

# **ASSURANCE SECTION**

## **REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

Minot State University

Minot, North Dakota

March 31 to April 2, 2008

FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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## **I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT**

### **A. Purpose of Visit**

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, site-visit review for continued accreditation.

### **B. Organizational Context**

Hard work by the citizens of Minot and northwestern North Dakota were recognized in 1907 and 1909 when legislation passed establishing a State Normal School at Minot. Since its opening in 1913-1914, Minot State University matured from a facility with 11 faculty members, 99 students, 60 acres, and three buildings to a regional comprehensive university with approximately 500 faculty, 3800 students, 102 acres, and 21 buildings.

Minot State University is a member of the North Dakota University System (NDUS) under the general administration and direction of the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE). Prior to 1990, North Dakota's public higher education institutions operated under a "commissioner" system of governance; namely, the SBHE and the commissioner functioned much like a school board and superintendent of schools. In 1990, the SBHE acted to create the North Dakota University System, which changed the role of the SBHE from coordination to governance. A system-wide chancellor designated as the executive officer of the newly formed university system replaced the former commissioner.

Minot State University (MSU) is the primary four-year institution in northwestern North Dakota and the only NDUS campus west of the Red River Valley authorized to provide a broad spectrum of graduate degree offerings. Within 120 miles of Minot, there are five tribal colleges and four NDUS two-year institutions, one (MSU-Bottineau) of which is MSU's partner institution. MSU's President is also the MSU-Bottineau campus President.

MSU received initial, five-year accreditation from the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges in 1917. MSU's accreditation has been continuously renewed since that time. MSU-Bottineau is accredited separately by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. A master's of science degree in elementary education was approved in 1995 for delivery through the campus at Mayville State University. Moreover, in 1996, MSU received permission to provide the education specialist degree. The 1997 decennial re-accreditation review and evaluation resulted in accreditation for a full 10 years at the specialist degree level with no monitoring or contingency reporting required. However, the North Central Association Board of Trustees stipulated, "in three years there [will] be a progress report on assessment, graduate programs, and enrollment management."

### **C. Unique Aspects of Visit**

None.

**D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited**

None.

**E. Distance Education Reviewed**

MSU's Center for Extended Learning (CEL) is one of the largest distance education programs in the NDUS. The Center provides course delivery through online, correspondence, and the Interactive Video Network (IVN) offerings, and at off-campus locations such as the Minot Air Force Base and Bismarck State College. Prior to 2007, an outreach director supervised the Center's functions, as well as overseeing MSU's enrollment services and admissions processes. In 2007, MSU established the position of Dean of the Center for Extended Learning, charged to integrate distance learning more fully into the university's academic structure. The CEL dean is responsible for working with academic departments and colleges to facilitate presentation of academic offerings in nontraditional formats. The CEL provides instructional design support. Ownership of the curriculum resides within the departments and colleges, as does the responsibility for course and program assessment. Assessment of online courses requires different models, in sum or part. Assessment conversations about online student learning need to be explored with the Assessment Committee.

MSU's online program consists of eight undergraduate degrees, four certificate programs, and two graduate degrees. Over 200 courses are completely online. The colleges provide faculty from its current faculty pool or by hiring qualified part-time or adjunct hires. The CEL dean normally uses course tuition to pay the instructor overload salary. MSU is intentionally reducing the use of faculty overloads in its online course offerings.

Campus consensus is that online learning, initiated originally through a Title III grant to build alternative course delivery capacities, is working well. The advanced technology used has virtual face-to-face capabilities. Several team members stated that this virtual learning environment is at least equivalent to traditional, in-person course delivery. Many communication modes including blogs are being used or explored. Special interest was expressed in the online tutoring package, "Smart Thinking," which off-line campus students use as well. Self-Study Steering Committee members attest that MSU is well served by Information Technology Office, which is described as collaborating with the CEL effectively.

**F. Interactions with Constituencies**

Advancement Team – Marketing, Alumni, Fundraising (4)  
Alumni Association Board Member  
Alumni Association President  
Assessment Committee (7)  
Associate Registrar

Athletic Director  
Campus Tour  
Committee of 12 (11)  
Community Members (26)  
Controller  
Curriculum Diversity and Campus Climate Committee (9)  
Dean of the Center for Extended Learning  
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences  
Dean of the College of Business  
Dean of the College of Education and Health Sciences  
Dean of Enrollment Management  
Director of the Alumni Association  
Director of the Gordon B. Olson Library  
Director of Human Resources  
Director of Information Technology  
Director of Multicultural Support Services and Native American Center  
Director of the Physical Plant  
Director of Public Information  
Diversity Committee Chairperson  
Diversity Office (2)  
Faculty Development and Research Committee (7)  
Faculty Involved in Interdisciplinary Initiatives (11 from a Broad Range of Disciplines)  
Faculty Rights Committee (5)  
Faculty Senate (18)  
Faculty Senate President  
Faculty-Students Involved in Undergraduate Research (13 Students, 17 Faculty)  
Financial Aid Director  
Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee (13)  
General Education Committee (7)  
Graduate Dean  
Intellectual Climate Committee (3)  
International Initiatives Task Force (4)  
International Office and the Director of International Programs (2)  
MSU Advisory Board Members (2)  
North Dakota University System Vice Chancellor for Academic & Student Affairs  
North Dakota University System Strategic Planner  
Open Faculty Meeting (~110)  
Open Staff Meeting (~65)  
Open Student Meeting (~70)  
Planning and Budgeting Council (11, Including 1 Community Member)  
President  
President's Executive Management Team (11)  
Self-Study Coordinator/Third Party Comment Process (2)  
Self-Study Steering Committee (30)  
Student Rights Committee (6)

Registrar  
Vice President Academic Affairs  
Vice President Advancement  
Vice President Administration and Finance  
Vice President Student Services and Dean of Students

### **G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

Academic Affairs Committee List  
Academic Program Review Process  
Accountability Measures Report, 2004  
Accreditation Self-Study Working Papers: Criterion 1a (August 2006), Criterion One (October 2006), Criterion One (May 2007, June 2007)  
Active Major Program Outcomes  
Arts and Sciences Annual Assessment Reports, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007  
Arts and Sciences Program Reviews, 1999  
Assessment Day Reports Submitted by Chairs and Coordinators to the VPAA, Fall 2006  
"Assessment Instruments Used; Results Obtained" (Sample)  
Assessment Task Force Folder, 1994-1995  
Atlas of North Dakota Butterflies  
"Be Seen, Be Heard." (MSU Mottos: seen many places, but never heard.)  
Bibliographic Instruction Session Statistics  
Blank Copies of Evaluation Forms and Online Version  
Brochure/Registration Form: College Level Placement & Advanced Placement Programs  
Budget Presentation by Vice President of Administration and Finance, 2006  
Bush Foundation Final Grant Project Reports  
Bush LCP Grant Application  
Campus Poster Session Rosters and Announcements  
Campus Technology Pilots  
Career Services Placement Report  
Center for Extended Learning Online Faculty Assignments: PT/Adjunct, Full Time Inload/Overload, Fall 2005, Spring-Summer-Fall 2006, Spring-Summer 2007  
Center for Extended Learning Semester Hours on Line, FY2006, FY2007  
Cerambycidae of North Dakota  
Charter of the Graduate School of MSU, Revised February 14, 2008 (To Be Approved)  
College of Education and Health Sciences Annual Program Assessment, 2006-2007  
College of Extended Learning Roundtable on Higher Education Report, April 21, 2005  
"Committee on Everything," Charter and Final Report  
Compensation Task Force and Five-Year Salary Plan Summary, February 21, 2007  
Course Approval Packets (Sample)  
Curricular Diversity and Campus Climate Committee: Overview and Diversity Course Certification Proposal for Course Inclusion in the Diversity Requirement  
Data from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
Diversity Initiatives

