Standard IV: Students

IV.1 The school formulates recruitment, admission, financial aid, placement, and other academic and administrative policies for students that are consistent with the school's mission and program goals and objectives; the policies reflect the needs and values of the constituencies served by a program. The school has policies to recruit and retain students who reflect the diversity of North America’s communities. The composition of the student body is such that it fosters a learning environment consistent with the school’s mission and program goals and objectives.

The East Carolina University (ECU) College of Education (COE) describes its service mission as the “the preparation of professional educators and allied practitioners, including professionals in business information systems, counseling, electronic media, and librarianship.” The Master of Library Science (MLS) program mission, goals, and objectives support this mission.

Curricular emphasis is on core knowledge, skills, and dispositions required by the profession to support students’ potential for service and leadership, and through partnership and collaboration to form close bonds with their respective communities. The MLS program’s policies and procedures reflect the institution’s dedication to accessibility, and demonstrate a commitment to being “student-centered” and “practitioner-oriented.” The MLS program welcomes qualified and capable graduate students, including those who wish to study part-time.

Recruitment Activities

Because enrollment has dropped consistently since peaking in 2009-2010, recruiting has become an important activity for faculty. Student recruitment has been enhanced by faculty members’ high profiles in professional organizations, statewide licensure standards committees, and presence as leaders at the state and national levels. Visibility and accessibility of the faculty, especially at the state level in the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) and the North Carolina School Library Media Association (NCSLMA), have been among the MLS program’s best venues for advertisement and recruitment.

Recruitment or information booths have been set up at various regional conferences, including, but not limited to, those sponsored by NCLA and NCSLMA. Specific recruitment activities during the past four years have included personal visits to or staffing exhibit booths at
Six locations were targeted to recruit potential students who reflect the diversity of North Carolina’s population. Three visits were in Lumberton, NC, in Robeson County. Robeson County is a tri-racial area and includes large Native American and African American populations (39% and 25% respectively). One visit was to Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, NC. Fayetteville State University is an HBCU and has a student population that is 67% African American. Other visits
were to venues in North Carolina metropolitan areas with significant African American populations (Greensboro, 31%; Winston-Salem, 25%; Charlotte, 29%; and Raleigh, 20%). In addition, the venue at the NCCCLA Conference targeted potential community college support staff who might consider earning the Community College Instruction Certificate while earning an MLS.

Results from recent informational meetings held to recruit school and public library staff, and others who might be interested in librarianship were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/Event</th>
<th>Number attending</th>
<th>Number of resulting applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC Community College Library</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hanover Co PL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLA Biennial Conference</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSLMA Conference</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheboro Public Library</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene County Schools</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to group outreach events, Dr. Harer, the MLS Program Coordinator maintains close ties to key library personnel in large school districts through periodic contacts and personal visits. During the summer of 2012, he met with school library leaders and media coordinators at four of the largest North Carolina school districts: Joann Absi at New Hanover County Schools (Wilmington, NC), Tami Gruer at Guilford County Schools (Greensboro, NC), Gloria Miller at Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools (Charlotte, NC), and Rusty Taylor at the Wake County Public School System (Raleigh, NC). In addition, Dr. Harer and Dr. Marson maintain consistent contact with Dr. Etta Baldwin, School Library Media Supervisor for the Public Schools of Robeson County, a diverse population of potential applicants and future practitioners. The purpose of these contacts is to determine future workforce needs, as well as the skills, knowledge, and competences most desired by these employers. A new program recruiting brochure was published in Spring 2014 to replace older recruiting collateral.

During Spring 2013, Dr. Harer, and Dr. Sua, the MLS Program Advising Coordinator, attended recruitment forums offered by the COE and the ECU Graduate School to develop stronger and more coordinated recruitment efforts. Because of the concern of both the ECU Graduate School and the COE over declining enrollment, COE has established a Graduate Recruitment Task Force, and Dr. Sua serves as a member of this group. Expenditures for recruiting in 2013-2014 totaled $2,250 ($750 for exhibit space registrations, $370 for brochure printing, and $1,130 for motor pool expenses).
Admissions Policies

The program adheres to the admissions standards adopted by the ECU Graduate School. The ECU Graduate School minimum GPA for admission is 2.7. Admissions decisions are based on consideration of undergraduate academic record, graduate record if applicable, test scores on either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), students' written statements of purpose, and letters of recommendation. Minimum scores on the GRE or MAT are not specified by the Graduate School, although in general, a GRE or MAT score at or above the 30th percentile is considered acceptable.

Application information is available from the ECU Graduate School and a schedule of tuition and fees for distance education students is available from the Cashier's Office. In addition to the ECU Graduate School requirements for admission, the MLS program evaluates applicants' aptitude for and commitment to the profession through letters of recommendation and a required statement of purpose essay. Student aptitude and commitment are demonstrated by a wide range of evidence, including, but not limited to, the applicants' career history, extracurricular and community activities, and professional goals. The required essay also demonstrates an applicant's writing ability, a core skill required of all graduate students.

