty Handbook

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Acknowledgments and Recognition

This Faculty Handbook represents a collaborative effort to capture the spirit, practices, and aspirations of teaching and learning at Missouri Western State University.

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This handbook is intended as a supportive resource, not an official policy manual. For binding policies, please refer to the Missouri Western State University Policy Guide.

Thank you for everything you do to make MoWest a place where students and faculty thrive.

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Welcome and Foundations

Welcome to MoWest!

Hello and a warm welcome to MoWest! Whether you're stepping into your first classroom here or joining us with years of experience, we're excited to have you in our community. Located in St. Joseph, MoWest is a place where everyone—students and faculty alike—comes together to learn, grow, and make a difference through hands-on, applied learning. This handbook is your starting point to discover what makes teaching and working here unique, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is your friendly guide to thriving at MoWest, filled with practical advice and insights to help you succeed. It's not a replacement for the official Policy Guide—that's where current rules live—but a toolbox of timeless tips for teaching, supporting students, and building your career. We've kept it simple and approachable, and since it's a living document, we invite you to share feedback with your department chair, the Faculty Senate, and your colleagues in Academic Affairs to keep it fresh and relevant for years to come.

Framing the Faculty Experience at MoWest

At MoWest, your experience as a faculty member is about making a lasting impact through meaningful work. Our mission focuses on career-ready education for all—first-generation students, non-traditional learners, and everyone in between—guided by applied learning that connects your efforts to students' lives. You'll find support for your research, linking intellectual inquiry to the classroom and enriching student perspectives with real-world questions you explore together. Your teaching will shine with a clear and caring presence, blending innovative and creative applied learning opportunities that span disciplines and general education, helping students see the value of their education in action. Beyond that, we're building a culture of service where you can lead as a servant-leader, demonstrating our commitment to the community and each other through mentorship, collaboration, and outreach. This is a place where your ideas shape the future, and we're committed to helping you succeed—whether guiding students, pursuing your passions, or serving our region. Let's build that journey together!

MoWest's Identity as an Open Access, Regional, Applied Learning University

MoWest's story is one of resilient growth and community roots, a journey that has shaped us into the open-access, regional university we are today. It all began in 1915, when we opened our doors as St. Joseph Junior College in the heart of downtown St. Joseph, offering two-year programs in the original Central High School building at 13th and Patee Streets. With just 35 students and 8 faculty members, we were a modest start, focused on providing accessible education to local young people eager to build better lives amid the challenges of a changing

world. By 1933, as Central High School moved to its current location, we followed to the Robidoux Polytechnic High School building at 10th Street between Edmond and Charles, our first relocation signaling our commitment to staying close to the community we serve.

The real transformation came in 1969, when we expanded into a four-year institution, Missouri Western State College, acquiring the farm of St. Joseph State Hospital #2 on the east side of Interstate 29. This move to our current 744-acre campus marked a bold step, allowing us to grow from a junior college to a full-fledged center of higher learning, with facilities designed to foster hands-on education amid the rolling hills and woodlands. In 1977, we became a full member of the State of Missouri system, solidifying our role as a regional anchor. A pivotal moment arrived in 2005, when legislation elevated us to university status as Missouri Western State University, designating us Missouri's official Applied Learning Institution and empowering us to offer master's degrees. This honor recognized our dedication to practical, real-world education, turning theory into skills that students could immediately apply.

Our graduate programs debuted in 2007, with the first 12 master's degrees conferred in May 2009, and enrollment in these offerings has grown steadily, reflecting our expanding reach. Today, as MoWest, we stand as a beacon of opportunity, serving over 3,600 undergraduates and hundreds of graduate students from northwest Missouri and beyond. Our applied learning ethos—blending classroom knowledge with community projects—has earned accolades like the All-Steinway School designation for music excellence and accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. Looking ahead, we're poised to deepen our impact, innovating with new programs in high-demand fields and forging stronger ties with local partners like the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce, regional employers, and the Saint Joseph School District. From those early classrooms in 1915 to the vibrant campus we share now, MoWest remains a place where every student's potential is unlocked, one applied experience at a time, ready to shape the future of our region and the world.

Our Commitment to Student Learning, Success, and Access

At MoWest, we're all about giving every student the tools and support they need to thrive, no matter where they're starting from. Our commitment to student success is rooted in the belief that education should be a pathway to real achievement for everyone—first-generation learners, working adults juggling families, commuters from the region, and those with varied academic backgrounds. This means creating an environment where barriers are low, opportunities are high, and faculty like you are at the heart of helping students build confidence and skills for their futures.

We make this happen through a range of accessible programs designed to smooth the transition to college and keep students on track. For instance, the Center for Academic Success offers personalized advising, tutoring, and regular check-ins to support students in strengthening their skills, ensuring they can adjust without feeling overwhelmed. For those balancing life outside school, our flexible scheduling and dedicated spaces for non-traditional learners provide a welcoming place to connect and recharge. These efforts help students—about 40% first-generation and 30% non-traditional—find their footing and grow.

As faculty, you're key to this success story. Your classrooms are where students test their ideas, gain practical skills, and discover new possibilities through applied learning projects, like solving community challenges or developing hands-on solutions. We also foster ongoing encouragement through mentorship programs that pair students with faculty for guidance. It's this blend of structured support and personal connection that helps our diverse students not just pass courses, but truly flourish.

Looking ahead, we're expanding these efforts with new pathways that open doors even wider. Your role isn't just teaching—it's lighting the way for students to claim their place in the world, one step at a time. We're here to back you up, so let's keep making success accessible for all.

A Brief Profile of Our Student Body

Our students bring a vibrant mix of experiences to MoWest, shaped by lives that are anything but simple. Many come from challenging backgrounds—some facing economic hardships, others navigating the weight of being the first in their families to pursue higher education. Their journeys reflect a wide range of socio-economic realities, from modest means to varied educational starting points, often with gaps that test their resilience. Resource struggles, like limited access to technology or study space, and time management challenges, juggling jobs or family responsibilities, are part of their daily grind. Yet, this rich stew of perspectives—forged in adversity—creates a dynamic classroom where diverse voices spark creativity and tough questions drive learning. As faculty, you'll find this environment both inspiring and demanding, a place where your support can turn struggle into strength.

Guiding Institutional Values

At MoWest, our journey as a community is shaped by a set of values that come alive through your work as a faculty member. It all begins with service, a shared purpose that drives you to support your students, your colleagues, and the people of our region—whether through a listening ear in office hours or a project that lifts up a local cause. Quality weaves through everything you do, from crafting engaging lessons to building programs that stand out, reflecting your dedication to excellence in teaching and beyond. Your enthusiasm lights up the classroom, inspiring students with the belief that learning can change their lives, turning challenges into opportunities with every class you lead. Freedom thrives here, as you encourage the open exchange of ideas, creating a space where students feel safe to question and grow, mirroring the liberating spirit of education. Respect guides your interactions, honoring the unique potential in every student and colleague, fostering a campus where everyone's voice matters. And courage pushes you to embrace the adventure of shaping the future, bringing a global perspective to our regional work. Together, these values define your role, empowering you to lead with heart and make a lasting difference at MoWest.

Strategic Planning and Academic Vision

Overview of the Current Strategic Plan

MoWest's current strategic plan, set to guide us through 2028, focuses on student success, community impact, and innovation—details are still being finalized, but it's all about moving forward together.

Introduction to the Master Academic Plan (MAP)

The Master Academic Plan (MAP) serves as MoWest's blueprint for academic excellence, guiding how we deliver education that prepares students for meaningful careers and lifelong growth. Adopted in 2021 and set to expire at the end of 2025, the MAP emphasizes applied learning as the cornerstone of our teaching, ensuring every program connects classroom knowledge to real-world challenges. While we anticipate a review and potential updates in the coming year to align with evolving needs, the core principles—fostering student success through hands-on experiences, essential skills development, innovative curricula, and a strong sense of belonging—will likely remain strong, adapting only to support our mission more effectively.

At its heart, the MAP calls for 100% of graduates to engage in at least one applied learning experience tied to workforce readiness, whether through internships, community projects, or creative collaborations. It promotes essential skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and communication, woven into courses across disciplines, so students build the adaptability they need for a changing world. The plan also encourages innovative curriculum design that responds to student interests and regional demands, alongside efforts to create a supportive community where every student feels connected and valued.

As faculty, your work is central to this vision—your classes bring the MAP to life, turning abstract ideas into practical tools that empower students. Whether through a service-learning project or a capstone that solves a local problem, you help shape the experiences that define MoWest. Even as the plan evolves, its focus on equitable, student-centered learning will continue to guide us, providing a flexible framework for your teaching and our shared goals.

Shared Governance at MoWest

At MoWest, shared governance is the heartbeat of how we shape our future, and your role as faculty is essential to keeping it alive. It begins at the department level, where you work with colleagues to set teaching priorities and address student needs, giving you a direct voice in daily decisions. At the college level, you join councils to align programs with our mission, bridging ideas across disciplines. The Faculty Senate offers a broader platform, where you can influence university-wide policies and advocate for your students' and colleagues' needs. Institutional committees—like those for curriculum, assessment, or even partnering with Admissions to develop new recruiting initiatives or contributing programming at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)—invite you to tackle big-picture goals, from shaping new courses to enhancing student outreach. Having a seat at the table is just the start; shared governance means rolling up your sleeves and doing the lifting—attending meetings, sharing your expertise, and collaborating to build a stronger MoWest. It's a balance, though—while your service and governance efforts are vital, we recognize the need to juggle these with your teaching and

research expectations, ensuring you have the support to thrive in all areas. Your active participation ensures our decisions reflect the real needs of our students and community, making this a place where your efforts truly shape our path forward.

Stepping into the Classroom: Your Guide to Teaching and Learning

As we've explored the heart of MoWest—our welcoming community, rich history, and shared commitment to student success and governance—you're now ready to dive into the heart of your daily work. Part I: Teaching and Learning will guide you with practical tools and insights to bring your passion for education to life in the classroom. Whether you're shaping innovative lessons or supporting our students, this next section will help you turn our mission into action, step by step.

Part I: Welcome to the Classroom

Introduction

At Missouri Western State University (MoWest), excellence in teaching is the cornerstone of our mission to foster student success, intellectual growth, and lifelong learning. The classroom—whether in-person, hybrid, or fully online—serves as the primary space where faculty translate institutional goals into meaningful educational experiences. This section outlines clear, actionable expectations for faculty in delivering high-quality instruction, ensuring consistency, accountability, and innovation across all disciplines.

Grounded in MoWest's commitment to applied learning, inclusive practices, and data-informed improvement, these guidelines align with our accreditation standards (e.g., Higher Learning Commission), General Education (CORE 42) requirements, and program-specific outcomes. They promote a supportive environment that prioritizes student retention, equitable access, and ethical use of emerging technologies, including generative AI.

Whether you're a new or seasoned faculty member, these expectations are designed to be practical tools, not burdensome rules. By upholding these standards, we collectively contribute to MoWest's vision of empowering Griffons to thrive academically and professionally.

Faculty Workload

Overview

Faculty workload at Missouri Western State University (MWSU) refers to the calculated hours of instructional responsibility assigned to full-time faculty for teaching duties across the academic year. It is expressed in "workload hours," a standardized measure that accounts for course credit hours, contact time, preparation, and other factors to ensure equitable distribution of teaching responsibilities.

Full-time faculty are contractually obligated to fulfill **23–25 workload hours** of instruction over the Fall and Spring semesters. Summer teaching is separate, optional, and compensated additionally without impacting annual workload calculations.

Workload calculations may vary by department due to factors such as course type or enrollment. Faculty should consult their department chair for specifics applicable to their assignment—they're a great resource for any questions!

How Workload Hours Are Calculated

- A standard 3-credit-hour lecture-based course (without a lab or studio component) counts as **3 workload hours**.
- This typically results in a **4/4 teaching load**: 12 workload hours in the Fall semester and 12 in the Spring semester, totaling 24 hours annually.

- Adjustments may apply for lab-intensive, studio, or large-enrollment courses, as determined by the department.