Emergency Operations Plan, December 14, 2007  
Faculty Achievement Award List: Teaching, Scholarship, Service  
Faculty and Staff Tuition Benefits and Waivers  
“Faculty Observation Rubric,” Committee of 12  
Faculty Personnel File Sample to Validate Credentials: College of Arts and Sciences,  
College of Business, College of Education and Health Sciences  
Faculty Senate Assessment Committee Minutes, 2006-2007  
Faculty Senate Bylaws  
Foundations of Excellence  
General Education Committee Final Reports (Sample)  
General Education Faculty Survey  
General Education Notebook, 2005-2006  
General Education Program Matrix  
General Education Student Survey  
Geosciences Self Study, 2006  
German Program Review, 2004  
Gordon B. Olson Library Collection Development Policy  
Graduate School Strategic Plan  
Graduate School Toolkit  
*Graphic Standards Manual*  
*Handbook for Disability Support Services*  
IACBE Annual Reports, 2005-2006  
IACBE Outline of Reporting Requirements  
Institutional Self-Study Report for Military Installation Voluntary Education Review  
Institutional Snapshot  
Intellectual Climate Committee, Event Evaluation  
Intellectual Climate Committee, Fall 2005 Summative Report  
Intellectual Climate Committee, Table of Funded Projects, 2000-2007  
Job Corps Executive Management Program  
“Lab Space in the Sciences” Document and Biology Department Memorandum  
Letter to Dr. H. Erik Shaar from Dr. Barbara Pollard, March 27, 2001  
Letter to Dr. H. Erik Shaar from Dr. Robert Appleson, June 11, 2002  
Letter to Dr. H. Erik Shaar from Dr. Steven Crow, August 20, 2001  
Letter to Dr. H. Erik Shaar from Dr. Steven Crow, March 3, 1998  
Letter to Dr. Rodolfo Garcia Z from Dr. H. Erik Shaar, January 14, 1998  
List of Assessment Topics and Activities, 1999-2007  
Major Program Assessments and General Education Chronology  
Media Focus Group Survey  
Memorandum from David Fuller, President to Minot State University Faculty and Staff:  
*Vision 2013* Action Plans, January 7, 2008  
Memorandum from Gary Ross, College of Business, Detailing Recent MSM Discussions  
Memorandum from Neil Nordquist, Examples of “Closing the Loop”  
Memorandum from President David Fuller, May 11, 2006  
Minot State University Academic Assessment Mid-Year Report, March 28, 2008  
*Minot State University Adjunct Faculty Handbook*

Minot State University Campus Master Plan, 2000-2008  
Minot State University Campus Master Plan, 2009-2011  
Minot State University Campus Master Plan Goals and Draft, March 2006  
Minot State University Constitution, Article V  
Minot State University College of Business/JCEMP Course and Institutional Evaluation  
for BADM 535, BIT 510, FIN 545  
Minot State University Diversity Plan  
Minot State University Fact Book, 2006  
*Minot State University Faculty Handbook*, Revised August 2007  
Minot State University Faculty Small Research Grants Evaluation Sheet  
*Minot State University Graduate Catalog, 2006-2008*  
*Minot State University Human Resources Policy Manual*  
Minot State University Master Planning Desk Tri-Fold, 2005-2006  
*Minot State University Online Standards & Best Practices Handbook*, March 2008  
Minot State University "Open Doors Data Collection" Report for the Institute of  
International Education and *Vision 2013*, Strategy Four, p.14  
*Minot State University Residence Hall Handbook*  
Minot State University Response to the 1987 Site-Visit Team Report  
Minot State University Roundtable Cornerstone Goals, 2005-2006  
*Minot State University 2008 Institutional Self-Study Report to the North Central  
Association of Colleges and Schools Higher Learning Commission*  
*Minot State University Student Handbook 2007-2008*  
*Minot State University Undergraduate Catalog, 2006-2008*  
Minot State University Virtual Tour  
NITOP Report  
National Survey of Student Satisfaction Results, 2005, 2007  
Noel Levitz Employer Satisfaction Surveys and Employer Comments  
North Dakota University System Campus Climate Assessment Project Final Report  
North Dakota University System Cornerstones  
North Dakota University System Financial Review, Fiscal Year Ending 2006  
North Dakota University System Financial Report, FY2005  
North Dakota University System Financial Report, FY2006  
North Dakota University System Preschool to College (P-12) Initiative  
North Dakota University System Roundtable on Higher Education, Overview & Summary  
NDUS Web site  
Note from the Dean of the Center of Extended Learning  
Office of the President Web Site  
Online Student Satisfaction Survey, Fall 2005  
Organizational Charts, 2003-2007  
Performance Review Calendar  
Placement Report, 2005 - 2006  
Planning and Budgeting Council  
Planning and Budgeting Council Meeting Minutes  
President's Monthly Reports, MSU Web Site (Sample)  
President's White Paper on Shared Governance

Program Assessment Reports (Annual), 12001-2001  
Program Implementation Memorandum  
Program Outcomes by Discipline  
Progress Report to North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, December 2000  
Program Review Cycle  
Public Access Computing Map  
Rankin and Associates Consulting, Campus Climate Report  
Rankin and Associates Consulting, Climate Assessment Survey  
RN to BSN Online Program Notebook  
Report of a Focused Visit to NDUS Online, Bismarck, ND, April 2004  
Report of a Focused Visit to NDUS Online, Bismarck, ND, June 2001  
Report of a Visit to Minot State University, October 1997  
Report of the Roundtable on Higher Education: Overview & Summary, 2003  
Research and Small Grants  
*Self Study Prepared for the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, October 1997*  
Smoke-Free Environment Policy  
Social Work Program “Closing the Loop” document and Annual Assessment  
Actions, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 Assessment Reports  
SBHE Approval of MSU Mission Statement  
SBHE Policy 401.1: Academic Freedom  
SBHE Policy 403.12: Program Evaluation  
SBHE Policy 605.2: Standing Committee of Faculty Rights  
SBHE Policy 605.3: Non-renewal, Termination or Dismissal of Faculty  
SBHE Policy 605.4: Hearings and Appeals  
SBHE 600 Series  
Student Complaint Log  
“Student Guide to Information Technology on Campus”  
Student Satisfaction Inventory Summary  
Student Success in Colleges and Universities, Executive Summary  
Substantial Physical Plant Improvements, 1996-2006  
“Summary of Findings, Strengths, & Challenges: *A Precip for the Campus Community.*”  
Teacher Education Unit Assessment System Overview  
“Technology at Minot State University: Past, Present, Future”  
*A Test of Leadership*. Spellings Report Summary  
Third Party Comment Solicitation Documentation  
Thirtieth Annual Employee Appreciation Banquet Program, 3-27-2008  
Three-Question Survey Results  
University Diversity: 2007 Climate Assessment Power Point  
*Vision 2013: A Vision for the Future of Minot State University*  
*Vision 2013, Completed Actions and Initiatives, 2005-2007*  
*Vision 2013, Priority Actions, 2007-2008*  
*Vision 2013, Unabridged Report, January 8, 2007*