The MLS program has a well-developed process to propose potential exceptions to the ECU Graduate School's minimum requirements for a limited number of students who may not normally qualify, but who have “other offsetting strengths.” Making the case for an exception, as specified in the Admissions Exception Policy (Appendix IV.A), allows the program to meet the special needs of its traditional service area, and to build a more diverse student body. A prospective student who does not meet the Graduate School's admission guidelines may be reviewed for Admission by Exception to the MLS program. An interview with the MLS Admissions Committee may be required for this consideration. The personal interview, if necessary, is useful when Committee members have follow-up questions about the applicant’s materials that could enlighten their decision making or benefit the applicant. Table IV.1 indicates the percentages of those admitted by exception each semester during the past three years.

After previous consideration and discussion, program faculty changed its policy on the timeframe of admissions, moving from year-round admissions to admitting for Fall and Spring semesters only. The decision was made during the March 2012 faculty planning meeting and the change became effective in Summer 2013. The need to establish a regular course rotation and to develop stronger and more coherent cohort groups precipitated the decision.

Admission of applicants residing outside the State of North Carolina to an online degree, certificate program or individual online courses offered by East Carolina University are subject to the U.S. Department of Education Regulation on
State Approval of Out-of-State Education Providers. For this reason, ECU does not offer online programs or courses for students residing in Alabama, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maryland and Ohio.

Graduation, Retention and Attrition Rates

For the 60 students graduating Fall 2013-Summer 2014, the average time-to-degree was six semesters and three terms. Fall and Spring semesters are 16 weeks; summer terms are 11 weeks. Average time-to-degree was three academic years, including summer terms.

According to the ECU Graduate school, the fall-to-fall retention rates for the Fall 2009 cohort were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>82 students began the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32 students graduated and 28 continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>52 total students graduated, and 10 continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>59 total students graduated, and 3 continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not available until September 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data suggest that successful students follow one of two likely patterns: some take two courses per semester/term and graduate in approximately two years, and some take one course per semester/term and graduate in approximately four years. Fewer successful students take longer than four years to graduate, and are limited to a six-year degree completion period by the ECU Graduate School. Based on the Fall 2009 cohort, and assuming the three continuing students did not enroll for Fall 2014, the attrition rate would be 28%.

During 2013, the program performed an internal study of the Fall 2008 entering cohort because the Graduate School retention report was not available until 2014, and found a comparable attrition rate of 27%. Reasons for attrition were:

- 6% of the 27% left the program to continue at an ALA-accredited program
- 5% of the 27% failed to maintain good academic standing
- 16% of the 27% withdrew from the program; five withdrew from the first course without receiving a grade, while the remaining four completed between three and 18 hours in good academic standing.

The 16% (nine students) who withdrew were surveyed to determine their reason(s) for leaving the program. Of the four students who responded to the survey, two reported financial difficulty as the reason, one reported a family emergency as the reason, and one indicated that librarianship was not a good career choice for her.
Financial Aid Policies

A full array of financial aid services is provided by ECU’s Office of Student Financial Aid which offers, education, guidance, and support to students and their families in the financial aid process. The Office administers Federal, State, and Institutional aid programs along with descriptions and explanations of financial aid opportunities. According to MLS students who completed the 2013 Graduate Exit Survey, 18.4% had received financial support from the program, and 35.1% had borrowed money to finance their graduate education.

There are direct links from the MLS and COE websites to the Office of Student Financial Aid and to program and COE scholarship opportunities. MLS program students are eligible for five annual library science scholarships and awards: the Emily S. Boyce Fellowship, the Linda Haddock McRae Memorial Scholarship, the Mildred Daniels Southwick Scholarship, the Diane Kester Innovator Award, and the Outstanding Student Award. MLS program students are also eligible to apply for COE scholarships and have received the Dr. James W. Batten Research Fellow Scholarship and the Dr. Suzanne Wester, MD Scholarship. The amounts of all MLS program and COE scholarships vary between $500 and $3,000, depending upon the funds available for distribution and the number of worthy applicants. All COE scholarship opportunities, including those restricted to MLS program students are evaluated by a cadre of volunteer COE faculty members, and program faculty participate actively as volunteers. A description of scholarships and awards 2010-2014 recipients is included as Appendix IV.B.

MLS program students are also eligible for scholarship awards made available by various professional organizations, particularly those sponsored by NCLA and NCSLMA. Within the past four years, four ECU MLS students have received one of these $1000 awards.

In addition to the scholarships above, the MLS program was awarded a 2014 IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant for the project “North Carolina Economically Disadvantaged and Diversity Scholarships” (NC-EDDS). The $494,324 in funding supports full-tuition scholarships for 30 MLS students who began the program in Fall 2014. In Fall 2014, 91 total new students were admitted and 76 are currently attending classes. Of these 76 students, 27 are IMLS scholars, and the three remaining IMLS scholars will begin the program in Spring 2015.

