CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, & APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Minot State University 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.

Overview

Minot State University’s new mission, presented in Vision 2013, affirms a strong commitment to life-long learning and “critical and creative thinking,” sustained by a collective dedication to the “common good.” The institution envisions future graduates of insight and erudition, characterized by “compassion, tolerance, character, [and] sound judgment.”

MSU’s new “vision of place and engagement” requires tangible linkage between theory and practice. By design, this perspective therefore promotes a general respect for the learning process, the application of critical thinking skills to real-world issues, and a continuous consideration of the individual’s responsibilities as a learned citizen. As Vision 2013 states explicitly, “(c)onnecting knowledge, theory, practice, and place to the realities of human existence, problem solving, and life remains a compelling reason to foster…engagement in learning.”

MSU has the capacity to fulfill this mission and vision. A multitude of current and ongoing undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research initiatives on campus attest to the fact that MSU has grown over the last 20 years, from a college “teaching” institution to a full “teaching and research” university. The Graduate School provides invaluable opportunities for regional professionals and has made significant strides since 1997 in establishing long-term structures, policies, and plans that will support its development (see Introduction).

A strong commitment to academic freedom of inquiry and expression is a necessary precondition to accomplishing the goals of Vision 2013. The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) Policy 401.1, “Academic Freedom,” adopted in 1984, states that faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research and publication of results as well as they are entitled to freedom in the free dissemination of information in their field of competence. Additional SBHE Policies in Series 605 address “Academic Freedom and Tenure,” “Academic Appointments” (605.1), the “Standing Committee on Faculty Rights” (605.2), and “Hearings and Appeals” (605.4).

MSU affirms these SBHE policies in Section 1, Article V of its Constitution:

Academic freedom is unhampered opportunity to seek the truth in any field. Minot State University recognizes that true education takes place only if academic freedom is the inviolable right of both students and faculty. The University, therefore, shall enjoin all of its members to promote and to practice academic freedom.

The institution’s new mission also specifically commits to honoring “freedom of expression, academic freedom, ethical and moral behavior, integrity, fairness, and honesty.” MSU upholds all these principles in practice through the functions of its Special Review Committee, Faculty Rights Committee, and Student Rights Committee.

Core Component 4A

1 Vision 2013, p. 8
2 Vision 2013, p. 9
3 Vision 2013, p. 5
4 SBHE Policy 401.1, Academic Freedom http://www.ndus.edu/policies/sbhe-policies/policy.asp?ref=2355
6 Link to MSU Constitution, article V
7 Vision 2013, p. 8

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Minot State University demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

**Research and Professional Development**

MSU recognizes the importance of research and continued study for faculty, students, administrators, and staff. The institution provides significant financial support for research grants, advanced study and professional development opportunities, tuition waivers, research poster sessions, and conference presentations. This section also highlights some of the exemplary current research and creative activity on campus. Research efforts at MSU are celebrated routinely in university publications such as the Alumni Magazine, Connections, Inside MSU, and college newsletters, and are acknowledged by the President in monthly reports. MSU also recognizes the creative work of its faculty and students by publicly advertising and promoting numerous musical performances, theatre events, and art shows. One recent development regarding research has been a renewed campus discussion about faculty sabbatical, which is not currently an option at MSU. The establishment and funding of sabbatical would greatly enhance opportunities for research and creative activity.

Financial support for faculty research, originally housed in the three colleges, was consolidated in 2003 under a new “Faculty Development and Research Committee.” This elected committee replaced college-level grants with a single competitive grant application tied to the campus mission. The campus Office of Research and Sponsored Programs solicits research proposals and offers workshops on grant preparation. Many faculty build collaborative undergraduate research components into these proposals. The six-member Faculty Development and Research Committee reviews all applications and awards the grants. Awards are competitive and are based on the grant’s potential to enhance MSU’s reputation for academic excellence, its potential to improve teaching and learning and MSU, its potential to produce scholarly work, the quality of the proposed project, the researcher’s qualifications, and the budget for the project. Forty-six grants have been funded in the four years this committee has been in existence, varying from $500 to $4,500, with an average of $1,430 in the last funding cycle. Each year the total grant budget has increased, from approximately $22,000 in the first year to over $33,000 in the 2006-2007 fiscal year. While these funds support faculty development in important ways, it should be noted that the grants are rarely accompanied by leave time, a commodity that is increasingly scarce, yet unquestionably valuable to serious scholarship.