## **II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW**

### **A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process**

Minot State University's Self-Study describes campus preparation as open and inclusive. The on-campus site visit by a seven-member team of consultant-evaluators attests to the accuracy of this assertion. MSU appointed a self-study coordinator in December 2005. Five faculty members served as the Editorial Committee of a Steering Committee of almost 40 persons, with off-campus representation. Five Task Forces were then convened, one for each criterion. Each Task Force submitted its findings to the Steering Committee in a series of working papers. Editorial and Steering Committee members worked in pairs to revise chapters. Finally, a full-time editor prepared a unified document, in draft form, from the individual submissions. Draft Self-Study document copies were shared with the entire campus community early fall semester 2007 and to the University's remaining stakeholders later that term. Student participation and ideas were sought by the Self-Study process and included in the report, to the pleasant surprise of some students. Alumni representatives confirmed that the alumni were kept well informed. Revisions, expansions, and criticism were invited. The Editorial Committee continued its work throughout fall 2007.

### **B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report**

Minot State University organized the Self-Study chapters by criterion, focusing explicitly on the core components. The Self Study is forthright, descriptive, and comprehensive. Links to additional data, publications, and other resources, in addition to the Self-Study document itself, contributed to the team's pre-visit confidence that the report was inclusive and the process open. Team members validated and confirmed these impressions through individual and group meetings with internal and external members of the MSU community, as well as through careful examination of resource room exhibits. Minot State University concluded its treatment of each core component with a concise set of findings and each criterion chapter with an examination of strengths, challenges, and proposed actions. These choices assisted team members in determining MSU's level of institutional performance relative to HLC expectations for ongoing accreditation and in identifying key areas for advice in the advancement section.

### **C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges**

The 1997 site-visit team report identified three areas of institutional challenge, which were to be addressed in a report to the Commission by December 1, 2000; namely, concerns about assessment, graduate education, and enrollment management. After a review of the campus report, MSU received a letter from the Commission that indicated MSU had addressed the 1997 team's concerns in the assessment area, progress was evident in the graduate programs, and enrollment management would remain a priority.

Overall, the 2008 team concurs with the Commission's findings and the current site-visit

report will address assessment progress in Criterion 3, graduate program practices in Criterion 4, and enrollment management efforts in Criterion 2.

#### **D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment**

Third-party comment process occurred during December 2007 and January 2008; requirements fulfilled.

### **III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information and found the institution to be in compliance with those requirements.

### **IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA**

**CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

#### **1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

The Self-Study Committee was broad-based and reflective of the institution and the alumni. Its members demonstrated a clear sense of dedication and accomplishment. One member commented, "We became a stronger, more self-aware institution through the Self-Study preparation process." Committee members described the preparation efforts by some as heroic and were obviously pleased with the outcome of their collective commitment of time and effort.

The Planning and Budgeting Council (PABC) facilitated a thorough and inclusive process to develop Minot State University's mission statement. The MSU mission was approved by the State Board of Higher Education in January 2007. Interviews with faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and members of external constituencies confirmed widespread participation in development of the mission.

A review of the MSU mission shows the institution's commitment to student learning. MSU defines learning, engagement and service, appreciation for diversity, and lifelong learning as goals for student success. Meetings with students, faculty, alumni, and administrators demonstrate that the University is organized to support student learning and success. Each of the three colleges and the Center for Extended Learning have mission statements that identify the unique contributions they make to student learning. Non-academic units have also developed mission statements to guide their work and identify their contributions to student success.

The MSU administration is organized to provide effective leadership. Functional responsibilities are clearly defined and grouped into reasonable units. A review of the

University organizational chart and interviews with campus constituencies confirm commitment to shared governance and transparency of decision making in the organization. The Planning and Budgeting Council is charged with coordinating and facilitating the strategic planning process, development and implementation of initiatives to guide the institution, and resource allocation to support the initiatives.

The MSU mission identifies its constituents as residents of the local community, the state, the region, the nation, and other countries. The University's proximity to Canada results in a number of students from that country who choose to attend MSU. An agreement with SIAS International University in the Henan province of China brings cohorts of students to MSU. The University offers classes to members of the military stationed at the Minot Air Force Base; many dependents of these military personnel take classes on campus. MSU reaches out to residents of the Native American tribes in the region, which adds to campus diversity. A review of program requirements and interviews with the members of the Curriculum Diversity and Campus Climate Committee demonstrate that diversity is an integral part of courses offered in programs across the University. Reviews of the undergraduate and graduate catalogs and semester schedules confirm that faculty use diverse teaching modes as identified in the MSU mission. Instructional delivery strategies include face-to-face, online, correspondence, and interactive video-conferencing modes. There are significant numbers of international faculty members at MSU. Meetings and interviews with campus community members attest to the University's commitment to a diversity of learners and faculty members.

The MSU mission, vision, and values statements are widely publicized. They appear on the University's Web site, in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and in the faculty handbook. Framed posters of the MSU mission, vision, and values are prominently displayed in all campus buildings. Overall, MSU does an excellent job communicating its mission documents both internally and externally.

The Faculty, Staff, and Student Senates, the President's staff, and the University Cabinet share participation in governance of MSU. The President advocates for "shared governance dialog;" he encourages campus stakeholders to express their views and creates opportunities for these dialogs to occur. Planning and Budgeting Council facilitated the development of MSU's new mission and strategic plan, *Vision 2013*. Moreover, the PABC will provide leadership and coordination for the implementation of the *Vision 2013*'s seven initiatives. Membership on the PABC includes faculty, staff, students, administrators, and ex officio representatives from the Alumni Board and the Board of Regents. MSU's campus and external constituencies share planning and resource allocation functions.

Grievance policies are in place. A review of faculty, staff, and student grievance policies provides evidence that these groups receive due process and fair hearings to adjudicate complaints.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

The Self-Study Steering Committee discovered a lack of data organization and the need for institutional research with regular analysis of data. One committee member mentioned the need to have a clearer awareness of institutional memory. The Team noted data inconsistencies and errors on the institutional snapshot provided to it as part of the review process, as well as discrepancies in student counts in the MSU 2006 Fact Book. Striving to make data-driven decisions, MSU will increasingly need accessible and accurate data. MSU's decision to hire an institutional researcher is a timely and wise decision.