Placement

Program students have access to information and opportunities for placement, career information, resume assistance, and career exploration through the ECU Career Center. In addition to the more general placement services offered by ECU, the MLS program provides links to vacancies. Job announcements placed on professional email listservs are regularly forwarded to MLS student and alumni listservs, and posted on the MLS Facebook page.
Other Academic and Administrative Policies

The ECU Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities administers the Student Code of Conduct and related policies, and follows established processes to protect the safety and well-being of the campus and online student communities, including the preservation of academic integrity.

The ECU Faculty Manual, Part VI establishes academic policies and processes to be followed with regard to grades and grading, advising, academic integrity, distance education, and student privacy and conduct.

The ECU Graduate School publishes the Graduate Catalog which contains regulations for academic standards, including eligibility, academic probation, continuous enrollment, degree time limit, reinstatement and readmission, and approval of transfer credit. Students who do not maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in graduate-level courses are automatically placed on probation, but are permitted to take an additional nine hours of graduate courses to bring the GPA up to 3.0. If successful, their status returns to “good academic standing.” In addition to a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0, good academic standing requires satisfactory progress in the overall graduate program. A student’s advisor may render judgments as to whether satisfactory progress is being made toward the degree, taking into account all aspects of academic performance and promise, not necessarily course work alone.

Additional MLS program-specific regulations are created only when necessary to meet specific program requirements for graduation or to advise students responsibly. For example, the Graduate School’s policy on student course load sets the maximum enrollment in Fall and Spring semesters at 15 credit hours. The majority of students in the MLS program are working full-time, and those students are strongly encouraged at the time of admission and during advising periods to enroll in only six credit hours for Spring and Fall semesters and a maximum of nine credit hours for Summer terms. The program also specifies requirements for creating and maintaining an MLS portfolio and for arranging and completing the internship experience in LIBS 6991 Internship: Seminar. The MLS Internship Manual describes a structured series of tasks to be performed in field settings under the guidance of a Site Supervisor. The field experience is part of the seminar course led by Dr. Kaye Dotson, the MLS Program Internship Coordinator.

... The school has policies to recruit and retain students who reflect the diversity of North America’s communities. The composition of the student body is such that it fosters a learning environment consistent with the school’s mission and program goals and objectives.
Diversity

One challenge facing the MLS program, as well as the library profession as a whole, is the shortage of librarians from minority backgrounds. This is a special concern to MLS program, which has prepared and continues to prepare librarians to work in communities with significant minority presences. To recruit and retain students who reflect community diversity, the MLS program follows nondiscrimination and affirmative action law and guidelines set by the federal government, the State of North Carolina, the UNC system, ECU, and the COE. MLS program students benefit from offices and support services of the ECU Office of Equity and Diversity. This Office encompasses the overarching institutional equity and diversity functions and involves education, intervention, compliance, consulting, programming, outreach, and assessment. Administrators in this office monitor institutional practices in support of the principles of diversity and equity so that these guiding principles are applied and assessed institutionally on administrative, academic, budgetary, and strategic fronts.

Policies Regarding Nondiscrimination and Diversity

ECU’s policy is governed by the North Carolina General Statutes 126-16, which mandates “All state...agencies...of North Carolina shall give equal opportunity for employment, without regard to race, religion, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, or physical disability to all persons qualified, except where specific age, sex, or physical requirements constitute bona fide occupational qualifications necessary to proper and efficient administration.” ECU’s policy is also consistent with the Code of the UNC System, Section 103, which states: “Admission to, employment by, and promotion in The University of North Carolina and all of its constituent institutions shall be on the basis of merit, and there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex or national origin.”

ECU’s Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policies note a commitment “to equality of educational opportunity and prohibits discrimination against students, applicants, employees, or visitors based on race, color, creed, genetic information, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, political affiliation, or veterans’ status.”

The COE places emphasis on diversity by making it a priority consideration for the development of education professionals embodies its Conceptual Framework for Preparing Education Professionals and its Diversity Action Plan.

The MLS program builds its student minority base through the regular recruitment and outreach efforts of the COE, which strive to recruit and retain a diverse body of education professionals, as well as through the efforts of MLS program faculty members who encourage promising individuals in the community and those they meet during professional activities to pursue a career in library science. The COE Diversity Committee continuously and thoughtfully reviews diversity issues in the COE and strives to build a more diverse student, faculty, and
staff while instilling a greater understanding of diversity issues in all members of the COE community. Dr. Dotson chairs the COE Diversity Committee.

Diversity Support Services

The ECU Office for Equity and Diversity assures that the goals, policies, and directives outlined above are met. As one means of support, ECU’s Ledonia Wright Cultural Center works to “increase awareness and promote cultural understanding,” and is a substantial resource, especially for African American students. The Office of Intercultural Student Affairs works to build bridges between students of different ethnicities, encourages dialogue, and provides support for minority students. As a result of these policies and support services, ECU has the highest percentage of minority students of the predominantly white institutions within the UNC System. In Fall 2013, racial and ethnic minorities comprised 18% of graduate students, excluding medical students. The ECU Department for Disability Support Services coordinates and implements internal policy regarding programs, services, and activities for individuals with disabilities.