Underenrollment and Adjustments

- If a course is deemed underenrolled by the Office of Academic Affairs, workload hours for that course may be prorated based on enrollment levels.
- In cases of under load (fewer than 12 workload hours in a semester), academic leadership will collaborate with the department chair to assign additional appropriate duties, such as mentoring or committee work, to meet contractual obligations.

Overloads

- Annual workload exceeding 25 hours constitutes an overload.
- Overloads require approval from the department chair, dean, and Office of Academic Affairs, submitted via the designated form on the Faculty Portal.
- Compensation is provided at a flat rate per credit hour, based on the faculty member's highest degree:
 - Terminal degree (e.g., PhD, MFA): **\$800 per credit hour**.
 - Rates for other degrees are specified in the faculty contract; consult HR or the chair for details.
- Overload payments are divided evenly across the February and March pay periods.

Example: Teaching an additional 3-credit course in the Fall semester increases annual workload to 27 hours (2 overload hours). For a faculty member with a terminal degree, this yields \$1,600 in overload pay (\$800 per hour × 2), split as \$800 in February and \$800 in March.

Support Resources

For questions on workload assignments, calculations, or approvals, contact your department chair or the Office of Academic Affairs. We're here to help make things run smoothly!

Teaching Modalities

Overview

At Missouri Western State University (MWSU), we offer a variety of teaching modalities to meet diverse student needs and enhance learning outcomes. Choosing the right format for a course is a collaborative process, and we're here to support you every step of the way. Modalities are selected based on program requirements, student demand, and evidence-based best practices—always with input from faculty.

The modality for each course section is determined by the department chair, in consultation with faculty in the unit, and with approval from the dean and the Office of Academic Affairs. We strive for consistency where possible, but flexibility is key: You might be asked to adapt a course from

face-to-face to online (or vice versa) to address emerging student needs. This helps us serve our Griffons better while keeping your workload balanced.

Most full-time faculty teach a mix of modalities, which adds variety to your schedule and exposes students to different learning styles. We're especially mindful of modalities for General Education courses, where data shows certain formats (like in-person for basic skills) often yield stronger results. Our goal? Encourage you to explore the unique pedagogies each modality offers—think active discussions in person or flexible async modules online.

Available Modalities

Here's a quick rundown of what we offer:

- **Traditional In-Person:** Classes and labs meet fully on campus with no required online component. This format works especially well for hands-on activities, real-time collaboration, and building classroom community. Even in fully in-person courses, you are expected to use Canvas at minimum to post your syllabus, record grades, and communicate key information to students.
- **100% Online Synchronous:** Fully virtual with scheduled live sessions (e.g., via Zoom). Great for structured interaction without travel.
- **100% Online Asynchronous:** Self-paced with deadlines, using Canvas for discussions, videos, and assignments. Perfect for students juggling work or life commitments.
- **Hybrid:** A blend of in-person and online elements (e.g., weekly on-campus meetings plus online modules). Balances flexibility with face-to-face engagement.

Embracing Modality Shifts

Change can feel daunting, but it's an opportunity to grow! If a shift is needed:

- Your chair will discuss it early and provide rationale tied to student data.
- We'll offer support through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)—from Canvas basics to advanced hybrid strategies.
- Many faculty find that experimenting with modalities sparks fresh ideas and improves retention.

We hope you'll lean into these options with your chair to create dynamic, inclusive experiences for students. Questions about prepping for a new modality? Reach out—we've got resources and peers ready to share tips!

Faculty Presence

Overview

Faculty presence at Missouri Western State University (MWSU) is about more than just showing up—it's about building connections, supporting student success, and contributing to our vibrant campus community. This includes being actively engaged in your classes (in-person or online),

holding accessible office hours, and maintaining a visible presence on campus. We value flexibility for your research, grading, and personal life, but consistent availability helps foster the teacher-scholar environment we're proud of. Work with your department chair to align your schedule with these expectations—they're here to help make it workable for everyone.

Classroom Presence and Engagement

Faculty are expected to meet all scheduled class sessions for their full duration, whether in-person or online. This means:

- Starting and ending on time.
- For online courses: Maintaining an active presence through regular videos, discussion forums, announcements, and timely responses—no "plug-and-play" autopilot. Engage students meaningfully to keep the course dynamic.

Active classroom presence supports learning outcomes and models professionalism for our Griffons.

Handling Class Absences

Life happens—illness, family emergencies, conferences, or other commitments may require missing a class. Here's how to manage it smoothly:

- **Planned Absences (e.g., conferences, professional travel):** Notify your department chair in advance using the **Permission to Miss Class Form** (available on the Faculty Portal). Get approval early, and provide alternative content to cover the material—such as a recorded lecture, assigned readings, group projects, or asynchronous modules in Canvas.
- **Illness or Unexpected Absences:** Contact your chair or administrative assistant as soon as possible (ideally before class starts) to report you'll be out. If you're able, notify students directly via email or a Canvas announcement. The chair or admin will post signs on classroom doors for face-to-face sections and guide students to check for updates.
- **Follow-Up for Sick Leave:** Once you're feeling better, submit sick leave paperwork to Human Resources. Full-time faculty can request either a half-day (3.75 hours) or full day (7.5 hours).
- **Other Unexpected Reasons:** Communicate promptly with your chair and students. We'll work together to minimize disruptions.

In all cases, the focus is on continuity for students—advance planning goes a long way!

Office Hours

Office hours are a key way to support student success outside the classroom. Full-time faculty are required to hold **10 office hours per week**:

- **5 scheduled hours:** Fixed times posted on your syllabus and office door (or Canvas for online courses).
- **5 hours by appointment:** Flexible slots students can book via email, Calendly, or signup sheets.

Virtual office hours (e.g., via Zoom) are welcome for accessibility, but we encourage holding as many as possible on campus to stay connected with the community. Update your hours each semester and make them easy to find—students appreciate the extra guidance!

General Campus Presence

As a community of teacher-scholars, faculty presence on campus strengthens our shared mission. While we recognize that much of your work (grading, research, prep) happens off-site, we expect full-time faculty to be on campus **3–4 days per week** for a meaningful portion of the day. This supports:

- Drop-in student support.
- Service commitments and committee work.
- Attendance at occasional events (e.g., guest lectures, concerts, or student performances).
- Participation in governance and collaborative initiatives.

Your exact schedule will vary based on teaching modalities, family obligations, and other factors—coordinate with your chair to ensure it meets departmental needs. MWSU operates Monday–Friday, with core business hours from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Academic leadership may occasionally request your presence for meetings or events during these times, always with as much advance notice as possible and flexibility for individual circumstances.

We're not about micromanaging; we're about building an engaged, supportive environment where faculty and students thrive together.

Course Design, Syllabus Guidelines, and Required Elements

Overview

At Missouri Western State University (MWSU), we deeply value your autonomy and academic freedom in the classroom. You're the expert in your field, and we trust you to design courses that inspire and challenge our Griffons. That said, thoughtful course design paired with a consistent, student-friendly syllabus helps set clear expectations, promotes transparency, and supports institutional goals like retention and assessment. Think of these guidelines as a helpful framework—not a rigid script—to enhance your creative teaching.

Course Design Considerations

Great courses start with intentional design. Here are some key elements to weave in as you build yours—tailor them to your discipline and style for the best fit.

- **Instructional Style and Approach:** Consider models that suit your goals, such as a traditional mastery approach (where students progress after demonstrating competency) or alternatives like project-based learning, flipped classrooms, or competency-based pacing. What works best for your content and students? Draw on evidence-based practices to boost engagement and outcomes.
- **Amount and Appropriateness of Course Work:** Balance rigor with realism. Assignments should match the course level (e.g., introductory vs. advanced) and credit hours—aim for work that builds skills progressively without overwhelming students (or you with grading). A 3-credit course might include 2–3 major projects, weekly readings/discussions, and quizzes, totaling about 9–12 hours of student effort per week (including class time).
- **Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods:** Start with the end in mind! Define 4–6 clear, measurable outcomes aligned to program or Gen Ed goals. Then, choose assessments that directly measure them—e.g., essays for critical thinking, portfolios for creative skills, or exams for knowledge retention. Variety keeps it fair: Mix formative (low-stakes feedback) and summative (final grades) methods.
- **Student and Faculty Workload:** Design with sustainability for everyone. For students: Spread deadlines evenly and communicate effort expectations upfront. For you: Factor in grading time—aim to return assignments with meaningful feedback within **two weeks** of submission. This timeliness keeps students motivated, allows for iterative improvement, and prevents backlog. Post grades promptly in Canvas to maintain momentum.

Check with your chair early for any department-specific requirements, like embedded assessments or standardized elements.

Syllabus Guidelines

Your syllabus is the roadmap for the course—make it welcoming, organized, and easy to navigate. Start with a template from the **Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) resources** or your department chair. It's customizable and covers the essentials.

- **General Education Courses:** If teaching Gen Ed (e.g., CORE 42 aligned), collaborate with your chair or colleagues. Departments often share standardized syllabi for consistency, including common outcomes or assessments.
- **Assessments:** Verify any required assignments for General Studies or program-level assessment with your chair—they must align with outcomes.
- **Textbooks and Materials:** Here are some key things to remember:
 - Confirm the adoption deadlines for Fall/Spring/Summer semesters. This is especially important if you are reviewing textbooks as opposed to simply continuing with a current adoption.
 - Confirm any department-standardized textbook with your department chair before finalizing your course syllabus.
 - All required course materials, including textbooks, lab manuals, and access codes, must be ordered through the MWSU Bookstore.

- Please note that every course is automatically assessed a per-credit-hour textbook fee, and students may opt out of this program for all courses whether or not a textbook is required. Make sure you talk with your Chair about this program

Required Syllabus Elements

Incorporate these into every syllabus. Your template will guide you!

- **Course Information:** Title, number, credits, semester, meeting times/locations (or online details), and modalities.
- **Instructor Contact:** Your name, office location, phone, email, and office hours.
- **Course Description and Objectives:** Official catalog description plus your student-friendly version. Tie objectives to program/Gen Ed outcomes where applicable.
- **Required Materials:** Texts, software, supplies—list only those available via the Bookstore. Note that all classes are charged a per-credit hour fee for textbooks that students may choose to opt out of regardless of if you assign textbooks or not.
- **Grading Policy:** Scale, assignment weights, late work rules, and how grades post (e.g., via Canvas).
- **Attendance/Participation:** Align with our policies—emphasize engagement without punishing life events.
- **Schedule:** Week-by-week topics, readings, due dates, and exams. Include flexibility notes for adjustments.
- **University Policies:** Must-include statements on:
 - Academic integrity (with link to full policy).
 - Accessibility/ADA
 - Full list of MWSU policies: There is a link that is included on the Syllabus Template, make sure that is embedded in your online version of the syllabus.
 - **Email Response Policy:** Set clear boundaries. Here's a friendly sample:

Email Response Policy

- I aim to respond to all emails within 24–48 hours of them hitting my inbox. You'll often get a response much quicker! This facilitates student learning and student success and also reflects one of our values: respect.
- I regularly check my email between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM Monday–Thursday, and between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM on Friday.

- I check emails intermittently during the weekend but may not respond until the following Monday.
- **Support Resources:** Point students to the Center for Academic Success, tutoring opportunities for the course, Canvas help, and other student support areas as appropriate

Best Practices

- Keep it concise (5–10 pages) and readable—use bullet points, bold headers, and a positive tone.
- Make it accessible: PDF with alt-text, or post in Canvas as HTML.
- Upload to Canvas by the deadline (typically 2 weeks before semester start).
- Update each term to keep it fresh.
- Send a copy to your administrative assistant to be placed on the O-Drive

Your course design and syllabus set the tone for success—students love clarity!

Instructional Technology

We are proud to use **Canvas** as our campus-wide Learning Management System (LMS). Canvas is required for **every course**, regardless of delivery format, and serves as the central hub where students access materials, submit work, check grades, and stay organized.