Interviews with campus community members and external constituents indicated an uneven understanding of MSU's aspiration to "...be known as one of the premier public regional institutions in the 'great' Great Plains..." The confusion arises because of varying concepts of "place." Specifically, while a number do, not all stakeholders clearly comprehend what MSU means when it uses the phrase 'great' "Great Plains" in relation to the local community, the state, the region, and the nation. Moreover, while most of those interviewed who are involved in distance learning initiatives were able to articulate how a sense and appreciation of "place" can be imparted to MSU's growing online student population, this understanding is not yet universally held.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None noted.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team.**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

Minot State University has engaged in significant planning efforts designed to focus resources and direction. This is evidenced through plans and documents developed to guide the institution, such as *Vision 2013*, Master Plans 2005/2006/2007, Action Plan for 2013, and the strategic plan for the Graduate School. In support of these overall planning

processes, a new strategic planning group called the Planning and Budgeting Council was formed to conduct strategic research and develop an overall strategic plan for the campus. Based on reviewing these documents and interviewing the Planning and Budgeting Council, the campus has a clear understanding regarding future opportunities and that it is developing strategies to achieve its long-term goals.

Meetings with the President and his senior staff confirmed the focus on *Vision 2013* and the dramatic change in MSU-Minot relations in recent years. The President is committed to transparency of operations both on and off campus, and this approach is having the correspondingly positive impact in both realms.

On-campus enrollment has steadily declined over the last five years, but this has been offset by a gradual increase in online enrollments. Long-term demographics in North Dakota indicate a significant projected decrease in the number of high school graduates; high school graduation rates are projected to drop 30 percent by 2017. The campus has responded to this challenge by creating a new Dean of Enrollment Management, who oversees various enrollment services and who is charged with developing a comprehensive Enrollment Management Plan. Moreover, the President recently approved a Strategic Enrollment Management Task Force charged to work with the dean on enrollment management issues and concerns.

Minot State University is a member of the North Dakota University System (NDUS) of higher education, an oversight organization that sets policy, recommends resource allocations, and develops standards in support of accountability to the legislature and citizens of the State. Several initiatives are underway to increase the effectiveness of higher education to achieve statewide goals developed by the ND Roundtable of Higher Education. Minot State University has integrated State and System planning goals into its campus-based planning efforts. Evidence of compliance reviewed by the Team included MSU's progress in meeting Cornerstone Goals, as well as various accountability measure results documented in reports to the State Board of Higher Education, as well as interviews with NDUS office staff.

Several building renovation and new construction projects have been completed in the last few years since the accreditation visit ten years ago. Specifically, Crane Residence Hall; Swain Hall, in process; Old Main; Moore Hall; and the bookstore in the Student Union building benefitted from extensive renovations. The campus reviews and prioritizes the most critical facility needs and then presents them to the State Board of Higher Education for review and approval. Over the past three years, MSU invested considerable time and effort to explore, study, and develop a long-range campus master plan. At least three plans have been produced for each of the last three years, each with increasing complexity as more issues are discussed and resolved. Campus master plans for 2005, 2006, and 2007 were available for Team review. Deferred maintenance, calculated as a percent of replacement values, was 11 percent through FY2006, compared to the overall NDUS average of 10 percent. The facilities planning processes and the attention to deferred maintenance laid a solid foundation that the campus can

continue to use to leverage resources from the State to maintain facilities to meet academic priorities.

The institution recognizes the importance and value of its human resources. *Vision 2013* reinforces the importance of valuing faculty and staff contributions as an underlying thread in support of student engagement, quality learning, and meaningful service. One example of this commitment observed by the Team is the adoption of the recommendations put forth by the 2005 Compensation Task Force. A key recommendation in the Task Force report is to resolve market inequity and internal salary compression issues by, in part, implementing a five-year plan to increase salaries by five percent each year. The plan was approved, benchmarks were established, and processes are in place to accomplish this goal. In support of this campus priority, the State provided partial funding during the two years of the current biennium, with the remainder allocated internally by the campus.

Minot State University is a tuition-dependent institution and relies heavily on enrollment revenue. While on-campus enrollment has declined in the last five years, online enrollment increased. In FY2007, online enrollment represented 22 percent of MSU's full time equivalent (FTE) students. The Center for Extended Learning (CEL) oversees all distance programs, including online offerings. The revenue generated by CEL from on-line courses and programs helps offset revenue losses resulting from the general decline in on-campus enrollments and enabled MSU to establish a modest reserve to buffer enrollment fluctuations. Moreover, during the last nine years, grant funding increased by \$4.2 M, or 200 percent. Endowment growth has been moderate, but the number of alumni giving, measured as a percentage of alumni donors, shows steady growth, averaging 5.7% per year over the last five years. Increased revenue from online learning, successful grant writing, stronger alumni giving, and a State legislature supportive of higher education will help stabilize MSU budgetary pressures, at least in the short term until new enrollment strategies gain traction.

Minot State University engages in comprehensive and focused planning, driven primarily by the strategic planning process used to generate *Vision 2013*. This vitally important document affirms the underlying core that defines Minot State University and sets a clear direction for all other planning efforts. The process used to create *Vision 2013* included impressive community engagement; participants consistently described it as intense, collaborative, and transparent. Community members indicated strong support for the process used to solicit community feedback. On several occasions, campus community members told Team members about the large number of comments, opinions, and suggestions that were posted in the Student Union for all to see. Multiple cross-constituent committees are at work to address various planning issues associated with *Vision 2013*. The Planning and Budgeting Council, Compensation Task Force, Diversity Committee, and the recently approved Strategic Enrollment Task Force are illustrative.

The North Dakota University System requires member colleges and universities to report annual progress meeting Cornerstone Goals using a series of accountability measures. For the last several years this has meant that MSU generates a significant amount of

data, which the campus can integrate into its overall planning processes. The most recently completed publication, *Creating a University System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – 2007 Accountability Measures Report*, consolidates most of the campus specific data into overall System summaries which provides useful and convenient comparisons. These reports are publically available and serve as a valuable campus resource.

Valuing faculty and staff contributions, at an individual performance level, is an essential personnel process that provides feedback to employees and helps the campus move forward in achieving its long-term goals. A sampling of faculty personnel files confirms that performance reviews are occurring and that they are being reviewed by the administration. This evidence attests to the organization's basic tenet that individual performance is critically important in institutional goal attainment and that feedback helps instill a sense of continuous improvement in campus community members.

Minot State University invested significant resources in developing *Vision 2013*. The Planning & Budgeting Council engaged campus and community stakeholders in an inclusive, extensive, and in-depth series of meetings and focus groups to validate its vision, core values, mission, and core purpose through rigorous analysis and unflinching institutional reflection. *Vision 2013* guides, facilitates, and integrates overall campus planning by outlining seven key strategies which support MSU's mission and goals. At the unit level, alignment with *Vision 2013* is beginning through a process of goal setting, action plan development, and annual unit evaluation. Detailed action plans identify tasks for each strategy, with resources requirements, responsible units or individuals, and timelines clearly delineated. The Planning and Budgeting Council oversees the process and provides input to the President.