Minot State University began providing professional development funding for faculty and staff in 1993, when the SBHE mandated that 1.5% of the annual budget be allocated to professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators. Advanced study grants to faculty and staff are available through the Academic Affairs Office, based on the needs of the person and the needs of the institution. Support for pursuit of terminal degrees has particularly encouraged academic excellence in high-demand disciplines such as Nursing and Education. In the past eight years, 41 faculty members have received grants totaling $152,060 to pursue advanced degrees. During that same time period 35 staff members received grants totaling $27,836.

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8 Research and Small Grants [http://www.minotstateu.edu/rsp/small_r_grants.shtml](http://www.minotstateu.edu/rsp/small_r_grants.shtml)

9 These figures come from the Academic Projects and Research Office, as do the following charts/tables.
To encourage faculty and staff to continue their education, MSU since 1993 has offered tuition waivers so that faculty and staff may take up to three credits each semester. Children of faculty and staff receive tuition waivers, as well.

MSU supports research efforts on campus by hosting poster sessions each spring semester to encourage faculty and students to demonstrate their research results. Recipients of funding from the Research and Small Grants program (described above) are specifically invited to take part, and in many cases faculty choose to include student collaboration. Faculty from every college have participated, and the 2005 session included such projects as:

- Alcohol Expectancy and Spatial Memory (Addiction Studies)
- The Effects of Light Cycle on Metamorphosis in Salamanders (Biology)
- Developing a Cooperative GIS at Minot State University (Business Information Technology)
- The Spoken Word: Middle English Sound Recordings (English)
- The Slave Trade: A South Atlantic Perspective (History)
- Antipsychotic and Antidepressants (Nursing)
- Training Effects of Three Exercise Programs (Teacher Education and Human Performance)\(^\text{10}\)

In addition, MSU has recently sponsored several juried student research poster sessions, including a session celebrating Women’s Heritage Month.

MSU supports both faculty and student attendance at professional conferences, and has hosted a number of important regional and national conferences on campus. Since renovation of Cyril Moore Hall and the declaration in 1999 of a university undergraduate “science initiative,” by Fall 2007 more than 80 students had presented their research findings at regional or national conferences (see Appendix). A separate “research track” has been identified within the undergraduate biology major, and a majority of students in that program, and many in chemistry and the geosciences, have presented their findings at annual conferences. These events have contemporaneously been attended by mentoring faculty, and in many cases by other undergraduate students who were not presenters. Although the sciences have focused specifically on such experiences, examples of undergraduate attendance at regional and national conferences may be found within many other areas of study across the campus. Students in the MSU Honors program, for example, have recently presented at the National Collegiate Honors Conference on topics as diverse as autism in the classroom, “No-Shame Theatre,” and wind energy in ND.

\(^{10}\) Link to Poster Session announcements in evidence room

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As mentioned in Criterion 3B, most campus units assist faculty to attend professional conferences through internal funds and external granting sources. One striking example has been the 2007 attendance of a multi-disciplinary group of eighteen MSU faculty at the “Learning and the Brain Conferences” sponsored by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and other major research entities. The end result of that association has been proposal of a new MSU initiative called the Collaborative for the Applied Study of Cognition and Learning Sciences (CASCLS). Modeled after the interdisciplinary Mind, Brain, and Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), the collaborative will be designed to prepare teachers and school leaders who are masters-degreed specialists in the application of mind/brain science in educational settings. Faculty, undergraduate and graduate students will have continuing opportunity to learn, apply and test research from cognitive development, cognitive psychology, and cognitive neuroscience, as these areas of research apply to teaching and learning in authentic classroom settings. The faculty members who attended these conferences have continued to meet on an ongoing basis, to incorporate conference wisdom into their MSU work and to design subsequent presentations for a regional January Inservice (which serves 900 area teachers), and the regional Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) spring banquet. A two-day “Mind/Brain Myth-busters Seminar” is planned for September 14-15, 2007, through collaboration with Phi Delta Kappa and other stakeholders.