To help you create a welcoming and effective online environment, we've established the following **Canvas Minimum Expectations**. These friendly guidelines reflect best practices and are designed to support both you and your students:

- Organize your course using the **Modules** landing page as the primary navigation tool. This ensures students can easily find due dates for all assignments, the course syllabus (using the required template), and all class handouts and assignments (we encourage embracing TILT practices for transparency).
- Remove any unused or unnecessary navigation links to keep the course page clean, simple, and student-friendly.
- Keep the **Gradebook** as up-to-date as possible so students always know where they stand.
- Include an **Introductory/Orientation module, file, or video** (required for fully online courses; face-to-face courses may deliver this introduction in person).
- Upload **PowerPoints, videos, and other key resources**—especially important for online and hybrid courses.
- Make your **Canvas shell available and published at least one week before classes begin**.

We offer **regular training sessions**—both for first-time users and ongoing refreshers—so please take advantage of these opportunities to stay confident and current with Canvas tools and features.

Instructional Technology Support

We're here to make sure your teaching experience runs smoothly, whether you're navigating Canvas or troubleshooting tech in the classroom. Our dedicated support teams are just a phone call or email away—don't hesitate to reach out for quick resolutions to keep your class on track.

Classroom Technology Issues

(e.g., projectors not working, computers won't turn on, AV equipment problems)

For immediate hands-on help with classroom setups, contact the **MWSU Technology Help Desk**.

- **Phone:** (816) 271-4555
- **Location:** Hearnes Center, Room 150
- **Additional Options:** Submit a support ticket online or search the IT Knowledge Base for self-help guides.
- **Hours:** 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

For broader infrastructure or custom software issues:

- Engineering & Infrastructure Support: (816) 271-4568
- Programming & Software Support: (816) 271-5874

Canvas and Online Learning Tools Support

Specialized help with Canvas, Panopto, Camtasia, Snagit, and course design is available through the **Instructional Media Center**.

- **Phone:** (816) 271-5880
- **Location:** Hearnes Center, Room 150

For basic Canvas access, login, or general IT issues:

- **Technology Help Desk:** (816) 271-4555
- **Email:** help@missouriwestern.edu
- **Location:** Hearnes Center, Room 110

Our goal is your success—whether it's a quick fix or deeper guidance, we're excited to partner with you every step of the way!

Assessment in Courses: Program and General Studies

At Missouri Western State University, assessment is a collaborative and essential part of our shared commitment to student success and institutional excellence. We define assessment as the articulation of desired outcomes, the design of measures to evaluate progress toward those outcomes, and the systematic collection and analysis of findings to drive meaningful

improvements. This process isn't about checking boxes—it's about informed action that enhances student learning, refines our programs, and ensures we're delivering high-quality, affordable education that truly makes a difference.

Whether you're teaching in a specific program or contributing to general studies (like our general education curriculum), your role in assessment helps us showcase our strengths and identify opportunities for growth. It's embedded in everyday teaching practices, from designing assignments that align with learning outcomes to reflecting on student performance data to inform your methods. This work supports both program-level reviews (e.g., annual assessments and academic program reviews) and general education assessment, ensuring our courses foster critical thinking, skills, and knowledge across the curriculum.

Your Role and How to Get Involved

As faculty, you're invited—and supported—to integrate assessment thoughtfully into your courses. Here's a simple starting point:

- **Align with Outcomes:** Review your course syllabus to ensure assignments and activities clearly connect to program or general education learning outcomes.
- **Gather and Reflect:** Use tools like rubrics or surveys to collect student work samples or feedback, then analyze trends to celebrate successes and tweak for better results.
- **Contribute to Broader Efforts:** Share insights during department meetings or program reviews to help shape curriculum improvements.

We know this can feel like one more layer, but it's designed to be seamless and rewarding—ultimately making your teaching even more impactful.

Resources and Support from the Office of Assessment & Accreditation

You're not navigating this alone! Our Office of Assessment & Accreditation is here to partner with you every step of the way, offering friendly, practical guidance tailored to your needs.

- **Website:** Dive into a wealth of resources, including examples of effective assessments, templates, deadlines, and step-by-step guides. Visit missouriwestern.edu/assessment to get started.
- **Workshops:** Join engaging sessions on topics like assessment basics, academic program review (APR), data visualization, and more. These are hands-on and scheduled throughout the year—check the faculty development calendar for dates.
- **Drop-In Hours and Consultations:** Swing by during open hours or request a one-on-one meeting for personalized advice, whether it's brainstorming measures or interpreting data. We're excited to brainstorm with you!

Assessment is an ongoing conversation, not a one-time event, and we're committed to making it as supportive and low-stress as possible. If you have questions or ideas, reach out to the Office—we're cheering you on as you help our students thrive!

Managing Your Classroom

FERPA and Respecting Student Privacy

Missouri Western State University is committed to protecting student privacy in full compliance with the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**, a federal law that governs access to and release of student education records.

As faculty members, you play a vital role in safeguarding this privacy while supporting student success. FERPA affords students (once they reach age 18 or enroll in postsecondary education) the right to:

- Inspect and review their education records
- Seek amendment of inaccurate or misleading records
- Consent to most disclosures of personally identifiable information from education records (with certain exceptions, such as directory information or school officials with legitimate educational interest)

Key Guidelines for Faculty

- Never share non-directory information (e.g., grades, GPA, class performance, Social Security numbers, or student ID numbers) with anyone—including parents, spouses, employers, or other students—without written consent from the student.
- Avoid discussing a student's academic progress or records in public spaces, via unsecured email, or on social media.
- Do not post grades publicly using identifiable information (e.g., full names, partial SSNs, or student IDs). Use Canvas's secure gradebook or other private methods instead.
- When communicating with parents or guardians, remember that rights transfer to the student upon enrollment. Direct them to the student unless the student has provided written consent (via a FERPA release form available through the Registrar's Office).
- Directory information (name, address, phone, email, major, enrollment status, dates of attendance, degrees/awards) may be released without consent unless the student has requested a privacy hold—always check Goldlink before sharing.

Best Practices

- Include a brief FERPA reminder in your syllabus (sample below).
- Use university-approved tools (Canvas, Goldlink, MWSU email) for sharing grades and feedback.
- When in doubt, consult the Registrar's Office before releasing any information.

Sample Syllabus Statement

"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of your educational records. I will not release non-directory information about your performance to

anyone (including parents/guardians) without your written consent. Grades and feedback will be shared only through secure university systems."

For complete policy details, training resources, or questions, contact the Registrar's Office (Eder 102) or visit the university's FERPA page on the intranet.

Thank you for your diligence—protecting student privacy builds trust and supports the safe, supportive learning environment we all strive to create.

Attendance and Participation

Missouri Western State University does not require attendance in every course. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) expects us to define clear, consistent policies on student engagement, apply them equitably, and document participation—especially in online/hybrid courses and for federal financial aid (Title IV) verification.

Important: Attendance Verification for Financial Aid

At the beginning of every semester, federal regulations require us to verify student attendance/participation for Title IV financial aid purposes. This mandatory process is reported through GoldLink and must be completed by the published deadline (typically within the first 10–14 days of the term).

- In face-to-face classes, verification can be satisfied by taking roll during early class sessions or through a graded assignment/activity completed before the deadline.
- In online and hybrid courses, verification requires an academically related activity that demonstrates active participation—such as a graded quiz, discussion post, assignment submission, or similar engagement with course material.

Faculty are responsible for submitting this verification promptly and accurately. Failure to verify can impact a student's financial aid eligibility.

This required verification process fits seamlessly into the **broader flexibility** we have in designing engagement policies that best support student success.

Think of participation not as a gatekeeper, but as a supportive tool that helps students stay connected, build momentum, and deepen their learning—especially valuable for those juggling work, family, or other challenges. Many of our students lead incredibly complex lives, so your policy should invite engagement in ways that are meaningful, realistic, and tied directly to course goals.

For face-to-face classes, this might mean valuing in-class contributions like group discussions, quick reflections, or hands-on activities that reinforce concepts and foster community. In online or hybrid settings, engagement can take forms such as thoughtful discussion posts, submitted lecture notes, quiz completions, or participation in virtual sessions—anything that shows active involvement with the material. In general education or high-support courses, structured

check-ins or low-stakes assignments can provide gentle accountability without adding undue pressure.

Whatever shape your policy takes, state it clearly in the syllabus, review it early, and reinforce it through Canvas. Avoid letting a single absence or technical hiccup become a barrier to success; instead, focus on patterns of learning behavior. Collaborate with your chair and colleagues to refine your approach and ensure alignment within your program. For ideas or feedback, the Center for Teaching & Learning is always ready to help.

By designing participation with empathy and purpose, you create a pathway—not a hurdle—for every student to thrive.

Midterm and Final Grades, Pathway, and Athletic Reporting

Our guiding principle for all grade reporting—midterm, final, Pathway, and athletic—is simple: **provide students with accurate, timely information so they can make informed decisions about their education.** Many of our students balance complex responsibilities, and early insight into their standing helps them seek support, adjust study habits, or celebrate progress before small issues become major obstacles.

While students should always be able to track their performance through the **Canvas Gradebook**, your official reports serve a broader purpose. These grades are shared with a network of campus partners—academic advisors, Pathway success coaches, athletic academic coordinators, and support staff—who use them to offer targeted interventions, encouragement, or resources. Your input doesn't just inform the student; it activates a safety net.

Midterm Grades (Required for All Undergraduate Students)

Midterm grades must be submitted **for every student**, including Early College Academy participants, through **Banner** by the deadline set by the Registrar. This is non-negotiable and applies across all course formats.

- **Accuracy matters.** The midterm grade should reflect a **fair, realistic assessment** of performance based on completed work—no placeholders or projections.
- **Timing is key.** Plan assignments and grading so that a meaningful body of evidence exists by the midpoint. Avoid front-loading or back-loading graded work in ways that skew the picture.
- **Failing students.** If a student is earning an **F** at midterm, you **must** include their **last date of attendance or participation** (required for compliance and support follow-up).
- **Watch for reminders.** The Registrar, your chair, and administrative assistants will send multiple emails to your Missouri Western email account about deadlines and procedures—don't let them get buried.

Pathway and Athletic Progress Reports (Twice per Semester)

Pathway (our high-support program for at-risk students) and Athletics request **two progress reports** each term. You'll receive email requests from Advising and/or Athletics—**only if you have enrolled students in these groups**. Not every faculty member will see these, depending on course demographics.

When reporting:

- Submit the **current grade**.
- Include the **number of absences** (if relevant to your participation policy).
- Add **brief, constructive comments**—these are reviewed by coaches, advisors, and success teams and can prompt life-changing conversations.

Even a short note like “Strong effort—encourage consistent submission” or “Missing recent assignments—let’s connect” can make a difference.

Final Grades

Final grades are submitted through **Banner** within a **tight five-day window** after finals week. The Registrar will communicate exact deadlines—treat them as firm.

- **Submission is critical.** Missing the deadline creates significant administrative issues and delays degree progress, transcripts, and financial aid.
- **Stay alert.** Expect emails to your Missouri Western email account from the Registrar, your chair, and support staff with instructions and countdown reminders.
- **Plan ahead.** Grade exams and final projects promptly to avoid last-minute stress.

Your timely, thoughtful reporting—whether at midterm, for Pathway/Athletics, or finals—strengthens our culture of care. It’s one of the most direct ways you help students stay on track, recover from setbacks, and cross the finish line. Thank you for being a vital part of that process.

Course and Student Evaluations

At Missouri Western, course evaluations are a valuable, formative tool designed to support your growth as an educator. Conducted online each semester, they blend quantitative ratings and qualitative comments to give you a well-rounded view of the student experience. Evaluations open about two weeks before the end of term and close on the last day of classes—a perfect window for reflection while the course is still fresh.

We invite you to gently encourage participation. A few minutes set aside in class, a Canvas announcement, or a quick reminder can significantly boost response rates and enrich the feedback you receive. Higher participation means richer insights for everyone.

Important note: Your evaluation reports are released **only after final grades are submitted**. This timing protects the integrity of both grading and feedback, ensuring students respond candidly and you reflect without pressure.

The Heart of Evaluations: Reflection and Growth

Student evaluations exist to help **you** celebrate what's working and identify opportunities to shine even brighter. They're not about judgment—they're about professional development. You'll see:

- What's resonating (e.g., "The real-world examples made concepts click")
- Where adjustments might help (e.g., "Pacing felt rushed in Week 10")
- And yes, occasionally, comments that miss the mark (counting "ums," critiquing attire, or venting about a grade)

Here's the truth: Not every comment will be helpful or fair—and that's okay. A single off-topic remark doesn't define your teaching. What *does* matter are patterns—recurring themes that point to real opportunities for impact.