Increasing Student Diversity in the MLS Program

While a high percentage of MLS program students have significant experience working in highly diverse environments, white females dominate the student population. Table IV.2 tracks enrollment by race and ethnicity across Fall semesters from 2007-2013. The percentage of racial and ethnic minority students rises and falls from a low of 3.5% in 2010 to a high of 10.8% in 2012. In Fall 2013, it was 7.6%. The peak year (2012) may be accounted for by targeted recruiting efforts, especially in Robeson County, which has the largest minority population in the state. The challenge remains to continue increasing the diversity of the student body.

The program received a 2014 Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant through the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarians program, and the proposal was targeted to recruit students from economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented backgrounds. Of the 30 full-tuition scholarships available, 15 were awarded to students from underrepresented groups (eight African Americans, five Native Americans, one Asian, and one Hispanic) and 15 were awarded to students who live in and intend to serve in their own largely rural and economically disadvantaged counties in eastern North Carolina.

To create a learning environment consistent with the school’s mission and program goals and objectives, the majority of the MLS program internships are carried out in public schools throughout North Carolina, with many of these schools being selected as internship sites because they serve diverse student and staff populations. The internship emphasizes working with diverse populations and requires students, upon completion of the internship, to reflect upon their
understanding of student diversity in evaluation essays that summarize their field experiences.

According to the NC Department of Public Instruction, in 2012-13, 52% of public school students were white, and 49% were non-white. In charter schools, the statistics were 61% white and 39% non-white. Internship placements of program students align with the state statistics. From 2008 to 2012, 51% of MLS students completed internships in schools with student populations that were at least 40% non-white and 38% interned in schools with student populations that are at least 50% non-white. In 2013, these statistics increased to 58% and 42%, respectively.

At public and academic library internship sites, the racial diversity of the corresponding counties indicates a diverse presence that is generally representative of the state as a whole, which is 28% non-white. From 2008 to 2012, 60% of MLS academic and public library students interned in counties with a non-white population of at least 30%; 40% interned in counties with a non-white population of 40%. In 2013, all MLS academic and public library interns worked in counties with a non-white population of at least 30%.

IV.2 Current, accurate, and easily accessible information on the school and its program is available to students and the general public. This information includes announcements of program goals and objectives, descriptions of curricula, information on faculty, admission requirements, availability of financial aid, criteria for evaluating student performance, assistance with placement, and other policies and procedures. The school demonstrates that it has procedures to support these policies.

Current, accurate, and easily accessible information on the school and the program is available to prospective students, current students and the general public through the program’s website. The program website includes accordion menus that contain general program information, professional pathway descriptions and check sheets, information on licensure as a school media coordinator, statements of specialized accreditation, current course schedules, information for current students, and scholarships and financial aid.

Information specifically useful to current students is available from a pull-down menu with links to the ECU ALA Student Chapter, a reference list of course descriptions taken from the Graduate Catalog, information on professional internships, professional resources and job postings, program meeting minutes and reports, a statement of program mission, goals and objectives, technical recommendations, and portfolios.

The MLS program employs an array of additional information and communication outlets to communicate with current students, including a Facebook page and listservs for both current students and alumni. The program receives
assistance in publishing and disseminating program information from the COE Director of Development and Communications and the COE Webmaster.

Feedback from every MLS student on the program’s website is gathered upon completion of LIBS 6042 Technology for Library Services by means of a class survey (Appendix IV.C). Based on the survey results, the website was updated to include information on professional pathways, updated scholarship information, syllabi for all required courses. Subsequent surveys and student input have resulted in the addition of a calendar of important academic dates, updated portfolio information, the addition of a Facebook page, and a forthcoming Twitter service.

The program maintains two listservs to disseminate information. The first listserv is for alumni and includes approximately 600 email addresses for graduates of the program going back to the mid-1990s. The second listserv is for current students and uses the student’s ECU email account. During a student’s last semester, the student is asked to contribute a non-ECU email address to be added to the alumni listserv. The program uses both lists as additional venues to let students know about job vacancies, upcoming conferences, and news relevant to the program and the profession at large. The student listserv is also used to communicate time-dated information about registration, course schedules, graduation ceremonies, and other useful academic information.

Personal Communications

In addition to its website and listservs, program faculty communicate with students individually outside of coursework. Faculty members communicate with their advisees on future enrollments, progress toward degree, and job or career planning, as well as to discuss letters of recommendation for scholarships and to prospective employers. Perhaps the greatest sources of information for students are the faculty and staff who regularly make themselves available through email, telephone, online venues, and in-person by appointment.

The MLS Program Advising Coordinator, Dr. Sua, mails welcome and orientation letters (Appendix IV.D), assigns advisors, assists with registration problems if needed, responds to queries with general information about the program, and refers students to useful ECU support services. Personal contacts made at information and recruitment booths, as well as alumni and friends receptions at state, regional, and national conferences help faculty connect with students and alumni.