MSU has hosted a variety of conferences on campus. The MSU chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association hosts an annual regional conference on campus, primarily for professional speech-language pathologists. The conference is administrated entirely by students in the MSU Communication Disorders Department, and approximately 100 conference attendees come each year from all across North Dakota and southern Canada. The Humanities Division has sponsored several conferences, including the 2004 NDUS Arts and Humanities Summit, the Northern Plains Early British Literature Conference (2004) and the Linguistic Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota (2005). The North Dakota Academy of Science commonly holds its annual conference at the home institution of its annually elected president. In these circumstances, MSU has hosted numerous annual meetings over the past 50 years, most recently those in 1998, 2003, and 2007. The Department of Biology hosted a symposium, “The Flying Dinosaurs Around Us,” in 2002.

An International Behavioral Development Symposium was held in May of 1995 with the aim of promoting scientific understanding of the contribution of biological factors to sexual orientation and sex differences in behavior. The symposium brought together many leading researchers in this area of study from around the world. Under joint support of the Eugene Garfield Foundation of Philadelphia and MSU, second and third International Behavioral Development Symposiums were held in the Springs of 2000 and 2005.

MSU is proud of the nationally-recognized excellence of its faculty research and creativity, much of which includes undergraduate students. Among exemplary areas of study are the effects of alcohol and caffeine on motor response and hand-eye coordination (Department of Psychology), detection of heavy metals in natural systems (Departments of Biology and Chemistry), early behavioral indicators of sexual orientation (Department of Social Science), the role of small mammal fossils in aging Eocene sandstones (Department of Geoscience), and history of slave and illegal trade between the West Indies and mainland Europe (Department of History), collaborative presentation of J. S. Bach’s St. John Passion (Department of Music), and publication of five plays (leading to off-Broadway production of some) by a member of the Theatre Department.

Computer science faculty members carry out research and development activities for off-campus clients and with colleagues on campus. Examples of partnerships with off-campus clients include recent work with Killdeer Mountain Manufacturing of Killdeer, North Dakota on the development of a telemetry system and current work with SEO Precision Optics of Crosby, ND on software support for SEO’s laser steering mirror. Examples of partnerships on campus include development of closed-captioning software for NDCPD and development of laboratory software for researchers in the Psychology Department.

Collaborative and federal grant-funded research efforts on campus have expanded remarkably in the course of the last decade. MSU is in its fourth year of a $3.12 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant project funded through the IDeA Network for Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) program, which supports projects specifically designed to include active participation of undergraduate researchers. Students gain cutting-edge research experience, attend national scientific meetings, present posters and
papers, and publish their own research results. Current faculty project leaders are working on research involving: antifungal agents for combating opportunistic fungal infections in patients with compromised immune systems; identification of molecular interactions of DNA with cellular proteins; functional genomics of endocrine disruption in salamanders (relevant to human environmental health policy); and control of genes associated with auxin control of leaf cell expansion in the plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*. A pilot heavy metals project has also been initiated in 2007, adding more investigators who are providing students with similar research opportunities. As of summer 2007, sixty-two students from biology and chemistry programs have been actively involved in the project.

In response to the dire need for law enforcement domestic violence policy in North Dakota, the Rural Crime and Justice Center on campus has formed a partnership with the North Dakota Council on Abused Women’s Services (NDCAWS). The purpose of the project is to chart the nature of intimate partner violence and criminal justice/law enforcement response in ND, and the goal is to assist in the development of a statewide data collection and analysis system. The collaboration also includes the University of North Dakota’s Tribal Judicial Institute (TJI), and a multidisciplinary advisory committee to 1) develop a model law enforcement domestic violence policy for North Dakota, 2) utilize the assistance of RCJC and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) to develop a train-the-trainer curriculum on local policy, and 3) create a pool of trained officers available to serve as technical assistance and training resources for local law enforcement agencies and community response teams. This initiative is funded by the 2004 Department of Justice “Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program.”

The MSU History Department received two NEH grants totaling $322,148 to fund summer institutes in 2003 and 2005, called “Contexts and Legacies of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.” The institutes welcomed high school teachers from across the nation as they participated in scholarly and experiential learning about the Lewis and Clark voyage of discovery, the Upper Great Plains Region, and development of the American West. Nationally renowned scholars presented in their areas of expertise, and the participants engaged in both primary and secondary research, including exploration of artifacts and reconstructed sites located in western ND, at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the North Dakota Heritage Center, Double Ditch Indian Village (archaeological site), Fort Abraham Lincoln Park, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Knife River Indian Villages, and Fort Mandan. At the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, participants studied cultural practices that reveal some of the long-term legacies of cross-cultural contact. At the end of these sessions, the participants constructed lesson plans and units which were then posted on the Internet as a national teacher resource.