How Evaluations Are Used

- **Department chairs and Deans** review them during annual evaluations, focusing on trends over time, not isolated outliers.
- They are a part of your mid-tenure, tenure, and promotion packets, showcasing your commitment to continuous improvement.

A Mindset for Receiving Feedback

- **Celebrate your strengths**—students often highlight the passion, clarity, or care that makes your class memorable.
- **Filter with grace**—let unhelpful or personal comments roll off; they say more about the moment than about you.
- **Lean into growth**—even one thoughtful suggestion can spark a small change with big results.

You're not alone in this process. Talk with colleagues, your chair, or the Center for Teaching & Learning to unpack feedback and brainstorm ideas. Thoughtful teaching evolves through reflection—and your willingness to listen, learn, and adapt is what makes MWSU stronger, one course at a time.

D/F/W Rates: A Shared Commitment to Student Progress

At Missouri Western, we track **D/F/W rates** (grades of D, F, or Withdrawals) not as a scorecard for faculty, but as a **compass for student success**. Our open-access mission welcomes learners from all walks of life—many arriving with unique strengths and challenges—and we know that some will need extra guidance to stay on track toward graduation. A certain level of D/F/W is expected in any rigorous academic environment; what matters is how we **respond together** when patterns emerge, always with empathy, collaboration, and a focus on what's best for students.

You play a pivotal role, and we're here to support—not scrutinize—your thoughtful efforts. Checking in on D/F/W trends at midterm, after major assignments, or during progress reporting isn't about blame; it's about **early awareness** so you can celebrate momentum and offer timely help where it's needed most.

Reflecting with Purpose

When you notice elevated rates, consider them an invitation to reflect—**not a judgment**. Ask gentle questions like:

- Are there common stumbling blocks in assignments or concepts?
- Do pacing, prerequisites, or skill gaps play a role?
- How might scaffolding, clearer instructions, or varied assessment formats open new pathways?

These reflections honor your expertise while aligning with our goal: **helping more students cross the finish line** without compromising standards.

Practical, Supportive Steps

- **Monitor gently.** Use Canvas analytics or Banner reports to keep a pulse on your class—think of it as a health check, not a report card.
- **Connect with colleagues.** Department conversations often reveal shared insights and proven strategies (e.g., early low-stakes quizzes, flexible deadlines with structure, or peer mentoring).
- **Leverage our intervention systems.** When a student struggles, a quick referral through academic advising, or **early warning/intervention tools** connects them to tutoring, coaching, or resources—often making all the difference.
- **Reach out personally.** A brief, caring message (“I noticed you missed the last assignment—how can I support you?”) can rekindle motivation and prevent withdrawal.

There's **no magic threshold** (like 15% D/F/W) that defines success—every course, cohort, and semester is unique. What we value is your **ongoing reflection and proactive care**, balanced with the academic rigor that prepares students for what's next.

You're not alone in this. Your chair, the Center for Teaching & Learning, and Academic Leadership are eager partners, ready to discuss ideas, data, and encouragement. Together, we're building a campus where every student feels seen, supported, and capable of moving forward—one assignment, one conversation, one semester at a time.

Academic Integrity

At Missouri Western, we cultivate a culture of **academic integrity** rooted in trust, respect, and shared responsibility—one that honors the hard work of every student and the value of authentic learning. Like a river finding its path, students may sometimes seek shortcuts amid pressures

and deadlines, but our goal is to guide them toward the rewarding flow of honest effort. As faculty, you're empowered to uphold high standards while fostering an environment where integrity feels natural and supported.

Academic honesty is foundational to all our endeavors. Violations include plagiarism, cheating, falsifying records, or any fraudulent activity. Consequences can range from a zero on an assignment to course failure or expulsion, but you have **flexibility** in determining the response that fits the situation and promotes growth. Policies around emerging technologies, like generative AI, are evolving and may be updated—stay informed through campus communications.

Handling Allegations with Care

When you suspect a violation—whether traditional or involving modern tools like AI:

- **Meet promptly and privately.** Start with a supportive conversation to gather facts, clarify expectations, and understand the student's perspective. This often resolves gray areas and turns the moment into a teachable one about ethical practices.
- **Assess thoughtfully.** Weigh the evidence against your course guidelines. Consider the intent, context, and impact—did the student know better, or was there a misunderstanding? Your discretion allows for responses like a rewrite with reflection, reduced credit, or escalation if needed.
- **Document and report as required.** If the grade is affected, file the **MWSU Academic Honesty Violation Report** with the Provost's office. This creates a fair record for patterns without immediate judgment.
- **Support due process.** Students have a structured appeal path: first to your department chair (or dean), then to the Provost and Academic Regulations, Standards & Honesty Committee. This ensures decisions are fair, evidence-based, and free from arbitrariness—protecting everyone involved. If no violation is found on appeal, it's removed from records. Repeat offenses escalate to the Dean of Students for broader review.

Approach these situations as opportunities for mentorship: frame them around growth, not punishment, and emphasize the "why" behind integrity (e.g., building real skills for their future).

This process isn't adversarial; it's a safeguard that balances accountability with equity, giving students a voice while upholding our standards.

Minimizing Incentives, Maximizing Integrity

We thread the needle by maintaining **clear, high expectations**—explicitly outlining them in your syllabus—while proactively designing courses that reduce temptations:

- **Build in supports.** Use low-stakes practice, clear rubrics, and tools like Canvas originality checks to normalize ethical habits and catch issues early.

- **Encourage originality.** Frame assignments around personal application or reflection, where external aids add little unique value.
- **Foster community.** Share stories of integrity's rewards and connect students to resources like the Writing Center or tutoring early on.

Your vigilance, paired with empathy, helps students see integrity not as a hurdle, but as a bridge to their potential. You're not just enforcing rules—you're mentoring future leaders. If you need guidance on a case or strategies, lean on your chair, the Provost's office, or the Center for Teaching & Learning. Together, we're nurturing a campus where honesty thrives and every Griffon succeeds on their own merits.

Managing Classroom Behavior

At Missouri Western State University, we strive to create inclusive, respectful, and productive learning environments where every student can engage fully and succeed. Most of our students are motivated and collaborative, but occasional disruptive behavior can occur. Your role in addressing it calmly and consistently helps maintain a positive space for everyone.

Prevention Starts with Clear Expectations

The most effective way to manage behavior is to prevent issues before they arise. On the first day of class (and in your syllabus), explicitly outline expectations for respectful conduct. Consider including:

- Active listening and participation guidelines
- Policies on device use, side conversations, arrivals/departures, and contributions to discussions
- A statement emphasizing mutual respect, inclusivity, and the value of diverse perspectives

A sample syllabus statement:

"This class thrives when we all contribute to a respectful and supportive community. Please engage thoughtfully, listen actively, and treat classmates and the instructor with courtesy. Disruptive behavior—including persistent side conversations, inappropriate device use, or disrespectful comments—interferes with learning and will be addressed promptly."

Responding to Disruptive Behavior

When minor disruptions occur (e.g., off-topic talking, phone use), start with low-key interventions:

- Non-verbal cues (e.g., proximity, eye contact, or a brief pause)
- Gentle verbal redirection (e.g., "Let's stay focused on the topic" or privately addressing the student after class)

For persistent or more serious disruptions (e.g., hostile comments, refusal to participate constructively, or behavior that impacts others' learning):

- Speak privately with the student outside of class time to express concern, clarify expectations, and seek resolution
- Document the conversation (date, what occurred, and outcomes) for your records
- If the behavior continues, consult your department chair for guidance

In rare cases where a student's behavior poses an immediate threat to safety or severely disrupts the class, you may ask the student to leave for the remainder of the session. If they refuse, contact Campus Police (816-271-4438) for assistance. Follow up by reporting the incident through the Student Conduct process (via the Dean of Students Office).

Support and Resources

You are not alone in handling these situations:

- Consult your department chair early for advice and support
- Reach out to the Dean of Students Office for guidance on Student Code of Conduct violations
- The Center for Teaching & Learning offers workshops and consultations on classroom management strategies
- For concerns involving mental health or distress, submit a CARE Team referral

All conduct matters are governed by the **MWSU Student Code of Conduct**, which supports academic freedom while prohibiting behavior that interferes with teaching, learning, or campus operations.

By setting clear expectations, responding with empathy and fairness, and accessing support when needed, you help foster the engaged, respectful community that defines our university.

Advising, Mentoring, and Supporting First-Generation and Underprepared Students

At Missouri Western State University, teaching stretches joyfully beyond the four walls of the classroom. As an open-enrollment university with a big heart for access and student success, we get the privilege of working with an incredible mix of first-generation students, returning adults, and learners who arrive academically underprepared but brimming with potential. Many of them have never had someone in their corner who looked like a professor actually show up for them. That's where we come in.

So much of what helps our students thrive is simple presence—being there, being visible, being the friendly face that says, “I see you, I believe in you, and I’m rooting for you.” That’s why you’ll notice we happily repeat ourselves about office hours and campus engagement (we love it so much we said it twice!). Your open door, your wave in the hallway, your high-five at

Convocation—these moments matter more than we can measure. Students remember forever the faculty who noticed them, believed in them, and walked with them through the tough days. At Missouri Western, effective teaching is inseparable from intentional advising, mentoring, and just plain showing up with a smile.

The practices below are built around that spirit and are expected of all full-time faculty (and warmly welcomed from our adjunct colleagues too!).

Office Hours (In-Person and Virtual)

- Full-time faculty must hold and clearly publicize a minimum of ten (10) office hours per week, reasonably distributed across multiple days.
- At least five (5) of these hours must be in-person; the remaining five (5) must be offered virtually (Zoom, Teams, etc.), with scheduling information clearly provided.
- Office hours are for students—faculty should be fully present, not multitasking on research or other duties.
- Post hours on syllabi, Canvas, office door, and other appropriate spaces. Include instructions for scheduling appointments outside posted hours when necessary.

Availability and Engagement on Campus

Faculty presence matters. Regularly being visible in your office, attending campus events, and engaging in informal conversations signals to students—especially first-generation students—that they belong here and that faculty care about their success.

Advising and Mentoring

Academic advising at Missouri Western is fundamentally developmental and relational; it is far more than helping students select courses or build a schedule. It is an opportunity to build resilience, foster problem-solving skills, and connect students to the full range of campus resources. Effective advisors serve as mentors who bridge the gap between formal advising and ongoing personal support.

Faculty advisors are expected to:

- Meet with each advisee at least once per semester (preferably early and again after mid-term grades are posted).
- Proactively reach out to students who are struggling academically, on academic warning/probation, or who received D/F/W/I grades at mid-term.
- Follow up persistently. Many first-generation and underprepared students “ghost” when they feel overwhelmed or ashamed. Multiple attempts (email, phone call, Canvas message, etc.) are often necessary and appropriate.
- Teach students how to solve problems rather than solving problems for them: help them learn to use Griffon GPS (our degree-audit and planning system), file exception forms, find withdrawal and refund dates on the website, contact Financial Aid, schedule tutoring or academic coaching through the Center for Academic Support, etc.

- Be prepared to direct students to appropriate support services for non-academic concerns (e.g., mental health, food or housing insecurity, financial hardship) such as the Counseling Center, University CARE Team, Griffon Edge, or community resources. Faculty are not counselors or social workers; our role is to warmly connect students to the professionals who can best help.
- Check in periodically during the semester, especially with first-year and at-risk students, to reinforce that someone at the university is invested in their success.
- Always enter clear, professional, and encouraging notes after every advising session in Griffon GPS. These notes are visible to the student as well as to other faculty, staff, and advisors across campus, so they help everyone stay on the same page and provide seamless support.
- Faculty who consistently go above and beyond in advising and mentoring frequently receive heartfelt nominations from students and colleagues for campus awards (e.g., Advisor of the Year, Outstanding Faculty Mentor) and other forms of recognition.

Graduation and New Student Convocation

Faculty participation in Graduation and New Student Convocation is required for all full-time faculty who are on campus and not on approved leave. Missouri Western holds commencement ceremonies in both fall and spring; full-time faculty are expected to attend at least one of the two graduation ceremonies each academic year. Regalia is required for participation in commencement.