IV.3 Standards for admission are applied consistently. Students admitted to a program have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution; the policies and procedures for waiving any admission standard or academic prerequisite are stated clearly and applied consistently. Assessment of an application is based on a combined evaluation of academic, intellectual, and other qualifications as they relate to the constituencies served by a program, a
program’s goals and objectives, and the career objectives of the individual. Within the framework of institutional policy and programs, the admission policy for a program ensures that applicants possess sufficient interest, aptitude, and qualifications to enable successful completion of a program and subsequent contribution to the field.

...Standards for admission are applied consistently. Students admitted to a program have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution; 

To qualify for admission to the ECU Graduate School, an applicant must hold a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting body and show evidence of being able to succeed in graduate studies based on an evaluation of undergraduate GPA and an admission test score. A complete application to the MLS program includes the following materials

- A signed Application for Admission to Graduate Instruction form
- Test score reports from the GRE or the MAT
- Official transcripts(s) from school(s) attended
- Three letters of reference from persons who can attest to the applicant’s academic competence or ability to do graduate work
- A Statement of Purpose essay that addresses the applicant’s academic and professional goals and the reason for seeking a degree in the designated program. The essay should include a description of the expectations of the program, as well as any related qualifications, including talents, skills, dispositions, collegiate and professional accomplishments, community activities, and other personal achievements.

The program adheres to the admissions standards adopted by the Graduate School, which includes an undergraduate GPA of 2.7. The average undergraduate GPA of students admitted to the MLS program from Fall 2008 through Spring 2012 was 3.25. From Fall 2012 through Fall 2013, the average was 3.27, both of which exceed the minimum required GPA.

Minimum scores on the GRE or MAT are not specified by the Graduate School, but acceptable scores for both tests are suggested as the score equivalents of the 30th percentile. From Fall 2008 through Spring 2012, students admitted to the MLS program had an average GRE score of 999.5 (out of 1600) and an average MAT score of 404 (out of 471). The GRE scoring scale was revised in 2012 with a new maximum of 340 total for verbal and quantitative measures and 6 for analytical writing. From Fall 2012 through Fall 2013, students admitted to the MLS program had an average GRE combined score of 293.65 (roughly equivalent to the 51st percentile for verbal and the 19th percentile for quantitative) and an average writing score of 4.17. MAT scores for MLS students admitted from Fall 2012 through Fall 2013 averaged 409, equivalent to the 66th percentile.
... the policies and procedures for waiving any admission standard or academic prerequisite are stated clearly and applied consistently.

Though no applicant who falls below the ECU Graduate School minimum admission requirements is guaranteed admission to the MLS program, ECU Graduate School policy allows requests for admission by exception (conditional admission). The Graduate School makes final decisions on these requests and recommends that the percentage of admissions by exception not exceed 10% of admissions each semester. The MLS program guidelines provided in Appendix IV.A are used to inform decisions regarding admission by exception.

The MLS Program Admissions Committee reviews application materials from applicants who do not meet one or more Graduate School or program admission requirements (GPA and admission test score). The Statement of Purpose essay reveals the applicant’s writing ability, a core skill required of almost all graduate students no matter the discipline, but foundational in the online learning environment. Also taken into consideration are the applicant’s letters of reference. Prospective students who do not meet the Graduate School's admission requirements are reviewed for Admission by the MLS Admissions Committee. An interview with the MLS Admission Committee may be offered to an applicant in order to collect additional information regarding the applicant’s materials and elicit additional evidence of potential. If accepted, the MLS Program Advising Coordinator notifies the Graduate School, which then notifies the student.

This admission policy, while assuring that well-qualified individuals enter the program, offers the flexibility to recognize individuals who have matured significantly since their undergraduate years and are serious about their educational pursuits, or who have significant experience or achievements that demonstrate potential for graduate study and a career in librarianship. Students admitted by exception must earn an average of 3.0 (B) in their first nine semester hours of the program in order to be fully admitted and in good academic standing.

From Spring 2011 through Fall 2013, 359 students applied to the MLS program and 83% were fully admitted; 12% were admitted by exception; and five percent were declined. Of the students admitted by exception during this period, 99% earned A's or B's in their coursework.

... Assessment of an application is based on a combined evaluation of academic, intellectual, and other qualifications as they relate to the constituencies served by a program, a program’s goals and objectives, and the career objectives of the individual. Within the framework of institutional policy and programs, the admission policy for a program ensures that applicants possess sufficient interest, aptitude, and qualifications to enable successful completion of a program and subsequent contribution to the field.
Aptitude for and commitment to the profession are appraised through letters of reference and the Statement of Purpose essay. The Statement of Purpose essay is expected to express and explain the applicant’s interest and aptitude for librarianship, and provide informed rationales for why the applicant wishes to undertake the MLS program, and how the applicant’s previous experiences and background have prepared them for graduate study. References provided by representatives of the constituency the applicant intends to serve can be particularly compelling, and their references are asked for open-ended comments about the applicant’s “scholarship, personality, character, and any other factors related to the applicant’s promise in a graduate program.” In cases when an applicant describes career goals for which the ECU MLS program would not prepare the applicant, the applicant is made aware of other programs that may better suit the applicant’s career intentions.