These research initiatives demand an extraordinary amount of faculty time, largely unavailable during the academic year at MSU due to high teaching loads (12 credits/semester). In 2004, the matter of a policy regarding faculty sabbaticals was raised in Faculty Senate, and an ad hoc “Committee on Faculty Sabbaticals” was authorized to begin work, with a target of March 2005 for completion of its charge. The resulting committee met throughout ensuing months, on one occasion with the university president. Among other matters, it investigated extant SBHE policy relating to “developmental leave,” as well as the formal policy on sabbaticals of the University of North Dakota and several other institutions. A final report was submitted to the Faculty Senate on March 5, 2005, amended by the Senate, and forwarded to President Fuller. The report included a prototype application procedure, suggestions for makeup of a permanent sabbatical committee (similar to existing promotion and tenure committees), and an outline of responses to the various assignments originally given the ad hoc committee. The principal difficulty encountered was funding; at one point the committee considered the idea of a dedicated “pool” of accumulated funds derived from unfilled tenure-track positions over time. President Fuller also expressed concerns about funding once the final report was submitted to the Faculty Senate on May 5, 2005, and the matter of faculty sabbaticals has not been given serious consideration since that time.

MSU needs to expand and better support the function of its Academic Projects and Research Office, which operates under the Office of the VPAA. Among other things, that office has general responsibility for institutional assessment, the Research and Small Grants program (described above), institutional strategic planning (particularly in relation to the NDUS “Cornerstones”), faculty development, and the Institutional

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Review Board (IRB). The most important tangible product of this nebulously defined office is the production of an annual “Fact Book,” which details such matters as personnel and student demographics, program matriculation data, and budgeting and financial information reporting. Currently taxed far beyond the ability of one individual to manage it effectively, this office has been envisioned as the center for organizing the institution’s understanding of itself. To effectively accomplish that aim, this office needs the expertise, time, and independence to collect, analyze, and interpret information on all aspects of university function, particularly as this material is used to inform strategic planning efforts and document preparation (as, for example, this self-study report). The office thus needs to sustain ready access to current and accurate data about all personnel, finances, and educational enterprises associated with the institution, and it needs to be able to produce information (a) upon request, and (b) in regularly prepared documents such as the annual “Fact Book.” Finally, the office must be a trustworthy source of accurate information that will help faculty and senior administrative officials to do their work.

**Continuing Education through Graduate Programs**

The MSU Graduate School makes special effort serve the continuing education needs of full-time working teachers, through the scheduling of summer courses and through participation in state and federally-funded programs that provide financial assistance to students. The MSU Graduate School serves regional constituents by offering nine master-degree programs on campus and/or online, as well as a Specialist Degree in School Psychology. Furthermore, the Graduate School collaborates with the University of North Dakota to offer its Ph.D. program in Criminal Justice at MSU. The Graduate School enrolled 279 students in 2007.

MSU is the home of the Northern Plains Writers Project (NPWP), one of over 200 Federal, State, and University funded programs under the umbrella of the National Writing Project. NPWP's goal is to help improve teaching, learning, and writing through its pedagogical model of “teachers teaching teachers,” and each year holds seminars, workshops, and mini-institutes dedicated to a variety of different educational objectives. At the center of NPWP’s activity is its summer institutes, attended by approximately 20 state teachers nominated by their peers and interviewed by the NPWP Planning Team. Each Institute participant receives free tuition for six graduate credits per institute toward a Master of Education degree for its participants (virtually half the cost of the degree). Current annual funding levels exceed $130,000 and are expected to rise.

From 2003 to the present, MSU has received US Department of Education (Title II) grants programs in both math and science areas. During the 2007 fiscal year\(^\text{12}\) thes grants provided comprehensive tuition support and stipends to math and science teachers from all P-12 levels, during a series of summer offerings designed to help them achieve North Dakota “highly qualified” status under of the federal EESA (“No Child Left Behind”) Act. Funding for these grant projects together has exceeded $700,000. Although enrollment has been variable in both science and math graduate programs, and largely dependent upon this external support, both continue to provide important graduate opportunities for teachers in fields of long-standing shortage. Graduates of these programs also prove highly successful; for example, eight of the twenty-seven members of the recent North Dakota Mathematics Content and Achievement Standards Writing Team are graduates of MSU’s MAT: Mathematics program.