The Planning and Budgeting Council (PABC) is a relatively new entity at MSU. The President uses the 12 member PABC, which he chairs, as a source of counsel in helping define the array of action and options. The PABC looks for benchmarks for University action in fulfillment of *Vision 2013*. The President seeks their recommendations on University direction in conjunction with input from other stakeholders. The Team concludes that the President looks to the PABC and that each Council participant takes membership on the PABC seriously. The President connects the President's staff with the Council.

The PABC will be a major player in carrying *Vision 2013* forward. The Council is committed to systemic processes in addressing the seven strategies of *Vision 2013*. The PABC is also actively seeking funding from a variety of sources, including Title III. Part of the goal is raising the bar of academic standards at MSU and changing the perceptions and expectations of student performance. The confirmation and advancement of critical thinking and learning skills remain at the heart of MSU's efforts in this current period of change leading to transformation.

A differential fee structure for on-line courses is in place to support technology needs and other resources that are required to deliver effective on-line curricula. Establishing this

fee structure demonstrates that MSU planned effectively and responded appropriately to the unique costs of on-line programming. These fees are also an important revenue stream for the campus, allowing increased resource allocation flexibility.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

MSU aspires to implement planning, budgeting, and evaluation processes that are transparent and well understood by all stakeholders. Committees, task forces, and additional positions have been added to assist MSU in realizing this goal. Beginning with the Steering Committee for the Self-Study and during other conversations during the visit, Team members were made aware of the desire for institution-wide discussions in several areas, including general education, the impact of demographic realities which are now being obviated by gains in distance learning, and the perceived need for more faculty members. Campuses with a representational approach to governance continually balance the ideal of broad participation with the need to reach closure. The Team encourages MSU to extend the models of wide campus and community engagement used so effectively in the development of *Vision 2013* and the Self-Study process.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

On-campus enrollment has been on a downward track for several years, only partially offset by the increases in online course enrollment. Declining numbers of high school students is further exacerbated by projected higher high school dropout rates. While the University has done excellent work laying the foundation for its future and vision, much more effort and focus are needed on enrollment management planning and strategies. The newly added Dean of Enrollment Services position, filled by an internal candidate familiar with the University, shows both promise and intentionality. However, a comprehensive enrollment management plan that addresses student recruitment and retention, sets targets, assigns responsibilities, quantifies resource requirements, and establishes timelines is necessary to stabilize, or grow, overall enrollment.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Progress report on MSU's comprehensive enrollment management plan and its subsequent results is due to the Commission by October 1, 2011.

**CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

## 1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

At the level of the individual program, goals are clearly stated in a standard format that makes effective assessment possible. These goals are made widely available in the undergraduate and the graduate catalogs. Effective assessment is evidenced by the individual program-level annual assessment reports in the resource room and the statements of program outcomes. The assessment reports contain evidence that assessment takes place at the level of the program and that changes are made.

Since the last visit in 1997, MSU has worked to create a culture of assessment. Institutional assessments such as the NSSE and the Noel Levitz Employer Satisfaction Survey are used and the results shared with stakeholders. Program reviews occur on a seven-year cycle according to guidelines that are readily accessible. Within the last two years, a faculty Assessment Committee was formed and it conducts a fall and a spring assessment day each year. The role of the Assessment Committee is to educate the faculty about the importance of assessment and in the “nuts and bolts” of conducting assessment. To this end, speakers such as George Kuh and Jillian Kenzie come to campus for the morning of assessment day; the afternoon is devoted to department-level discussions of assessment issues. Each department provides the dean a summary of the department activities for the assessment day. These University-wide conversations help to foster a culture of openness and inclusion, as well as demonstrating concretely the importance of assessing student learning.

Effective teaching is important at Minot State University. The Team observed that the Committee of 12 recently was created by the Faculty Senate to provide evaluation and feedback to untenured tenure-track faculty from established faculty. The “Faculty Observation Rubric” includes six criteria and four evaluative levels. The Team noted a uniquely high level of enthusiasm and rapport among the members of the Committee of 12. This peer-review effort is important as it provides information and a professional point of view to individual faculty members and reviewing administrators that might not be available through student response sheets alone.

MSU has in place a number of activities that demonstrates that it values effective teaching. The Board of Regents gives an annual teaching award with an honorarium of \$1000. Student course evaluations are done on a regular basis. Tenured faculty members evaluate a minimum of two courses per year, while untenured faculty must evaluate every course taught. Tenure and promotion applications are peer reviewed by two separate committees of the Faculty Senate. Teaching excellence is a criterion for both promotion and tenure.

MSU also demonstrates support for effective teaching through faculty development initiatives. In 1999, MSU was awarded a Bush Foundation grant that gave faculty a valuable opportunity to enhance their teaching. The Partners in Learning (PIL) initiative called for pairs of faculty to meet regularly, observe each other’s classes, and elicit from

students their opinions regarding the effectiveness of their partner's teaching. Typically 24 to 30 faculty members participated annually. At the end of the grant, the project was institutionalized and officially revived in fall 2007. Another example of MSU's support of effective teaching is the College of Education and Health Sciences' program to "encourage pedagogical growth related to a particular discipline." Programs like these foster a culture that values teaching as "community property." Open and sustained dialogs enhance MSU's desire for operational transparency and inclusiveness, while also benefitting students and advancing MSU's mission.

MSU has created the preconditions for an effective learning environment through the construction and recent renovation of its physical facilities. Examples include the Cyril Moore Science Center, Old Main, Ann Nicole Nelson Hall, and the creative linking of the administration building and the student union. Pleasing physical structures may attract students and put them at ease, thereby facilitating learning and increasing retention.

The organization creates an effective learning environment through a wide variety of educational programs and program characteristics. These include a low faculty-student ratio of 14:1, the use of emerging and older technologies in the classroom, research opportunities for students, and study abroad. Having a wide variety of opportunities available for students to select creates synergies that define the learning environment.

MSU provides learning resources that support student learning and effective teaching, including the writing center, tutoring, library, and technology resources. Supplementary learning resources are important to support the efforts of students and faculty.

## **2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

Each department provides an annual update of student learning assessment and the curricular or pedagogical changes that result from the assessment. However, not all departments are at the same level of maturity in their assessment practices. As MSU continues to deepen its culture of assessment, it needs to develop a process to ensure that the departments that lag behind in assessment rise to a level equal to the most mature departments.

At the level of the program of "all bachelor degrees," further attention is needed from the institution to establish assessable goals for the common elements, namely, the general education program and any other bachelor degree components common to all degrees. The Team notes that the undergraduate "Statement of Philosophy" for general education is largely a statement of intentions. This area needs to be addressed with both program outcomes and assessment to support the broad intention of *Vision 2013* that "Minot State University will achieve national distinction as one of the premier public, regional universities in the 'great' Great Plains." That graduates from professional programs are "hardworking" and "well-trained" is probably not sufficiently distinctive.