IV. 4 Students construct programs of study that allow individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met within the context of program requirements established by the school. Students receive systematic, multifaceted evaluation of their achievements. Students have access to continuing opportunities for guidance, counseling, and placement assistance.

... Students construct programs of study that allow individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met within the context of program requirements established by the school.

The MLS program provides a comprehensive program of study through its core course requirements, yet provides flexibility to meet students’ individual needs through its internship requirement, wide-ranging electives, special topics courses, and willingness to consider independent studies and course work from outside the MLS program and ECU. Transfer of graduate courses is limited to a maximum of six semester hours. Courses eligible for transfer consideration must have been earned at a regionally-accredited institution, be graduate level courses in which the student received a grade of B or higher, and must not have been applied to a previously-earned graduate degree.

The MLS is a 39 credit-hour degree, including a core of eight required courses taken by every student. MLS students pursuing North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) licensure as school media coordinators are required to take four required courses beyond the core and one elective. Academic pathway students take two required courses beyond the core and three electives. Public library pathway students take one required course beyond the core and four electives. Students, in consultation with their advisors, choose electives to meet their individual needs and interests.

Many assignments are flexible and student-driven. This flexibility permits students to explore their individual needs, goals and aspirations before they are asked to select a specialized course of study for the second half of their program.
Examples of opportunities for students to explore different library settings in individual courses are provided in Appendix II.D.

**Internship**

The internship provides MLS program students with the greatest flexibility in exploring their own needs, goals, and aspirations through experiential learning. Working with Dr. Dotson, the student selects a library work site and a Site Supervisor (a practitioner librarian) and chooses a specific project to complete while performing onsite professional-level tasks. The practical component of the internship is complemented by seminar discussions and readings led by Dr. Dotson. Students may choose their own site(s) and within those sites may develop projects that meet their needs, as well as those of the site library.

... **Students receive systematic, multifaceted evaluation of their achievements.**

In all program courses, students receive systematic, multifaceted evaluation of their achievements. Evaluations are provided through various means such as formative feedback, tests, peer evaluations, artifact evaluations, course grades, and evaluation of artifact reflections.

Students receive evaluations from their peers through a variety of means including,

- Peer evaluation of draft assignment
- Peer evaluation of group members’ contributions to collaborative assignments
- Discussion board and blog commentary
- During group discussions held using Saba Meeting, Skype and OOvoo

Students receive feedback and evaluation from faculty through

- Feedback on assignment drafts and final submissions
- Grades on assignments
- Assessment of artifacts submitted to Taskstream portfolios
- Assessment of reflections contributed to Taskstream portfolios
- Course test scores
- Course grades

Students receive evaluations from internship site supervisors through

- On-site face-to-face conversation and discussion
- Grades assigned by the Internship Coordinator

In addition to the above evaluations, School Library pathway students are tested via the Praxis exam.
Assessment of Student Portfolios

Since 2001, the program has required completion of a student portfolio as the capstone requirement for graduation. The portfolio platform has evolved and at times overlapped, but has always included artifacts from and artifact reflections for all required program and pathway courses. The portfolio began as individual student websites hosted on a COE server (2001-2011), and evolved to a structured database called the Student Evidence Tracking System (SETS), also hosted on a COE server (2008-2013). Portfolios are now created and maintained on a commercial system called Taskstream. Students entering in Fall 2011 and later initiated portfolios in the Taskstream system. By May 2013, the web server and the SETS server had been decommissioned, and all students had portfolios in the Taskstream system.

From 2001 through 2013, students underwent portfolio reviews twice during the program--upon the completion of 18 semester hours and again at the completion of 39 semester hours prior to graduation. A team of three-to-five faculty members served as a review committee, called the Portfolio Assessment Team (PAT), and assigned pass or fail status to students’ portfolios. A student was not permitted to graduate without passing the final portfolio review. Those who did not pass a mid-point review were provided with specific corrections and given the opportunity to revise their work. Between Fall 2010 and Fall 2012, 91% of student passed the 18-hour review and 9% failed. One hundred percent of students passed final portfolio review.

Instead of two major portfolio reviews performed by the PAT, Taskstream portfolios are continuously evaluated by instructors when work is contributed to the student’s portfolio at the end of each course. Students’ contributions to Taskstream, both course artifacts and reflections are scored by the instructor using artifact scoring rubrics developed by the faculty. Artifact scoring rubrics for all regularly taught courses are provided in Appendix I.C. Weighted criterion on artifact scoring rubrics are evaluated using a three-point scale, 3 being "above proficient," 2 being "proficient," and 1 being "below proficient." An overall score on the artifact is calculated and recorded in the system. Overall scores on course artifacts are then averaged for each student, and no student whose overall portfolio score averages less than 2.0 (proficient, or the equivalent of a grade of B) is eligible to graduate.