**Continuing Education through the Center for Extended Learning (CEL)**

MSU’s Center for Extended Learning (CEL),\(^\text{13}\) the largest of the distance education programs in the NDUS, assists the university in its mission of providing flexible and life-long learning opportunities. This campus unit grew out of the original MSU “Continuing Education Department,” housed within the Office of the Registrar in 1959 to serve the needs of Minot Air Force Base students. Flexibility in course delivery is accomplished by offering courses online, through correspondence and IVN (Interactive Video Network, see Criterion 3C), and at off-campus locations such as the Minot Air Force Base and Bismarck State College. The

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\(^{12}\) Links to both Math and Science Summer programs.

\(^{13}\) Center for Extended Learning [http://www.misu.nodak.edu/cel/](http://www.misu.nodak.edu/cel/)
CEL also facilitates collaborative options for MSU students and offers dual credit options for qualifying high school juniors and seniors, course work for Driver Education teachers, non-credit Driver’s License Recertification courses, Teacher Education and Professional Development workshops, College for Kids courses for children ages six to fifteen, a yearly Municipal Finance Officers’ Institute (see Criterion 5D), and Microsoft Office Specialist Certification in eight different areas.

Over the years, and as CEL activities have grown, the leadership for the unit has evolved. Originally, a director for Continuing Education supervised Minot Air Force Base, IVN, and non-credit activities. With the introduction of online courses in 2001 and the growth of MSU Online, a Director of Outreach position was created. In 2005, the Director of Outreach position was expanded to include supervision of the University’s Enrollment Services and Admissions. In 2007, the key leadership position in CEL was rewritten to streamline functions (divesting the Enrollment Services responsibilities) and to reflect the increasing need to integrate distance learning more effectively into the University’s academic structure. In 2007, MSU established the position of Dean for the Center for Extended Learning. The DEL dean is responsible for working with academic departments and colleges to facilitate academic offerings for non-traditional students, presented in non-traditional formats.

While CEL continues to provide administrative and technical support, courses and programs remain the property of individual colleges. This college ownership preserves the quality of instruction and the coherence of the curriculum. Program development is initiated within each academic unit. Following the obligatory waiting period for NDUS approval, the relevant college then contacts CEL to provide instructional design support to develop the course for the online or IVN environment. The individual college provides faculty through its current faculty pool or through the hiring of a qualified adjunct instructor. CEL is awarded the tuition for the course and supplies payment to the instructor. Assessment of the course and program, however, is retained by the individual college. Despite the clear structure of college ownership, faculty have expressed concern about a growing sense of market-driven pressure to create distance offerings.

**Findings**

- By mandate of the SBHE, MSU supports its faculty with full freedom in research and publication
- The Faculty and Development Research Committee effectively reviews research proposals and disburses numerous small grants to faculty
- MSU provides excellent financial assistance for faculty advanced study, staff professional development, and faculty/staff tuition waivers
- Faculty and student research and creative efforts receive good visibility through university publications and campus poster sessions
- Support is given for faculty and students to attend and present at academic conferences; recent student participation has been particularly impressive in the sciences. Strong faculty follow-up to conferences is evident in the emerging multi-disciplinary campus effort to establish a Collaborative for the Applied Study of Cognition and Learning Sciences (CASCLS).
- MSU has hosted a number of notable academic conferences since 1997
- Faculty research is exemplary and is recognized at the national level, as recent major federal grants attest
- Institutional follow-up is needed regarding the issue of faculty sabbatical; funding sources need to be identified and pursued
- Increased staff and administrative resources are needed for MSU’s Academic Projects and Research Office to maintain efficiency and provide necessary services
- The Graduate School provides excellent opportunities for continuing education, especially for area teachers
- The Center for Extended Learning provides outstanding opportunities for life-long learning, serving a wide variety of age groups and constituencies
While progress has been made in restructuring and realigning CEL with academic units, the University must continue to balance its alert response to the growing market with thoughtful, faculty-driven, strategic programming.

Core Component 4B

Minot State University demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

General Education

The foundation of all undergraduate learning at MSU is the general education program.