Effective teaching may be hampered by excessively high teaching loads for some faculty members. The Team notes that teaching loads for selected regular faculty may reach 18 contact hours in a single semester, because of regular online, overload assignments of up to six hours (two sections), which are over and above a base load of twelve semester contact hours. The base load for adjunct faculty can be as high as fifteen contact hours. The Team wonders if such loads allow instructors time for preparation and student consultation, much less faculty development and renewal. The institution is making notable progress reducing these assignments, particularly within the last academic year. For example, a one-year reduction of 14 courses in business occurred last year. If the institution is to achieve its goals under *Vision 2013's Strategy Two: Fostering Engaged Learning and Place for the Benefit of Students*, ongoing, intentional progress in this area is important. This situation is completely within the control of MSU and the Team is convinced that academic administrators will address this concern without external oversight from the Commission.

The organization supports student learning through the provision of student financial aid. The total amount has increased 37 percent over the past five years, with increased institutional funding compensating for decreased federal support. However, according to the Self Study, students indicated concerns about the level of aid and the timeliness of the award announcements. There is also concern about the course load/employment/debt balance. This is important because student educational success depends on adequate study time as well as the management of the debt load.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None noted.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team.**

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.**

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

The State Board of Higher Education for North Dakota published several policies directed toward assuring freedom of inquiry for faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the President of MSU circulated a document in which he communicates his vision of shared governance with the rest of the University. The establishment of an environment congruent with the policies and the shared governance statement was confirmed in

discussions with the Faculty Senate, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, and the faculty as a whole.

In 1993, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education mandated that 1.5 percent of the institution's annual budget be set aside for the professional development of faculty, staff, and administration. MSU makes a considerable monetary effort to provide grants for faculty working toward terminal degrees, which benefits the institution, as well as the faculty members who receive them.

Research efforts are supported. A poster session is held each spring to allow students and faculty members to publicly display their research efforts. Students are assisted in presenting their research results at conferences. Additionally, the Intellectual Climate Committee works to acquire funds to bring in outside speakers, which benefits the institution. The Vice President for Academic Affairs has agreed to provide a standing amount for the committee's use. This will provide consistent funding and remove the continual need for committee members to seek alternative funding avenues.

The General Education model at MSU conforms to the SBHE model in which a minimum of 38 semester hours are distributed through several areas. MSU has adopted a "five strand model" for courses accepted as meeting general education requirements. When a department requests that a course be considered for the general education program, the relationship between the course presentation and each of the strands must be presented. The General Education Committee is charged to monitor the general education program. This committee not only approves general education courses, but also reviews these courses periodically to determine if the courses will be recertified for general education.

The Graduate Council provides the governance structure for the graduate program. Program goals are identified for prospective students and students in the Graduate Catalog. With the exception of one program, the goals stated for graduate programs are different from the goals identified for undergraduate programs. The Dean of the Graduate School and Research and Sponsored Programs provides capable leadership for the graduate program. Criteria for admittance to the Graduate Faculty are defined and followed.

Academic programs are reviewed on a regular basis. The review requires a self study by program members, which is presented to an external reviewer. The results of the review process are considered within the decision-making process of each program. Data tracked by the Career Services Office shows that for the three-year period from 2002-03 to 2004-05, more than 70 percent of MSU graduates accepted positions related to their major.

The University recognizes the need for diverse learning experiences. As a result, a six-semester hour diversity requirement is in place. The Faculty Senate created the Curricular Diversity and Campus Climate Committee to determine which courses would be certified to meet this requirement. The requirement indicates that three credits must

be completed from the selection of general education courses, while the remaining three credits are taken outside of the general education program. Additionally, three student learning outcomes are in place to assess the effectiveness of the diversity courses.

The Team found pockets of consistent, strong interest in interdisciplinary learning and initiatives at MSU. Of note is a recent, true interdisciplinary program, "Studies in Community and Environment," which involved multiple disciplines based on problem solving. It is organized as a double major program. The fourteen faculty members who attended the interdisciplinary initiatives session corroborated the community comments when they confirmed that employers are eager to hire their interdisciplinary-educated graduates. With the President's encouragement, new models for shared, interdisciplinary courses are being explored.

MSU has well-defined policies concerning ethical behavior for students, staff, faculty and administrators. These policies are readily available in both hard copy and online. Appropriate documents are included in the Undergraduate Catalog, Graduate Catalog, Student Handbook, and Faculty Handbook. The behavioral expectations are clearly stated, as are appropriate processes and procedures. Student rights and obligations are included in a mandatory student orientation session. Moreover, transfer students are also required to attend orientation. Human subject research by both students and faculty is approved and monitored by appropriate faculty. Comments by the Faculty Rights Committee and the Student Rights Committee attest to the success of the procedures.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organization attention**

In the Report of a Visit to MSU in 1997, that Team identified a concern about the assignments for the Director of Graduate Study. Since that visit, the position of Dean of the Graduate School and Research and Sponsored Programs was added. In addition, a one-quarter released time faculty member was appointed as Associate Dean and a full-time administrative assistant was hired. However, in addition to all graduate matters, this office is responsible for working with all sponsored programs, research, and IRB issues. Since the University targets the graduate program for growth, the scope of duties assigned to the office is of such size as to lead to continued concern.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**

None noted.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met.**

Minot State University has the capacity, creativity, and commitment to engage its identified communities and serve them in ways each partner values. The notable enthusiasm of the Board of Regents, the effective leadership of the President to involve all stakeholders in vision setting and strategic planning, and the impressive range of programs and collaborations engender reciprocal commitment and responsiveness between MSU and the communities it serves.

MSU evinces a culture of engagement and service. MSU is dedicated to working with the community. This relationship is stated explicitly in its mission documents and its recent commitment to embracing of the “stewards of place” concept championed by AASCU. Given its unique status in the western part of the state, MSU plays a prominent role in the growth and development of the economy and human resource development in the area. This interconnectedness is verified by the Self Study, supplementary documentation, and, importantly, in statements from community members and staff members responsible for the cultivation of these mission-related relationships.

MSU acts transparently and reflectively in its societal partnerships. The Self Study, supplementary documentation, and in testimony offered during the visit, cite MSU as essential to the economic, social, and cultural development of western and northern North Dakota. ING, Inc. is a prominent enterprise in Minot. Its representatives commented that they see MSU as consistently responsive to their requests and they value the institution as a seminal partner in training their growing workforce. MSU’s willingness to meet their diverse training needs and to broker additional local enterprises with other North Dakota institutions who provide services that MSU is not able to offer are indicative of a university attuned to the business community. MSU is recognized as an institution that strives to be a valued partner with the community in realizing its aspirations. In the health care professions, MSU’s programs in nursing, radiology, and speech pathology are explicitly credited for directly and effectively meeting local needs. The student teachers from MSU’s College of Education intern locally and many are hired after graduation because of the quality and strength of their student teaching reputations. Three local business leaders expressed appreciation for the work of MSU students teaching Junior Achievement in the city’s schools. The two MSU Centers of Excellence were lauded by community members.

Comments about diversity by community members led to a discussion of the Minot Air Force Base with 6500 families drawn from across the country, as well as to three nearby Indian reservations. Initiatives with both indicate an institutional interest in being proactive with diversity in a region that is predominantly Caucasian. Minot Air Force Base is a major economic engine in the region as well and MSU’s online courses and programs have served MAFB and Minot well.