New Student Convocation kicks off the academic year and welcomes our incoming class. Faculty are expected to attend and to bring great energy—Griffon gear, smiles, and enthusiasm are the dress code! These events are among the most meaningful moments in our students' lives—especially for first-generation students—and your presence tells them loudly and clearly that their journey and their accomplishments matter to the entire university community.

Supporting Extracurricular and Campus Events

While not mandatory for every event, regular attendance and participation in student organization activities, guest lectures, performances, athletic events, and campus traditions strengthen the sense of belonging that is critical for retention—particularly for underprepared and first-generation students. Departments are encouraged to recognize and celebrate faculty who go above and beyond in this area.

By embracing advising and mentoring as an extension of our teaching, we fulfill Missouri Western's promise to transform lives through access and caring support. The investment of time and persistent outreach often makes the difference between a student who quietly withdraws and one who crosses the commencement stage with a degree in hand—and maybe even comes back years later to tell you that you were the reason they stayed.

Inclusive and Engaged Teaching

At Missouri Western, inclusive and engaged teaching isn't an add-on; it's who we are. Our classrooms are filled with first-generation students, veterans, parents, full-time workers, and many who never imagined they'd sit in a university classroom at all. They chose us, and we choose them back—every single day. Inclusive teaching means we meet every student where they are, remove unnecessary barriers, and create learning experiences that invite everyone to belong and succeed.

Pedagogy That Opens Doors

We recognize that there are many equally valid ways to embrace inclusive pedagogy, and we deeply respect the unique experiences, backgrounds, and creative approaches each faculty member brings to the classroom. What works brilliantly in one discipline or with one group of students might look different in another—and that richness is something to celebrate. We strongly encourage you to share your successful strategies (and your experiments!) with colleagues in department meetings, Faculty Senate workshops, or with the Center for Teaching and Learning so we can all keep learning from one another.

Inclusive pedagogy starts with the belief that all students can excel when they are taught in ways that respect their lived experiences and strengths. Some practical strategies for consideration include:

- Using varied teaching methods in every class period (short lectures, small-group work, hands-on activities, think-pair-share, Canvas discussions, etc.) so no single learning style dominates.
- Offering multiple ways to demonstrate mastery (exams, projects, presentations, reflective writing, infographics, podcasts, etc.).
- Building in low-stakes practice early and often—quizzes that can be retaken, draft feedback, “test drives” of big assignments—so students learn from mistakes without catastrophic grade consequences.
- Making course materials available in advance and in accessible formats whenever possible.
- Starting each semester with a welcoming syllabus and an introductory activity that lets students share (on their terms) who they are and what they need to succeed.
-

Teaching Strategies Especially Helpful for First-Generation and Non-Traditional Students

Many of our students are navigating college without a roadmap at home. Small, intentional moves make a huge difference:

- Demystify college early: spend time in the first two weeks explaining how to read a syllabus, use Canvas, understand Griffon GPS, contact advisors, and find free resources.

- Be explicit about the “hidden curriculum” (office hours aren’t just for struggling students; emailing professors is normal and encouraged; it’s okay to ask for extensions in advance, etc.).
- If comfortable, share a bit of your own story—especially if you were first-gen or non-traditional yourself, including successes and setbacks.
- Incorporate regular “pulse checks” (anonymous Google Forms, index-card questions, Canvas surveys) asking “What’s helping you learn?” and “What’s getting in the way?”
- Celebrate effort and growth, not just “natural” talent. Phrases like “I can see how hard you’ve worked on this” or “Look how far you’ve come since the first exam” build confidence.
- Offer flexible deadlines or “grace days” (e.g., two free late passes per semester) to accommodate work schedules, childcare emergencies, and life.

Referrals for Academic and Personal Support

You don’t have to solve everything yourself—just be the bridge. When you notice a student struggling:

- For academic help: direct them to the Center for Academic Support (tutoring, academic coaching, study skills workshops).
- For disability-related accommodations: refer to Accessibility Resources (Eder Hall 201); encourage students to register and deliver their accommodation letters.
- For mental health, food/housing insecurity, or crisis: warmly refer to the Counseling Center or the Dean of Students’ Office. A simple “I’m not the expert here, but I know exactly who can help—can I walk you over or make the call with you?” goes miles.

Access Services and Accommodations Guidance

- Accommodation letters from Accessibility Resources are official and binding. Implement them promptly and exactly as written.
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (clear slides, captioned videos, flexible formats) often reduce the need for individual accommodations in the first place.
- Treat accommodation conversations as normal and stigma-free: “Thanks for sharing your letter—let’s make sure this class works great for you.”
- If something feels unclear, reach out to Accessibility Resources directly; they’re happy to consult.

Inclusive, engaged teaching is less about perfection and more about intention, flexibility, and genuine care. When our students—especially those who never thought college was “for people like them”—look around the room and see that they belong, that’s when the real learning (and the real magic) begins.

Part II: Scholarship, Creativity, and Professional Growth

Introduction

At Missouri Western State University, being a faculty member means being a scholar in the broadest, most vibrant sense. We believe that intellectual curiosity, creative energy, and professional growth are not extras; they are the lifeblood of great teaching and the reason our students get to learn from professors who are actively engaged in their fields.

This section is here to celebrate everything that counts as scholarship on our campus, to demystify the promotion and tenure process, and to remind you that the university is genuinely invested in helping you thrive as a scholar-teacher. Whether you're publishing traditional research, collaborating with students on an applied project that changes the community, studying your own teaching practices, or integrating ideas across disciplines, your work matters here. We follow Ernest Boyer's inclusive model because it reflects who we already are: a university that values discovery, integration, application, and teaching equally.

You are not alone on this journey. From internal grants and sabbaticals to your department chair and the Center for Teaching and Learning, resources and people are ready to cheer you on. Ask questions early and often; that's what they're here for.

What Counts as Scholarship at Missouri Western State University

We proudly embrace Ernest Boyer's expanded definition of scholarship (1990) as the foundation for how we recognize and celebrate faculty work. Boyer's model honors four overlapping and equally valuable forms of scholarship:

- Scholarship of Discovery: traditional research that pushes the boundaries of knowledge in your discipline.
- Scholarship of Integration: making connections across disciplines, synthesizing ideas, and illuminating big-picture meaning.
- Scholarship of Application (or Engagement): using disciplinary expertise to solve real-world problems, often in partnership with community organizations, industry, or government.
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): the systematic study of teaching and learning processes, sharing results so others can build on them.

At MWSU, all four count. Whether you're publishing peer-reviewed articles, co-creating public art with community partners, presenting at a national conference on pedagogy, or mentoring undergraduates through an applied research project that benefits a local nonprofit, your work is valued here.

We especially celebrate:

- Applied research and student-involved projects: Undergraduate research, creative works, community-based projects, and collaborative efforts that bring students into the heart of the scholarly process are central to our applied-learning identity.
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): Investigating what works in your own classroom, presenting at teaching conferences, publishing in pedagogy journals, or leading workshops for colleagues all qualify as legitimate, high-impact scholarship.
- The Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL) coordinates a variety of scholarship and applied learning endeavors, including CALHE, JALHE, faculty-led study away opportunities, human subject research, etc.
- MoWest Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs (OGSP) is able to assist faculty with information and support on various grant and funding applications. The OGSP has an established process for applying for funding opportunity, that begins with a pre-proposal process, and continues with submission of a grant proposal routing form with detailed proposal, budget, etc. that is reviewed and approved by administrative personnel, before any application may be submitted to a funding agency. More information is available through the MoWest OGSP website.

There is no single “gold standard” for what scholarship looks like at Missouri Western; only the expectation that it is rigorous, shared with appropriate audiences, and advances your field, our students, or our region.

General Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure at MWSU

The promotion and tenure process at Missouri Western is designed to be supportive, transparent, and developmental; not a mystery or a gauntlet. It rests on the same three pillars we live every day: excellence in teaching (including advising and mentoring), meaningful scholarship/creative activity (using Boyer’s broad model), and engaged service to the university, discipline, and community.

Every year you’ll have an annual review that gives you clear feedback and helps you build momentum. In your third year you’ll go through a formative mid-probationary (mid-tenure) review that mirrors the full tenure process up to the dean’s level. It includes peer classroom observations, a portfolio check-in, and candid, constructive advice from your chair and tenured colleagues. Think of it as a friendly halftime report designed to help you reliably gauge your progress and make adjustments with plenty of time.

Tenure and promotion to Associate Professor normally happen together in year six. Promotion to Full Professor typically comes after at least five years at the Associate level. You’ll assemble a professional portfolio that tells your story: CV, narrative reflection, evidence of teaching effectiveness, scholarly/creative products, service contributions, and more. External reviewers are brought in when needed for scholarship. The process runs from portfolio submission in early fall to final Board of Governors decision the following May.

Exceeding the standard in one area can balance another, and the entire process is built on the belief that you're already the kind of faculty member we want to keep forever; we just want to help you document and celebrate that fact.

A quick, important note:

At any point; whether you're wondering about funding opportunities, how a particular activity "counts," what "exceeds expectations" looks like in your department, or anything else related to promotion, tenure, or professional growth; please talk with your department chair. Chairs are your first and best resource.

We strongly recommend that every new faculty member (tenure-track or not) schedule a sit-down conversation with their chair during the first year (ideally in the first semester). Department cultures and expectations can vary meaningfully across campus, and this early check-in ensures everyone is crystal-clear on both the specific priorities in your discipline and how they align with university-wide promotion and tenure standards. A thirty-minute coffee chat now can save years of guesswork later; and it sets the stage for the kind of open, ongoing dialogue that makes our process truly supportive.

Professional Development and Support

Missouri Western is genuinely invested in your growth as a scholar, teacher, and professional. The university provides a range of funding opportunities—at both the department level and through Academic Affairs—that faculty may apply for to support professional development activities. These include (but are not limited to) conference travel, workshop registration, research expenses, creative projects, open-educational-resource development, applied-learning initiatives, and other scholarly or pedagogical endeavors. Specific programs, dollar amounts, and application processes vary year to year. Your best source of information for what may be currently available is going to be your chair and our colleagues in Academic Affairs.

Additional resources include:

- The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers regular pedagogy workshops and the annual GriffCon event, all designed to spark fresh ideas and refine your teaching and scholarly practices.
- Competitive professional development support is available specifically for faculty who wish to develop or expand applied learning projects with students (e.g., undergraduate research, community-based projects, creative collaborations, internships, and service-learning initiatives). These funds may help cover a range of expenses so that high-impact, hands-on experiences remain accessible to both you and our students.
- Each year, a limited number of competitive sabbaticals are awarded (typically one per college, at full salary for one semester), providing focused time to dive deep into significant projects.

- Faculty Summer Research Grants are competitive awards that support summer scholarly or creative work, with priority given to projects that involve students and align with our applied-learning mission.
- Faculty receive ongoing encouragement and support to attend discipline-specific meetings, teaching conferences, community-engaged scholarship events, and other professional gatherings that keep your work dynamic and connected.
- The Conference on Applied Learning in Higher Education (CALHE)- organized by the Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL), which is an annual conference that faculty are able to participate free of cost, or at a very low cost, to present the outcomes of their teaching or scholarship efforts.
- Faculty also have the opportunity to publish in the annual, peer-reviewed, competitively selected, annual journal, the Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education (JALHE) free of cost.

We want you to pursue the ideas and experiences that energize you, then bring that energy back to our classrooms and campus. While funding is never guaranteed, Missouri Western works hard to find resources for strong, mission-aligned ideas—talk to your chair or the CTL early and often.

Your growth isn't just good for you; it's one of the very best gifts you can give our students and our university.

Part III: Institutional and Community Service

Faculty Service at Missouri Western

Service is the third vital pillar of our faculty role, equal in importance to teaching and scholarship. At its heart, service is how we keep the university running, make shared governance real, enrich our students' experiences beyond the classroom, and strengthen the communities we call home. Done well (and joyfully), service is not a burden; it is one of the most meaningful ways we live out our mission.