At Minot State University, the principal role of general education is to foster the broad repertoire of intellectual, social, and cultural skills needed to function in the world. General education equips students to understand and influence their own milieu. General education develops the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information and to use it in solving problems. The general education curriculum therefore emphasizes 1) mastery of linguistic skills, 2) a broad historical and cultural perspective, 3) literacy in the social, natural, and mathematical sciences, 4) understanding and appreciation of the arts such as music, literature, painting, and sculpture, and 5) commitment to contributing one’s talents to advancement of the common good. It develops an ability to think and live creatively, critically, intuitively, and rationally, using the full range of abilities inherent in the mind and body. It offers the potential to create in every student a sense of personal, historical, and cultural identity, leading to a breadth of understanding that offers possibilities in all phases of life.14

The current program was redesigned in 1996-97 to promote independent, interdisciplinary inquiry and understanding among students, and to promote a uniform assessment mechanism for general education across all disciplines. The program was based on the conviction that a strong emphasis on the liberal arts is fundamental to the development of educated people. The general education program was consistent with the institution’s 1997-2006 mission to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry, and now will align well with the Vision 2013 commitment to “high academic standards,” “student success,” and “engaged and life-long learning,” as well as the high value placed on “critical and creative thinking.”

General education has become the topic of much debate, both at the national level and at MSU. Should general education offerings be expanded or contracted? How should general education requirements be balanced with the requirements for majors? To what extent should general education courses respond to the increasing need to incorporate writing and cultural diversity content? How should the “usefulness” of general education be defined and evaluated?

The current general education model at MSU, in place since 1997, conforms with SBHE policy. A minimum of 38 credits are necessary to complete the MSU General Education Requirement (GER),15 and these credits must be distributed throughout the curriculum in the following manner: Communications - 9 credits; History - 3 credits; Humanities - 6 credits; Wellness/Personal Development - 2 credits; Mathematics - 4 credits; Laboratory-based Natural Science - 8 credits; and Social Science - 6 credits. Students may satisfy the GER requirements in any of the following ways:

1. successfully complete the 38-credit GER as specified above
2. successfully pass AP/CLEP tests for some of the courses in the above inventory;
3. successfully complete approved, letter-graded correspondence or on-line courses offered through the Center for Extended Learning (a maximum of 16 correspondence credits may be applied toward the degree)

14 2006-2008 Course Catalog
15 Distribution of Requirements http://www.minotstateu.edu/ge/
• successfully complete the GER of another institution under the terms of the NDUS General Education Transfer Agreement (GERTA—see Criterion 5C for details).

The MSU general education program has operated under the auspices of a “five-strand” model\(^\text{16}\) for more than a decade. These strands—critical, factual, historical, cultural, and aesthetic—link disciplines, and guide course design and outcomes assessment for all general education courses. Because there is no department of general education, the Faculty Senate’s General Education Committee is responsible for oversight of the resulting program.\(^\text{17}\) The committee includes six faculty members, along with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. When the five-strand model was established, the General Education Committee also instituted a four-year revolving schedule for recertification of general education courses. Committee recertification of the courses requires departments and divisions to provide supporting materials from department chairs and faculty responsible for delivering the courses.\(^\text{18}\) (Records pertaining to each general education course are archived in the Registrar’s office.) The General Education Committee reviews these documents, and discusses course content with faculty as a prerequisite to recertification. The General Education Committee expects that over the course of four years departments must consider and archive evidence that all five strands are helping to guide assessment of their general education courses.

The 1997 detailed review of MSU’s general education program was originated within the disciplines themselves. This resulted in a comprehensive, categorical overview of departmental/divisional “goals statements” or “outcomes” pertaining to the general education program. Endorsed by the Faculty Senate, these “umbrella goals” comprehensively described the knowledge expected of all students who complete the program. Clear outcomes were articulated for each of the five strands (critical, historical, factual, cultural, and aesthetic).\(^\text{19}\) Using the critical strand as an example, one would fairly expect MSU students to express the following capabilities upon completion of the general education program:

- **In Humanities** – Honor their own intuitions; test, defend and modify those in discussion; and develop, refine, and support them with research drawn from appropriate sources.
- **In History** – Demonstrate ability to analyze historical events, trends and periods in terms of their contexts and influences, to organize and evaluate causal and explanatory evidence derived from that analysis, and to answer critical questions about those events and trends.
- **In the Social Sciences** – Demonstrate ability to analyze social phenomena in terms of major social science concepts, to organize and evaluate evidence derived from that analysis, and to answer critical questions about those concepts.
- **In the Natural Sciences** – Demonstrate understanding of how a natural scientist asks questions, collects data, designs experiments, analyzes data, and draws conclusions.
- **In Mathematics** – Demonstrate how mathematical methods can be used to analyze and solve problems in a variety of fields; recognize problems to which such methods are applicable.\(^\text{20}\)

Similar outcomes have been articulated in each liberal arts domain for each of the other four strands.