Data on Taskstream proficiency evaluations for portfolio artifacts compiled by course are indicated in Table IV.3. The mean score across all 1,227 artifacts that have been evaluated by instructors as of Fall 2013 is 2.8, the equivalent of “above proficient” and which translates to 93.9%, the equivalent of an assignment grade of a low A. An updated Taskstream report will be compiled immediately prior to the site visit and will be available on-site.
Site Supervisors’ Evaluations of ECU Interns

The internship requirement adds another dimension to the evaluation of students’ achievements. Each Internship Site Supervisor evaluates the intern’s characteristics relevant to the work setting, interpersonal skills, and professional knowledge and competences. MLS students have been successful as interns, and 96% of Site Supervisors during the period Fall 2012-Fall 2013 indicated that they would hire their interns if they had an appropriate vacancy. Data on selected elements of Site Supervisors’ Evaluations are available in Appendix I.E. Complete records of Site Supervisors’ Evaluations will be available for examination on-site.

Praxis

An important systematic evaluation for students in the School Library Pathway is the Praxis exam. This exam provides both the student and the program with feedback on the total learning experience, and a passing score of 148 is required for licensure as a school library media specialist in North Carolina. Between Summer 2009 and Fall 2012, 97% of MLS graduates who attempted the Praxis exam passed. The 2013 pass rate was 100% and the average Praxis score was 168.7, well above the minimum passing score.

… Students have access to continuing opportunities for guidance, counseling, and placement assistance.

Upon admission, each student is assigned an advisor whose job is to work with students throughout their time in the program and provide assistance with curriculum, course and career choices, and projecting program completion dates. However, this formal relationship is often supplemented by relationships with faculty members other than the assigned advisor, and students may request a new advisor at any time. When a student asks the Program Advising Coordinator to be reassigned, and both the incumbent and the proposed advisors agree, the student is reassigned.

ECU holds Advising Week twice a year, once each semester for the purpose of determining advisees’ preregistration schedules for coming semesters and terms. Advisors contact their advisees to initiate the process, but students may contact their advisors any time during the program. Advisors are notified by the Program Advising Coordinator when a student is assigned and consulted if an advisee requests transfer credit from another institution, requests permission to substitute a course, or requests an extension beyond the six-year limit. Results of the 2012-2013 Graduate Exit Survey provided in Appendix I.H indicate that 91.7% of responding program students rated academic advising overall as “good” or “excellent.”

Assigned advisors and other faculty members further support students with career counseling and placement assistance. As course instructors and in their
advising role, faculty provide students with information to prepare them for the job search, pass along vacancy notices to individual students, review resumes, and serve as reference contacts on job applications.

**IV.5 The school provides an environment that fosters student participation in the definition and determination of the total learning experience. Students are provided with opportunities to form student organizations and to participate in the formulation, modification, and implementation of policies affecting academic and student affairs.**

... **The school provides an environment that fosters student participation in the definition and determination of the total learning experience.**

Each summer since 2012, students and alumni have been invited to a half-day forum to discuss their program experiences and make recommendations for program improvements. Students may attend the forum in-person or virtually and about 15% of the current student body attended the 2013 forum. A current program student and two alumni are represented on the MLS Program Advisory Board and are consulted in matters that directly affect students. Student feedback and input for future planning have been essential to making programmatic changes.

... **Students are provided with opportunities to form student organizations and to participate in the formulation, modification, and implementation of policies affecting academic and student affairs.**

**ALA Student Chapter**

On February 5, 2005, the MLS program became the first library program without American Library Association (ALA) accreditation to host an ALA Student Chapter. The purpose of ECU’s ALA Student Chapter is “to enhance the educational experience of students studying library science at ECU as well as to further student’s intellectual and professional development.” Every MLS student is a member of the ALA Student Chapter and Dr. Jami Jones serves as Chapter advisor. Membership in the ECU ALA Student Chapter is conferred upon admission to the program and is free to the student. No dues are required or collected.

The Chapter is active and meets online to host guest speakers, which enhances students’ total learning experience. These meetings have featured respected professionals such as Ann Martin, the 2008-2009 AASL President; Faye Snodgrass, Executive Director of Kappa Delta Pi; Barbara Stripling, the 2013-2014 ALA President; Karen O’Brien, the Director of the ALA Office for Accreditation; public library directors throughout the state, and school library media consultants from NCDPI.

The Chapter focuses its efforts on service learning by sponsoring an annual “Give the Gift of Reading” Book Drive. The Book Drive is the Chapter’s signature
event each year and since its inception in 2006, more than 14,000 books have been collected and donated to charitable organizations throughout North Carolina.