Committee Service (Department, College, and University Levels)

Full-time faculty are expected to participate actively in the governance of the university. This typically means:

- Serving on at least one standing or ad-hoc committee at the department, college, or university level each academic year.
- Taking occasional turns on high-impact committees such as Faculty Senate, Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, search committees, program review teams, or accreditation working groups.
- Bringing your voice, expertise, and good humor to the table—meetings go better when Griffons show up ready to collaborate.

Department chairs work to distribute committee assignments equitably and to match faculty strengths and interests whenever possible. New faculty are often given lighter loads in the first year or two so they can focus on teaching and scholarship while they get their bearings.

Reassigned Time for Significant Service Roles

When a service role is genuinely time-intensive—think department chair, Faculty Senate President, leading a major accreditation effort, directing a large center or program, or tackling a special university-wide initiative—reassigned time (course release) may be awarded to help you succeed without burning out.

Here's how it works in practice:

Your chair and dean talk through the needs and coverage, then bring a recommendation to the Provost, who gives the final green light. No formal application from you—just an open conversation about what's best for the department and the university.

Whether it's an ongoing leadership role or a shorter-term special project, any reassigned time comes with friendly, clearly stated expectations and deliverables (usually spelled out in a simple

memo at the start). That way everyone stays on the same page and the investment makes sense for the whole Griffon community.

All reassigned time is reviewed each year by Academic Affairs to make sure it's still the right fit and delivering the intended value. The goal is always support, fairness, and flexibility—not bureaucracy.

We know these big service roles matter, and we're happy to give you the breathing room you need to knock them out of the park.

Civic, Community, and Professional Engagement

One of the things that makes Missouri Western special is how deeply we believe the university and the northwest Missouri region belong to each other. We're not an ivory tower sitting on a hill; we're your neighbors, your partners, and often the first phone call when a school, nonprofit, business, or city leader needs expertise. Extending your knowledge beyond campus is not just encouraged—it's celebrated as a natural expression of who we are.

We love seeing Griffon faculty out in the community doing things like:

- Giving a public talk at the St. Joseph Public Library or performing with the community orchestra
- Helping a local school district redesign its science curriculum or coaching mock-trial teams
- Sitting on the board of the United Way, the Chamber of Commerce, the Mosaic Life Care ethics committee, or the Pony Express Museum
- Partnering with the city on a downtown revitalization study, with the health department on a community wellness initiative, or with a local manufacturer on workforce training
- Leading a regional economic-impact study, restoring prairie at a conservation area, or curating an exhibit at the Albrecht-Kemper
- Stepping into elected or appointed leadership roles in your discipline's state, regional, or national professional organizations—chairing a conference, editing a journal, or guiding accreditation standards

When you do any of these things (and especially when you bring students along), you're strengthening the town-gown relationship that has defined Missouri Western for decades. You're also building goodwill that opens doors for internships, guest speakers, donor support, and legislative allies. In short, you're helping make sure our university remains a vital, welcomed part of northwest Missouri for another hundred years.

Every hour you invest in meaningful community or professional leadership counts fully toward your service expectations—often at the “exceeds” level if it raises the university's visibility or directly benefits our students. We want you to say yes to the invitations that energize you, knowing your colleagues and administration have your back.

Advising Student Organizations

Serving as a faculty advisor to a registered student organization or honor society is one of the most rewarding (and genuinely fun) ways to serve at Missouri Western. You don't have to do it every year—many of us rotate in and out to keep it fresh—but when you do, you become the trusted adult in the room who helps students turn their big ideas into reality, navigate university processes, and grow into confident leaders.

With more than 100 registered organizations ranging from the Digital Animation Club, D&D Club, and Wildlife Society to FBLA, honor societies, and everything in between, there are literally dozens of ways to connect with students who share your passions (or who will happily pull you into theirs). This is pure, old-fashioned service—no stipends, no course releases—just the deep satisfaction of watching students light up as they plan events, travel to conferences, raise money for causes they care about, and become the kind of people who will one day run the world (or at least run a killer fundraiser).

If you've ever wanted to know students outside the classroom, laugh with them, cheer them on, and occasionally be the voice of calm in an inevitable moment of drama, this is it.

Managing Service Expectations

We recognize that service loads should feel sustainable, not crushing. Here are the guardrails we use:

- No single faculty member should be overloaded with committees simply because they are collegial and reliable.
- Department chairs, deans, and the Faculty Senate leadership actively monitor service distribution and step in when imbalances appear.
- Tenured faculty are expected to take on a larger share of governance responsibilities so that pre-tenure colleagues can protect time for scholarship.
- “Service” does not mean saying yes to everything. Thoughtful, high-impact service is far more valuable than scattered over-commitment.

If you ever feel your service load is becoming unmanageable, talk openly with your chair—solutions are almost always possible.

In the end, service is how we build the kind of university we all want to work at: one that runs smoothly, listens to its faculty, celebrates its students, and makes a real difference in our region. Your willingness to pitch in—whether it's chairing a search, advising the Psychology Club, or speaking at the public library—makes Missouri Western the special place it is.

Part IV: Leadership, Governance, and Academic Structure

Introduction

At Missouri Western State University, leadership isn't confined to a few titles—it's a shared adventure where every faculty member has a voice in shaping our future. From Faculty Senate deliberations to strategic planning sessions, governance here is collaborative and inclusive, reflecting our belief that the best ideas come from diverse perspectives. Understanding our academic structure helps you navigate resources efficiently, while clear evaluation processes ensure your growth is supported every step of the way. This section is your friendly guide to how we lead together, govern thoughtfully, and advance as a community. Whether you're new to campus or a long-time Griffon, we're all in this to build an even stronger university.

Shared Governance and Faculty Voice

What Shared Governance Means at MWSU

Shared governance at Missouri Western is the heartbeat of our institution—it's how we ensure faculty, staff, students, and administrators work as true partners in decision-making. Rooted in our commitment to transparency and collaboration, it means faculty aren't just consulted; they're essential architects of policies on curriculum, academic standards, budget priorities, and strategic directions. This model empowers you to influence the university's path while fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect. It's not always perfect (what big family is?), but it's designed to amplify your expertise and keep our mission—transforming lives through access and excellence—at the center.

Role of Faculty Senate and Standing Committees

The Faculty Senate is your official voice in university governance, elected by and from the instructional faculty to represent our collective interests. It facilitates open communication between faculty, administration, the Board of Governors, and students, while making recommendations on everything from curriculum improvements and academic policies to resource allocation and student success initiatives. Meeting regularly during the academic year, the Senate reviews proposals, elects leaders, makes recommendations, initiates conversations, and acts as a bridge to broader university life.

Faculty Representation and Communication with Administration

Your voice reaches the highest levels in multiple, reliable ways. Faculty Senate representatives serve as full voting members on key university-wide committees, ensuring faculty perspective is always at the table when important decisions are made. Beyond that, administrators (including the Provost, CFO, Vice Presidents, and President) regularly attend Senate meetings, take questions directly from senators, and engage in open dialogue. The Faculty Senate Executive

Committee (President, Vice President, and Secretary) also holds recurring meetings with senior administration throughout the year to discuss emerging issues, share faculty concerns, and keep communication flowing in both directions.

At the same time, we believe in keeping things human and direct. If you have a question, idea, concern, or recommendation, the simplest and often most effective path is still a conversation with your department chair and the dean of your college. Helping you communicate upward (and helping leadership communicate downward) is literally part of their job description. They're your advocates and your translators—never hesitate to knock on their door (or send that email or drop by during office hours). No issue is too small, and no good idea is ever out of bounds.

Together, these formal channels and everyday open doors create a campus where faculty truly help steer the ship—and where no one has to shout to be heard.

Participating in Strategic Initiatives and Planning

Strategic planning at MWSU is a team sport, and faculty lead the charge. From the university's Strategic Plan (updated every five years with broad input) to college-level goals, you're invited to shape priorities like enrollment growth, applied learning expansion, and curriculum/workforce development efforts. Join task forces, attend planning forums, or contribute via Senate channels—your frontline experience with students makes you indispensable. These initiatives aren't top-down; they're co-created to align with our open-access mission.

The MWSU Policy Process

Policies at MWSU are living documents, developed collaboratively to support our community. Proposals often start in departments or Senate committees, then move through review by affected stakeholders (faculty, staff, students). The Faculty Senate weighs in on academic matters, forwarding recommendations to the Provost or President for approval. Once vetted, policies are posted in the online Policy Guide (missouriwestern.edu/policy-guide) for transparency. Revisions follow the same open process—your feedback is welcome anytime. Questions? Hit up your Senate rep or the Provost's office.

Understanding the Academic Structure of MWSU

Overview of the Office of Academic Affairs

The Office of Academic Affairs is the nerve center for all things teaching, learning, and scholarly at MWSU, led by Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. It oversees curriculum, faculty development, accreditation, and student success initiatives, ensuring our programs deliver on our promise of accessible, high-quality education. From graduate studies to applied learning, this office champions innovation while keeping operations smooth—think of it as your behind-the-scenes ally for everything academic.

The Three Colleges and Their Leadership

MWSU's academic heart beats through our three colleges, each with deans who steer programs tailored to student dreams and regional needs:

- **College of Liberal Arts:** Home to humanities, social sciences, fine arts, psychology, and communication—fostering critical thinking and creative expression.
- **College of Science and Health:** Focused on STEM, health professions, and nursing—preparing leaders in science, tech, and wellness, and care .
- **College of Business and Professional Studies:** Including the Steven L. Craig School of Business (AACSB-accredited!), education, criminal justice, and engineering technology, the Law Enforcement Academy, and Military Science/ROTC—building practical skills for careers. Dean: Dr. [Current].

Deans collaborate with department chairs to align college goals with university priorities, regularly connecting with faculty for input.

Role of Department Chairs and Program Directors

Department chairs are your daily leaders—managing schedules, budgets, hires, and evaluations while advocating for resources. They're the go-to for workload tweaks or program tweaks. Program directors handle specifics like curriculum updates or accreditation for majors/minors, ensuring smooth delivery. Both roles emphasize mentorship, so lean on them for guidance.

Support Units: CTL, Library, Registrar, Assessment, Sponsored Programs

These units are your academic superheroes, providing tools, expertise, and collaboration to elevate your teaching, research, and student success. Each offers tailored resources for faculty, from pedagogy support to grant writing—lean on them early and often to make your work more impactful and efficient.

- **Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL):** The CTL is your go-to hub for fostering excellent teaching and learning in any format—face-to-face, hybrid, or online. Co-directed by faculty and staff, it builds a supportive community through workshops,, and events like the annual GriffCon. Whether you're refining a syllabus, exploring new tech, or seeking feedback on inclusive practices, the CTL offers practical guidance to spark innovation and reduce burnout. Drop in for a chat or email ctl@missouriwestern.edu—they're here to make your classes shine.
- **Library:** More than bookshelves, the library is your partner in discovery and creation. Faculty get priority access to the catalog, 65+ databases (e.g., JSTOR, EBSCO), journal finder, and course reserves for seamless student materials. Research support includes one-on-one consultations with librarians for lit reviews, citation help, or data sourcing, plus interlibrary loans via MOBIUS (millions of items at your fingertips). For teaching, embed library resources in Canvas or request custom sessions on info literacy. Quiet study spaces, streaming media, and even leisure reading make it a recharge spot too. Connect with them by swinging by the Hearnes Center—librarians are pros at saving you time.