Though not specifically cited by community members, MSU's establishment of a six hour diversity course requirement is a curricular indication that MSU seeks to fulfill its responsibilities to the communities it serves by preparing its graduates for successful lives and careers in increasingly diverse national and global societies.

Development of *Vision 2013*, the MSU strategic plan, was an inclusive process. The PABC conducted internal and external environmental scanning. Focus groups were conducted with faculty, students, staff, administrators, alumni, Board of Regents members, and Foundation Board members. External focus group participants included individuals from a variety of local and regional groups. The inclusiveness of the strategic planning process was confirmed by the review of PABC meeting minutes and interviews with campus and external constituents.

MSU faculty, students, and staff provide a variety of services, resources, and expertise to the Minot community and the region. Interviews with internal and external constituents attested to the data and information in the Self-Study. Examples of these contributions include the following: graduate students conduct a summer reading clinic to provide services to children to develop, strengthen, and enhance their reading skills; students in the Communication Disorders and Audiology programs provide services to children in the community; senior accounting students provide free tax return preparation assistance to members of the community through the VITA program; a professor in the College of Education and Health Sciences leads a program of physical activities at a local nursing home; the resources of the MSU library and art gallery are available to community members; the Mind/Brain Myth Busters seminars and conferences held by MSU provide opportunities for MSU and community members to learn about and discuss ways to utilize current research and findings about the mind and brain related to learning and development; and the communications disorders department provides speech therapy services to clients over the Internet. MSU is a highly valued partner in the community and region.

MSU has undertaken an intentional commitment to connect to the community and service region. The MSU Self-Study Steering Committee agreed that MSU is promoting itself more effectively. MSU contracted externally over two years for assistance in re-branding the institution and for production of initial contact pieces. MSU is using its redesigned web site as an integral dimension of the marketing plan. This includes seven promotional videos and a virtual tour of the institution, all of which they are justly proud. More effective and extensive advertising of cultural and other activities is one result. During the Monday lunch meeting, community members corroborated this perception. MSU is expanding its capacities to present itself and its educational opportunities to Minot and the region effectively.

Awareness of MSU's local and regional public profile has increased demonstrably in the past few years. Community members spoke glowingly that it is impossible to ignore MSU since it is always in the news. The three television stations located in Minot's small

market are a distinct advantage. President Fuller confirmed that at least one of the local network affiliates is on campus interviewing him virtually every week. This exposure contributes to the public's perception that MSU has the capacity and willingness to serve the broad spectrum of their educational needs. The community praised the involvement of MSU personnel in community life and activities, including serving on organizational boards, volunteering, and assuming civic leadership roles. The community recognizes MSU as a strong and valued regional citizen.

"Sense of place" is a *Vision 2013* theme cited by Self-Study Steering Committee members and others in interviews as useful in demonstrating MSU's commitment to the area. They commented that even students in the Job Corps Executive Management Program from across the country seem to identify with MSU and tend to want to visit after their five weeks at MSU. (This program is offered with the Department of Labor. Job Corps fellows complete 30 semester hours of graduate work in management offered in a 12-month period, beginning in June and ending in May. They complete 3 courses and a finance primer at MSU between mid-June and mid-July and then return to their respective centers across the country to finish the program online.) Internships, the statewide oral history project and increased contacts with alumni are all perceived as positively contributing to MSU's identity and sense of place.

The community delegation affirmed that they were invited from the outset to be an integral partner in the developing the University's plan, *Vision 2013*, through meetings and visioning groups. Several were pleased to attest that some of their suggestions were included in *Vision 2013*. There is resounding consensus from community representatives that President Fuller and other MSU leaders listen to them. One corporate leader referred to the process as a "textbook execution for building a mission, vision, and plan with clear alignment and integration."

It is readily apparent that President Fuller's connection with the community continues. The PABC members are supportive of the President's outreach to the community, which has even included electronic focus groups with citizens and students. MSU solicits feedback and uses it appropriately. Moreover, there is public discussion of critical issues.

Evidence of commitment to engagement and service includes the creation of the Dean of the Center for Extended Learning position about a year ago. It was a conscious effort to meld outreach with educational offerings and make it a priority. Outreach now enjoys a higher profile within the campus culture. Local educators were highly complimentary of MSU's advanced degree opportunities; a large number of elementary and secondary teachers earn master's degrees at MSU.

There appears to be a consistent, strong bond between University and community. It is expressed tangibly in the access, use, and planned renovation of existing facilities. For example, Minot and MSU are proceeding with a plan to reinvent the existing aging University stadium through a \$12 million renovation. If a June 10 city vote carries the proposal, nine million dollars will be generated for the project by redirecting a one-half

cent city sales tax for five years. The 5000 seat facility would become the site for MSU and Minot athletic events, as well as for other University and community activities. This joint project illustrates both the congruence between community and University and MSU's willingness and ability to respond to community needs. Existing MSU athletic facilities, including the multi-purpose, 10,000-seat Dome, are open to the public. The Dome is the epicenter for a wide array of regional sporting and assorted other events. A morning visit to the facility by a Team member confirmed a vibrant public and student use of the Dome's facilities.

MSU is cited as a partner with ING in building the economic future of Minot. This perspective was reinforced by Trinity Health (regional public and teaching hospital) officials and the Minot Chamber leaders. Xcel Energy's community relations director applauded MSU as a valued partner with the communities in the region that it serves. Local media representatives confirmed the strong working relationship with MSU.

The public schools in the region rely on MSU for student teachers; placement can reach 25 students per term. MSU is also a productive source of full-time teachers upon graduation. Minot public school officials and MSU counterparts meet several times each year to discuss technology, programs, possible grants, and assessment. In this way, student, community and University interests are mutually advanced.

MSU's athletic programs compete in 12 NAIA intercollegiate sports, six each for men and women. Intramural programs need continued development. Their growth and success are likely linked to the initiative to attract more students to live in campus housing. There are currently beds available on campus; only 13 percent of MSU students live in the residence halls. To encourage more intramural participation, there is a scheduled renovation of the old gym for use by the intramural program and the public. Significantly, there is a full-time fundraiser in athletics.

## **2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.**

By its own admission, MSU was not focused on promotion in the past. This approach is now changing, tied to personnel changes in advancement leadership over the past two years and MSU's preparation for its first multi-faceted comprehensive campaign. The revised advancement strategy will be more aggressive in identifying donors and linking them to annual giving. The intent is to create an integrated marketing plan, including a new view book, the first to be produced after a two-year hiatus. MSU established new alumni chapters in the Twin Cities and Boise during the past year. With 18,000 identifiable alumni and only 1137 of them contributing an average of \$69 to the University last year, MSU and its advancement officers have more than ample room to improve in this arena. The Alumni Association and Foundation Boards must be re-acclimated to the University's new goals, including Board giving. The Foundation endowment is about \$13 million, generally restricted to student scholarships. Faculty sabbaticals are not available at MSU. Plans to seek funds to support sabbaticals should be encouraged.