A Student Chapter member represents the ECU MLS program at ALA Annual by participating in the Student-to-Staff program, and then serves as Chapter President during the next academic year. The following students have served in this capacity:

- 2014 Las Vegas: Jennifer Whitley
- 2013 Chicago: Mary Tobin
- 2012 Anaheim: Kristen Neal Johnson
- 2011 New Orleans: Kelly Loftis
- 2010 Washington, DC: Colleen Sophia Pinyan
- 2009 Chicago: Jill Whitson
- 2008 Anaheim: Kevin Vickers
- 2007 Washington, DC: Stacey Menzies
- 2006 New Orleans: Joetta Stoner

Professional Organizations

Because many students are already working in the field, they are strongly encouraged to be active participants in professional organizations by promoting the benefits of these organizations in its course content and sponsoring gatherings at state, regional, and national conferences. Participation in these venues while still in library school enhances their ability to define and determine their total learning experience.

Program students and alumni who have held leadership positions in professional organizations in the past two years include the following:

- Joan Absi (alumnus), President, NC School Library Media Association; NC State Library Commission’s Youth Services Advisory Committee; AASL Frances Henne Award Committee
- Alan Bailey (alumnus), Director-at-Large, NC Library Association; Secretary, Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee
- Lisa William Baker (alumnus), NC School Library Media Association Middle School Battle of the Books Committee
- Janice Gardner (student), Young Authors' Committee of the Robeson County International Reading Association
- Kathy Lawson (alumnus), Regional Coordinator, NC School Library Media Association Elementary School Battle of the Books Committee
- Kelley Loftis (alumnus), Secretary, NCLA Public Library Association subcommittee on Collection Management; appointed to the NC State Library eBook Advisory Committee
- David Miller (alumnus), Municipal Library representative to the North Carolina Library Director’s Association Executive Board
- Joetta Pittman (alumnus), Nash County/Rocky Mount Council of Community Services Library Representative
- Morgan Reece (alumnus), Communications Chair of the School Media & Technology Division of AECT
- Maddie Reed (alumnus), Randolph County Chair, Battle of the Books
- Eileen Schnur (alumnus), Service Director for Navy Libraries, Special Library Association
- Linda Teel (alumnus), North Carolina Curriculum Centers Committee; ALA/EMIERT Executive Board
- Jill Whitson (student), AASL Toolkit for School Library Development Committee

Table IV.4 highlights some of the presentations, publications, and awards received by MLS students and alumni within the past four years. These accomplishments reflect an educational environment that fosters and promotes student publications, presentations, and awards.

IV.6 The school applies the results of evaluation of student achievement to program development. Procedures are established for systematic evaluation of the degree to which a program’s academic and administrative policies and activities regarding students are accomplishing its objectives. Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, staff and others are involved in the evaluation process.

Systematic evaluation of student achievement includes data obtained via student exit surveys, employer surveys, internship site supervisor surveys, students’ individual and overall portfolio proficiency scores, and program effectiveness data (application, admission, enrollment, rates of degree completion). Praxis test scores for students have consistently exceeded the minimum required for licensure as a North Carolina school library media coordinator. Analyses developed for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) program reporting requirements are detailed in Appendix II.E and Appendix II.F.

The degree to which the MLS program uses the results of these assessments of student achievements to inform program planning and development is detailed in Standard I.3, and for curriculum review and revision, in Standard II.7. Assessment results have been used to modify the curriculum, individual courses, and course assignments; to improve student learning; to improve advising and enrollment management practices; and to incorporate more frequent opportunities for students to share their opinions about the program and influence program development.

Summarized in Table I.2, MLS program faculty, internship site supervisors, program alumni, and their employers indicate high satisfaction with students’ demonstrated mastery of program objectives and overall preparation for
librarianship, and in most cases, there is high agreement among these groups. These stakeholder ratings of program aspects have increased over time, suggesting the program is capable of responding to stakeholder input by making effective improvements. During the semester or term of graduation, students evaluate their overall program experience with teaching and learning, advising, and support services such as the library, information technology services, and ECU business offices. MLS program students report higher rates of satisfaction than graduate students in all ECU graduate programs on 34 of the 37 items on the Graduate Exit Survey.

... Procedures are established for systematic evaluation of the degree to which a program’s academic and administrative policies and activities regarding students are accomplishing its objectives.

In addition to the policies and procedures described earlier, ECU, the Graduate School and the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities have mechanisms to ensure that neither students nor academic policies are abused. There are grievance policies to protect students who challenge course grades and ensure fair hearing of grievances. There is a clearly described and progressive process for faculty to follow in suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The Student Code of Conduct provides regulations regarding processes for conduct violations.

... Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, staff and others are involved in the evaluation process.

Systematic evaluation of MLS administrative policies by students is somewhat limited by administrative decision-making structures at the ECU and COE levels. However, students have opportunities to become involved in policy-making through participation on ECU governing bodies, including the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and attendance at summer forums and through anonymous feedback provided on Student Perception of Teaching Surveys and Graduate Exit Surveys.