- **Registrar:** The Registrar’s Office keeps the academic engine humming, handling everything from enrollment to official records so you can focus on teaching. Faculty tools include Goldlink for real-time rosters, grade submission (e.g., finals due by 10:00 AM December 16 for fall terms), and degree audits to track student progress. They manage the academic calendar (key dates like finals December 8–12 and commencement December 13), transcripts, the University Catalog, and academic policy compliance. Their team is responsive and faculty-friendly—email registrar@missouriwestern.edu or visit Eder Hall 102.
- **Assessment Office:** Assessment here isn’t paperwork—it’s a collaborative tool for continuous improvement, ensuring we deliver on our promise of high-quality, affordable education. The office supports faculty with resources for articulating learning outcomes, designing measures, and collecting data to enhance student learning and program effectiveness. Key offerings include workshops on rubrics and data visualization, drop-in hours for feedback, and examples/templates for program-level reviews (e.g., majors, General Studies, accreditation like nursing or business). Led by dedicated staff, they facilitate department discussions to celebrate wins and make tweaks—making assessment feel purposeful, not punitive. Reach out at for a consult; it’s a game-changer for refining your courses.
- **The Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs (OGSP):** Dreaming of funding for research, creative projects, or student initiatives? The Grants and Sponsored Programs office is your navigator, helping secure external dollars while shielding you from compliance headaches. Led by Vice Provost Dr. Tilo Roy, the office offers proposal guides, federal grant training, and resources like the Department of Education toolkit or a grant-seekers database. From ideation to submission (they review for institutional risk), plus post-award accounting. Email Academic Affairs to brainstorm—whether it’s a small foundation grant or a big NSF proposal, they’ve got your back for advancing your scholarship
- **The Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL):** Coordinates a variety of on-campus applied learning initiatives including faculty-led study away programs, the annual Conference of Applied Learning in Higher Education (CALHE), the annual Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education (JALHE), Multidisciplinary Research Day (MRD), Griffon Showcase, as well as serves as the office of research compliance that oversees the OGSP, Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subject research, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), etc.

These units aren’t silos—they’re interconnected allies. For instance, the CTL might collaborate with Assessment on outcome-aligned teaching strategies, or Sponsored Programs with the Library on grant-funded research tools. Start with a quick email or drop-in; their goal is to amplify your impact as a Griffon faculty member.

Faculty Evaluation and Advancement

At Missouri Western, evaluation is never about judgment; it’s about reflection, celebration, and continuous improvement. We set aside time each year to look honestly at our work, name

what's going well, and decide together how each of us can become an even stronger teacher, scholar, and colleague. Everything here flows from the culture we're proudest of: one that assumes good intentions, values growth, and treats every faculty member as a professional worthy of trust and support.

The Annual Evaluation Cycle – Your Yearly Reflection

Each spring we invite you to pause and tell the story of your year. You'll pull together a concise self-reflection (usually 2–4 pages), an updated CV, student feedback, peer observation notes, and whatever evidence feels most representative of your teaching, scholarship, and service. Your chair reads it with care, adds their own perspective, and assigns one of three straightforward ratings in each area: Unacceptable, Marginal, or Satisfactory.

The expectation is clear and achievable: Satisfactory performance across the board. If a Marginal or Unacceptable appears (which is rare and usually signals that help is needed), your chair immediately partners with you on a supportive plan—extra mentoring, a workshop, a schedule adjustment, whatever makes sense. The goal is always to get you back to thriving, never to punish.

Most faculty finish the cycle saying, “That was actually helpful,” because the process feels like a genuine conversation about your professional life rather than a box to be checked.

Peer Observation of Teaching – Colleagues Helping Colleagues

Peer observation is one of the friendliest traditions we have. A respected colleague visits your class (in-person or online), watches with curiosity and kindness, then sits down for coffee and an honest, constructive chat. The focus is always on growth: “What’s already working beautifully?” and “Here’s one small idea that might make it even better.” Departments schedule these visits as needed—more often early in your career, anytime you want fresh eyes, or when you’re trying something new. Most of us leave the conversation energized and stealing each other’s best ideas.

Promotion, Tenure, and Rank Advancement

We’ve already covered the philosophy and timelines in Part II; here it simply feels like the natural extension of the same supportive culture.

- Year 3 Mid-Probationary Review: A low-stakes, high-helpfulness checkpoint with plenty of written feedback while time is still on your side.
- Year 6 Tenure & Promotion to Associate, and later Promotion to Full: Milestones we celebrate, not hoops we make you jump through.

New tenure-track faculty are strongly encouraged to seek out a mentor (or small mentoring team) right away—most departments have seasoned colleagues who genuinely enjoy the role. Departments also regularly offer (or will gladly organize) informal workshops on dossier-building,

narrative writing, choosing reviewers, or anything else that feels mysterious. No one expects you to figure it out alone; this is a journey we take together.

Pathways for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

Lecturers, senior lecturers, professors of practice, and visiting faculty are full members of this culture too. You follow the same reflective annual cycle, but advancement centers on teaching excellence, curriculum leadership, and service. Strong performers routinely earn multi-year contracts and rank promotions. Your chair is there to help you map the path that fits your goals.

Turning Reflection into Momentum

The real magic happens after the ratings are in. Grab coffee with your mentor or a trusted colleague, spread everything out, and ask two simple questions: “What am I most proud of this year?” and “What’s one thing I want to get even better at?” Jot down a few goals, toss them into your ongoing portfolio, and you’re already moving forward. The Center for Teaching and Learning offers reflection and goal-setting sessions every spring for exactly this moment.

At Missouri Western, evaluation isn’t the finish line; it’s the starting line for your next chapter of growth. We can’t wait to see where it takes you.

Part V: Contributing to Academic Excellence

Introduction

Everything we do at Missouri Western ultimately circles back to one question: “How are our students learning, growing, and succeeding?”

This section is about the ways every faculty member (regardless of rank or discipline) helps answer that resounding “really well.” From shaping tomorrow’s curriculum to catching a struggling student early, your daily work is what makes academic excellence real here.

Curriculum Development and Innovation

Course and Program Development – Faculty Shaping the Future

At Missouri Western, curriculum begins and ends with faculty expertise. You are the ones who best understand where your discipline is heading, what skills regional employers keep asking for, and how we can prepare our students—many of whom stay right here in northwest Missouri—to thrive in those roles.

When you’re ready to propose a new course, certificate, minor, or (more rarely) a new degree program, the process is intentionally faculty-driven. Start with rich conversations in your department, gather the evidence that matters—advisory-board input, labor-market data, enrollment trends, transfer needs, or feedback from alumni—and show how the change will deliver clear, measurable learning outcomes that serve students and the region’s workforce.

We view every proposal through that practical, data-informed lens: Does this help our students succeed in the careers and communities they’ll enter?

Launching a new degree program is a significant undertaking that requires sustained enrollment demand, budget alignment, and state-level approval. New courses, certificates, minors, and revisions to existing programs follow a similar evidence-based approach, though the scope and timeline differ. Your dean, the Provost’s office, and the Assessment team are ready to help you gather data, refine outcomes, and navigate the steps.

Your ideas about the future of your field are what keep our curriculum alive and relevant. Bring them forward—no matter how big or small—and we’ll work together to make the strongest possible case for our students.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment – Keeping Our Promises to Students

Clear, measurable student learning outcomes are simply the promises we make to our students about what they will be able to do by the time they leave our courses and programs. Assessment is how we keep those promises honest.

At Missouri Western, we assess because we're passionate about knowing: "Are they really learning what we say they will, and are we getting better every year at helping them succeed?" That spirit drives our institutional commitment: continuous assessment lets us deliver on the excellence part of our mission through informed, practical action that truly enhances student learning and institutional effectiveness.

This work happens at three friendly, interconnected levels:

- Program-level assessment (majors and minors)
- General Studies assessment (the core skills every Griffon needs)
- Accreditation and licensure assessment (for programs with external standards)

None of this is about reports that gather dust. It's faculty in departments sitting down together, looking at real student work, celebrating what's going great, and making common-sense improvements when needed. Our Office of Assessment and Accreditation is a genuine partner in this endeavor and can offer help in a variety of ways. Also, connect with your colleagues about rubrics, how the data you collect is informing decisions and choices in the classroom so the process feels useful and even energizing.

When it's done right (and we're always working to do it right), this cycle becomes the quiet engine that keeps getting better at what we do best: changing students' lives.

Encouraging Innovation and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

We want you to experiment. Try a new pedagogy, co-teach across departments, embed undergraduate research, add community projects—anything that lights you and your students up. The university actively looks for ways to support creative, mission-aligned ideas, and some of our most exciting programs and courses started because faculty from different corners of campus decided to dream together and offer our students a different and distinctive experience.

Graduate Studies at Missouri Western

Missouri Western State University offers a select, high-quality portfolio of graduate programs tailored to working professionals, adult learners, and the workforce needs of northwest Missouri and beyond. With a focus on applied learning and practical skills, these programs—ranging from the Master of Business Administration (MBA) to the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)—empower students to advance their careers while contributing to regional challenges like healthcare access, education equity, and community development. As faculty, you're at the heart of this work, bringing your expertise to teaching, mentoring, and program evolution in ways that feel energizing and impactful.

Our current offerings include:

- **Master's Degrees:** Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) – Secondary Education, Master of Social Work (MSW), and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN).
- **Graduate Certificates:** Forensic Investigations, Nurse Educator, TESOL, K-12 Cross-Categorical Special Education, and Special Reading.
- **Other Options:** Non-degree graduate study for professional development or prerequisites.

Many programs are delivered in flexible formats— 100% online, hybrid, or evening classes—to accommodate busy schedules, ensuring accessibility for our open-enrollment ethos. Admissions are straightforward: prospective students apply online via the Graduate School portal, with support from dedicated faculty program directors. The Vice Provost for Graduate Studies oversees it all and they are open and excited to work with you. Each graduate program is led by a program director in the respective area that is a part of the Graduate Council.

Faculty involvement is both important and rewarding:

- **Teaching and Curriculum:** Graduate courses are primarily taught by full-time faculty like you, often counting toward your regular load. Opportunities abound to develop innovative content, such as applied projects in the MSW or capstones in the MSN, blending theory with real-world regional needs (e.g., addressing rural healthcare gaps or equity in education).
- **Advising and Mentoring:** Serve as thesis chairs, project advisors, or career mentors—many graduate students are working adults eager for your guidance on professional paths. Graduate assistantships provide hands-on support while building your mentoring portfolio.
- **Program Development and Assessment:** Lead curriculum reviews, learning-outcomes alignment, and accreditation efforts (e.g., AACSB for MBA). Through the Graduate Council, collaborate on new certificates or emphases, like expanding TESOL for international teaching or forensic investigations for local law enforcement.
- **Recruitment and Innovation:** Spotlight strong undergraduates for our programs, guest-lecture in interdisciplinary courses, or pitch ideas for applied-learning integrations (e.g., community-based MSW fieldwork). Faculty innovation drives growth—our programs emphasize practical skills that prepare graduates for leadership roles, often with international recognition.

Benefits ripple both ways: Students gain career acceleration (e.g., nurse educators advancing in hospitals, business pros tackling regional economic challenges), while you enjoy deeper collaborations, leadership roles, and the satisfaction of shaping tomorrow's professionals. If you're interested in teaching a graduate course, advising, or joining the Graduate Council, chat with your chair or Academic Affairs—they're eager to connect you.

Graduate studies at Missouri Western isn't a side gig; it's a vibrant extension of our mission, where your expertise helps transform lives—one applied project, one mentored thesis, one innovative course at a time.

Faculty-Led Study Away Programs – Taking Learning Global

One of the most transformative ways to bring innovation to your teaching is through faculty-led study away programs—short-term, credit-bearing trips (typically 1–3 weeks) that immerse students in international or domestic destinations while tying directly to your course content. These experiences embody Missouri Western's applied learning mission, helping students build global awareness, cultural competence, and practical skills without the barriers of semester-long study abroad. Any full-time faculty member, in any discipline, can lead a trip—whether it's biology students exploring ecosystems in Costa Rica, Public Planning and Administration majors studying sustainable cities in Norway, or business classes analyzing markets in Asia.

The university encourages these programs because they broaden the campus experience, making study away accessible to students who might otherwise stay home due to schedules, finances, or family commitments. As the faculty leader, you'll guide a small group (minimum 8–10 students), blending structured academics with real-world exploration. It's rewarding work: many leaders describe it as the highlight of their teaching career, fostering deep connections and seeing students grow in ways no classroom lecture can match.

The Proposal and Development Process

Proposing a program is straightforward and faculty-driven, but it requires early planning to ensure smooth execution. The goal is academic rigor equivalent to on-campus courses, with built-in flexibility for cultural immersion.