Study abroad at MSU primarily consists of short-term, faculty-led programs. Until now, most participants were community people and non-traditional students. In fulfillment of *Vision 2013*, the Team believes that there needs to be a focus on recruiting traditional MSU students, who are the preponderant majority on campus, to enroll in international learning experiences. MSU uses a 7-1 student-faculty ratio for study abroad, and where possible, a direct connection with an in-country partner in planning the program. The academic departments decide if a course meets program requirements. MSU is in the process of migrating from faculty-led study tours to study abroad experiences with an increased academic focus, well-defined learning outcomes, and international learning experiences that last longer. There is strong connection with the academic affairs vice president, which is beneficial.

With the articulation of *Vision 2013*, the internationalization of MSU is now a stated priority that will command renewed attention. MSU is making a concerted attempt to build its international capacities and opportunities. Two professionals are leading MSU's international programs office and function as a "one-stop-shop" for international students handling recruitment, admission, and immigration. The majority of MSU's current international student body of 262 comes from the Canadian provinces contiguous to North Dakota. The Canadian student population declined from almost 500 Canadian students enrolled some years ago. The Team noted renewed emphasis on recruiting Canadian students and wishes to underscore the importance of this effort. Several factors are relevant to this recommendation: the dwindling numbers of traditional age students in North Dakota, the near parity in the Canadian-US dollar exchange rate, MSU's relative proximity to Canada, and the strong success rate among Canadians at MSU. The average Canadian citizen is better prepared, more successful, and more active at MSU than are American counterparts. Challenges include the identification of Canadian students as international students by American students at MSU and the reliance on People Soft to keep accurate records of student numbers and other information.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**

None noted.

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None noted.

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

**A. Affiliation Status**

No change.

**B. Nature of Organization**

1. **Legal status**  
No change.
2. **Degrees awarded**  
No change.

**C. Conditions of Affiliation**

1. **Stipulation on affiliation status**  
No change.
2. **Approval of degree sites**  
No change.
3. **Approval of distance education degree**  
No change.
4. **Reports required**

**Progress Report**

**Topic(s) and Due Date (month-date-year)**

Progress report on MSU's comprehensive enrollment management plan and its subsequent results is due to the Commission by October 1, 2011.

**Rationale and Expectations**

Given the demographic challenges facing North Dakota and the resulting increased competition for students, stabilizing or increasing student enrollment will require a successful enrollment management effort, which is data-driven and contains both recruitment and retention components.

5. **Other visits scheduled**  
None.
6. **Organization change request**  
None.

**D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action**

Not applicable.

**E. Summary of Commission Review**

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2017-2018)

**Rationale for recommendation:**

The team found evidence that the institution engages its community in developing, refining, and communicating its mission; publicly articulates its campus commitments; embraces and lives its mission; and upholds and projects its integrity. Minot State University complies with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, and the expectations defined by the Higher Learning Commission for off-site and online programs, and responds to complaints in a timely and thoughtful manner.

With the completion of the campus master facilities plan, implementation of the Planning and Budgeting Council, and the overarching *Vision 2013*, Minot State University evidences maturity in environmental scanning, strategic planning, community inclusiveness, and communication effectiveness. MSU is fiscally sound and committed to making the institutional resource allocation process transparent, though continued focus on the re-allocation process is needed to ensure future financial stability. The draft 2013 Priority Actions Work Plan for 2007-2008 is an excellent beginning, which ties specific *Vision 2013* objectives to adequate resources, identifies responsible persons, and establishes concrete timelines. All members of the MSU community should be encouraged to frame their activities within the aspirations of the strategic plan. While the Team believes that considerable effort remains to tie enrollment management targets to program goals, diversity initiatives, and multiple instructional delivery strategies; to meld the University's aspirations with the day-to-day demands of offering programs and providing services; and to support and define relevant measures and appropriate benchmarks, the work accomplished to date is impressive and future-focused. For MSU to sustain or increase student numbers, comprehensive enrollment management work that involves all University stakeholders is required.

Student learning outcomes are stated clearly for each educational program, are published in the undergraduate or graduate catalogs, and make meaningful assessment possible. MSU values effective teaching and strives to increase support for professional development activities directed at achieving enhanced student learning and its assessment. While MSU's program assessment is at a level comparable to peer campuses, the Team encourages MSU to align more clearly external program review and program assessment with the emerging budgeting and planning process underway to achieve the goals and objectives in *Vision 2013*.

The Team is pleased to learn about the desire for lively campus discussions, as well as the results of faculty and student surveys, which indicate a need to re-evaluate the institutional approach to general education and its assessment. With increased general education opportunities available online from multiple providers; significant numbers of transfer students; and the 2003 decision to assess English composition, communication arts, mathematics, and wellness primarily on skill development, general education assessment is becoming ever more challenging. The Team believes that MSU will ask the right questions and persevere with integrity to resolve them.

Actions of the board, administrators, faculty, students, and staff demonstrate that MSU values a life of learning. Moreover, acquisition of breadth of knowledge and skills, as well as the exercise of intellectual inquiry, are integral to MSU's educational mission. The new six-credit diversity requirement, broad definition of diversity, aspirations to institutionalize service learning, and efforts to extend opportunities for study abroad to more MSU students are consistent with the future-oriented Vision 2013 plan for an engaged MSU that knows and honors its unique place.

The Team applauds faculty members at MSU who create undergraduate research and other scholarly opportunities for students. These are often life-changing learning experiences for students. It is equally true, though, that they require faculty time and effort, which we suggest should be considered appropriately in faculty load.

MSU has the capacity, creativity, and commitment to engage its identified communities and serves them in ways each partner values. The notable enthusiasm of the Board of Regents, the effective leadership of the President to involve all stakeholders in vision setting and strategic planning, and the impressive range of programs and collaborations engender reciprocal commitment and responsiveness between MSU and the communities it serves.

It is the recommendation of the Team that Minot State University be re-accredited and that the year for the next comprehensive evaluation is 2017-2018. Given the demographic challenges facing North Dakota and the resulting increased competition for students, stabilizing or increasing enrollment will require a successful enrollment management effort, which is data-driven and contains both recruitment and retention components. It is the Team's recommendation that a progress report on MSU's comprehensive enrollment management plan and its subsequent results shared with the campus and the Higher Learning Commission by October 1, 2011.

## **VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS**

Minot State University and the City of Minot exemplify the partnership campuses and communities strive to attain. While the Team expected to observe an extensive, multi-faceted intertwining of community and University given the location of the institution, it must be noted that the mutually responsive relationship cited throughout this report is a dramatic departure from the immediate past.

From cultural and athletic events to public forums held to address campus issues, including the production of the Self Study, MSU encouraged public engagement. Team members frequently heard how much the community appreciates the inclusive approach the University has adopted. During the luncheon with community representatives, it was clear that the community holds MSU in high regard. Moreover, city representatives are open to new ideas from MSU on how to internationalize their community.

Minot community leaders attested that there is a renewed “sense of hope” about the future for Minot and that MSU is a major factor in this upbeat assessment.