1. **Start with a Conversation:** Meet with the Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL) staff early to brainstorm your idea, review policies, and sketch a rough budget. They'll share the Program Development Handbook (available on Canvas) and help tailor it to your discipline.
2. **Secure Approvals:** Get sign-off from your department chair and college/school dean, then submit to GOAL. Proposals must be complete and follow the Study Abroad Program Guide—expect feedback on syllabus alignment, learning outcomes, and feasibility.
3. **Timeline:** Submit at least 9 months in advance (ideally 12–18 months for international trips); anything under 6 months may not be approved due to logistics like visas and bids.
4. **Finalize Logistics:** Once approved, GOAL helps secure three competitive bids for major costs (airfare, lodging, ground transport) and set a final budget with a minimum enrollment (typically 8–10). If enrollment falls short, the trip portion may be canceled, but the course can still run on-campus.
5. **Risk and Prep:** Meet with the university's risk manager to cover health, safety, and emergency protocols. GOAL handles student visas/paperwork (destination-specific) and provides tailored forms.

6. **Recruit and Go:** With GOAL’s marketing support, recruit via classes, emails, and campus events. All student paperwork must be completed 3 weeks before departure—GOAL enforces this to ensure safety.

Faculty Responsibilities and Rewards

As leader, you’re the heart of the experience:

- **Responsibilities:** Develop a syllabus that matches on-campus rigor (with clear learning outcomes and assessments), communicate deadlines, assist with student prep, and lead on-site (including cultural debriefs). Ensure the trip advances your course goals while prioritizing safety.
- **Rewards:** Trips often count as course load credit, with travel costs covered and a modest stipend. It’s a chance to collaborate with GOAL for funding (e.g., small grants for underserved students) and build your mentoring portfolio—many faculty use these for promotion/tenure evidence.

GOAL is your full partner, handling admin so you focus on teaching. They can even present to your classes on study away benefits to boost recruitment.

Student Experience and Impact

Students earn credits toward their degree, with costs comparable to on-campus tuition (plus affordable program fees). Trips are short and flexible, ideal for commuters or first-gen students. Post-trip, participants often report stronger résumés, global networks, and renewed passion for their major—outcomes that align with our retention and success goals.

Ready to lead? Contact GOAL today—they’re eager to help turn your “what if” into an unforgettable adventure. These programs don’t just educate; they create Griffons who see the world—and their place in it—differently.

Student Support and Retention Collaboration

We graduate students by surrounding them with people who notice and care. Faculty are often the first (and sometimes only) person a student will tell when life gets hard.

Early Alerts and Midterm Grades

We get it—sometimes the extra emails, the repeated reminders, and the gentle nudges can feel like hand-holding. But there’s a very real reason we ask for your help:

1. **Our students.** Many arrive with uneven preparation, heavy work schedules, family responsibilities, or the simple fact that no one in their family has done this before. For them, a single missed assignment can spiral into “I don’t belong here.” A quick early-alert flag or an honest midterm grade can be the moment someone realizes they’re not invisible.

2. **Our shared responsibility.** These students are often borrowing real money to be here. Walking away without a degree can change a life—for the worse. We believe that if someone has been admitted to Missouri Western, we owe them our very best effort to help them finish.

That's why we use **Navigate 360**, our student success platform. One click from you — whether it's an Early Alert for disengagement, missing assignments, or a low midterm grade — triggers coordinated outreach from advisors, the Center for Academic Support, support staff from a range of offices, and sometimes even a personal call or text. Navigate 360 allows us to see patterns early and respond before small problems become big ones.

Training on Navigate 360 is available, and your department chair can help walk you through its uses. The platform extends well beyond early alerts — it also makes scheduling advising appointments and running targeted campaigns much easier.

We're not asking you to parent anyone. We're simply asking you to give students the same chance you'd want someone to give your own kid, your neighbor, or the younger version of yourself. That one alert in Navigate 360 often becomes the turning point students talk about years later.

Together, it works more often than any of us expect.

Referrals to Support Services

You don't have to be the expert on every problem—you just have to be the bridge.

When a student opens up about a struggle, that moment is golden. A quick, warm connection to the right resource can change everything.

Here's the simple playbook most of us use:

- Academic struggles → Center for Academic Support (tutoring, coaching)
- Disability accommodations → Accessibility Resources
- Mental health, food/housing insecurity, crisis → Counseling Center or the Dean of Students' Office
- Not sure? → Ask the people who know: your chair, a colleague down the hall, or any of our amazing staff across campus. They answer fast and will either take the student themselves or walk you both to the right door.

Never let a student leave your office (or end a call) feeling like they're on their own. A simple "I care about you succeeding, and I know exactly who can help—let's get you connected right now" is often the most important thing you'll say all semester.

You're not fixing their life—you're just making sure they don't have to face it alone. That's more than enough, and it's what Griffons do best.

Faculty's Role in Retention and Graduation Initiatives

Every welcoming syllabus, flexible deadline when life happens, applied project that feels relevant, “I noticed you were gone” email, or the moment you learn a student’s name is a retention tool. These small acts of caring are the most powerful graduation strategy we have.

When a first-generation student who once thought college “wasn’t for people like me” walks across the stage, it’s because dozens of faculty and staff quietly refused to let them disappear. That’s academic excellence—and you’re a big part of it.

Part VI: Thriving at Missouri Western

Welcome Home

You’ve just joined a campus that truly believes faculty are the heart of everything good that happens here. This final section isn’t a list of policies to memorize—it’s a love letter (and a practical cheat-sheet) to help you feel supported, connected, and genuinely excited to build your professional life with us. Whether you’re walking onto campus for the first time or you’ve been here twenty years and just need a refresher, these pages are meant to say: You’ve got this, and we’ve got your back.

Getting Started as a New Faculty Member

Orientation and Onboarding Support

We intentionally design your first days and weeks to feel like a warm welcome rather than a firehose.

New Faculty Orientation (usually the week before fall classes start) is a full-day event organized by Human Resources in collaboration with the Provost’s Office, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Faculty Senate. It’s packed with useful information, practical tips, and plenty of opportunities to meet colleagues across campus in a relaxed setting. The day is structured to give you everything you need to hit the ground running while building connections that last.

Here’s what a typical New Faculty Orientation agenda looks like:

- **Welcome** – Opening remarks from the Provost, Faculty Senate President, and HR Director
- **Strategic Plan** – Overview of Missouri Western’s mission, vision, and current priorities
- **Applied Learning** – How MWSU’s signature focus shapes teaching, research, and student success
- **Campus Information** – Key offices, resources, and who to know
- **Compliance & Regulatory** – Essential policies and training (Title IX, FERPA, safety, etc.)

- **Technology Services** – Canvas, Office 365, classroom tech, and IT support walkthrough
- **University Police Department** – Campus safety protocols and emergency procedures
- **Lunch** – Provided, with time to mingle and ask informal questions
- **Marketing & Communications** – How to share your work and represent MWSU
- **Benefits, Retirement, Payroll** – Detailed session on health insurance, TIAA retirement, direct deposit, and more

The day wraps up by early afternoon, leaving you energized rather than exhausted. You'll leave with a swag bag, a clearer picture of campus resources, and new friends from across disciplines.

Your department and college layer on additional onboarding—meetings with your chair, syllabus reviews, Canvas training specific to your courses, and often a welcome lunch or social. HR, IT, and the Provost's Office work behind the scenes so that by the time you teach your first class, payroll, benefits, email, and Canvas are fully set up.

Campus Logistics – Because the Little Things Matter

Nobody should spend their first month hunting for a parking spot or wondering where the good coffee is. Here's the quick-start guide:

- Griffon ID card → Missouri Western Police Department, Blum Student Union (Room 201) – visit photo-ready between 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Monday–Friday; your ID is also your access card to many locked buildings (access isn't automatic—work with your department chair and administrative assistant to get the appropriate doors activated)
- Office keys → your department's administrative assistant (they are campus superheroes—get to know them early)
- Email, Office 365, Canvas, Griffon GPS → created automatically within 48 hours of your contract start date
- Parking permit (decal or hangtag) → register online or in person at the Missouri Western Police Department, Blum Union Room 201; costs \$30 for first general decal (\$10 additional, \$5 replacement) or \$210 for reserved hangtag; see full details at <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/policedepartment/registration/>
- Mailbox → usually in your department suite; many folks have mail forwarded to their inbox
- Where to print big posters → Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL)
- Where the truly good coffee lives → Einstein Bros. Bagels in Remington Hall or Starbucks in the Blum Union, but the best coffee is usually found in your department office

Mentorship and Peer Support

You'll never be expected to figure everything out alone.

- Informal mentoring is part of our culture. Most departments have one or two veterans who genuinely love walking alongside new colleagues—grab coffee, co-plan a syllabus, borrow their Canvas shells, vent when impostor syndrome shows up. Ask your chair; they'll make the introduction.
- Beyond your department, take time to build relationships across campus. The administrative assistants are often the unsung heroes who know how everything really works. The staff in Academic Affairs, Human Resources, and the Registrar's Office are some of the kindest, most helpful people you'll meet—they've seen it all and are always ready to lend a hand (or a shortcut). A quick hello or coffee chat early on can save you hours down the road and turn colleagues into friends.

Getting Involved in Campus Life (Without Burning Out)

You don't have to become Campus Activities Chair to feel at home. A few low-pressure ways to dip your toe in:

- Sit in the faculty/staff section at a home football or basketball game (free with your ID, great people-watching)
- Cheer at the Griffon Edge Block Party or Family Weekend tailgate
- Drop by one student organization meeting that sounds fun (or that one of your own students keeps inviting you to)
- Join a CTL book club, the campus walking group, or the occasional "Yoga on the Quad"
- Say yes to exactly one thing each semester that sounds energizing and no to everything else guilt-free.

Small moments turn "this is where I work" into "this is where I belong" faster than anything else.

Understanding Outside Employment and Conflict of Interest

We trust you to be a responsible professional. Here's the commonsense version:

- Outside work (consulting, private practice, performances, summer teaching elsewhere, expert witness gigs, etc.) is perfectly fine as long as it doesn't interfere with your Missouri Western responsibilities or create a real or perceived conflict of commitment or interest.
- Disclosure is simple: once a year (and anytime something new starts), fill out the short Outside Employment/Conflict of Interest form in HR. It literally takes five minutes and keeps everyone protected.
- Questions or gray areas? Talk to your chair first—they've probably been there themselves—then HR or the Provost's Office if needed. Transparency is the entire goal; nobody is looking to make life harder.

Resources for Faculty Life – You're Not on Your Own

- Center for Teaching and Learning → workshops, one-on-one consultations, classroom observations, GriffCon, and endless moral support

- Library → research librarians who will hunt down anything, leisure reading collection, streaming movies, and the quietest corners on campus when you need them
- IT Help Desk → 816-271-4444 or helpdesk@missouriwestern.edu (they're fast and friendly)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) → free, completely confidential counseling, legal/financial consultation, and wellness resources—available 24/7
- Griffon Wellness → flu shots, fitness classes, meditation sessions, walking trails, Rec Center access, and an annual health fair
- Faculty awards and recognition → Outstanding Faculty Awards, Governor's Award for Teaching, Alumni Faculty Excellence, Magnificent Seven—nominate someone who inspires you (or let someone nominate you)
- HR, Provost's Office, Faculty Senate → real humans who want you to succeed. Walk in, call, or email—someone will always help.

Frequently Asked Questions (Quick Reference)

Situation	First Step / Who to Contact
Booking travel or getting reimbursed	Department admin → Business Office form
Need to miss class (illness, conference, family emergency)	Notify your chair + students ASAP; arrange coverage if possible
Student wants a course substitution or overload	You + chair → Registrar
Grade appeal or academic honesty concern	Follow syllabus policy → chair → Dean of Students if needed
Want to create a new course, certificate, or minor	Start with department colleagues and your chair
Technology in classroom isn't working	Call or email IT Help Desk (they'll often come to you)
Feeling overwhelmed, burned out, or just need to talk	Mentor, Chair, EAP (800-964-2009), or any trusted colleague
Curious about sabbaticals, summer grants, or travel funds	Your chair, the Dean, or the Provost's Office

A Final Note from All of Us

Missouri Western isn't perfect—no place is—but it's a campus where people genuinely look out for one another. Ask questions early and often (there is zero judgment here). Say yes to the opportunities that light you up and no to the ones that don't, without guilt. Take care of yourself first so you can keep doing the life-changing work you came here to do.

You belong here. We're really, really glad you're a Griffon.

Welcome home!