Since 2003, speech, communication, mathematics, and wellness have elected to assess their course outcomes primarily on the basis of skills development, but the five-strand model remains the structural underpinning of all traditional “survey” courses across the liberal arts and sciences.

Recent findings from debates, discussions, and surveys suggest that general education at MSU suffers from an overall image problem, and from a related lack of agreement among faculty and students concerning

\(^{16}\) General Education Matrix (add link)
\(^{18}\) [http://www.minotstateu.edu/ge/pdf/GE_Recert_12_06.pdf](http://www.minotstateu.edu/ge/pdf/GE_Recert_12_06.pdf)
\(^{20}\) Link to document of representative outcomes in all five strands?
the merit, value, and rigor of general education courses. In a 2006 public, Cambridge-style student debate over the value of general education, some students suggested that general education courses were “boring,” lacking in pertinence to their career fields, and sometimes poorly taught. An informal audience vote concluded that general education does have significant value, but that some of the courses should be more rigorous. Debate proceedings were posted that semester on the MSU website. Anecdotal information and information reasonably inferred from faculty meetings both suggest that faculty too often consider general education courses as merely obligatory parts of the teaching load. Some see these courses as a “necessary evil” that must be taught to bring up enrollment numbers for individual programs.

The General Education Committee is addressing such matters. To increase visibility of the program and improve communication, the committee developed a website for general education in 2006. This site includes information such as an overview of the mission and vision of general education at MSU, the status of general education courses, forms needed for recertification, amendments and changes to relevant courses and policies, and the like.

The committee is also seeking to elevate the level of dialogue concerning the means, goals, and merits of general education as understood by faculty. To this end, the committee joined forces with the Assessment Committee to cosponsor the university’s Spring 2007 Assessment Day, which focused exclusively on general education. To prepare for this significant undertaking, a task force of faculty members from the two committees attended AAC&U’s conference General Education and Assessment: Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Learning. During Assessment Day, each task force participant presented lessons learned.

As part of the preparation for Assessment Day, a six-question survey focusing on student perceptions about general education was administered to students in class, on two specific afternoons (March 2007). A total of 455 surveys had been completed and returned at the time of analysis. As this was not a random sample, findings should be generalized with caution. Nevertheless, the picture that emerged was surprisingly negative. For example, discouraging responses prevailed for the question “Of what value are General Education courses in your chosen program of study?” (Likert scale of 1-5 used, with 1 being Not Valuable and 5 being Very Valuable).

![Perceived Value of General Education Courses](image)

Figure 4.2 -- Student perceptions about the value of general education courses.

N = 455 (451 valid, 4 missing). Mean = 3.0621, Median =3, Mode = 3, SD = 0.97555.

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21 General Education Site [http://www.minotstateu.edu/ge/](http://www.minotstateu.edu/ge/)

22 General Education Student Survey Must determine link . . . Ron R, John G, Pay H, and Rita C-L all have copies
Likewise, a sixteen-question Faculty Opinion Survey on general education, which was conducted in the same month, determined that some faculty members are dissatisfied or frustrated with the current system. Faculty were especially concerned that meaningful general education must go beyond the state-wide minimums defined in the NDUS GERTA policy. The general education discussion during Assessment Day focused on the results of both surveys and the overall need to make general education courses more meaningful and challenging for students.

The General Education Committee believes that there may be validity to charges that general education courses are sometimes poorly taught, and the committee has made some improvements to the recertification process in order to help rectify this situation. For example, individual faculty members who teach general education courses are now required to meet with the committee to discuss what and how they teach. The committee now also requires faculty members to collect and present evidence that the five strands are being equitably employed in course assessment. Student exams, essays, creative materials, and the like must now be part of the evidence presented for course recertification. Recently the General Education Committee also reintroduced a review process in which it can choose one of the following approaches for a given course: recertify for four years; delay recertification for one year; or withhold recertification and publicly place a course on probation.

Although individual courses are reviewed every four years, there is no formal comprehensive outcome assessment in place at MSU for the entire general education program. The assumption since 1997 has been that if individual courses are assessed uniformly within the expertise of their originating disciplines, the aggregate result will be uniform program assessment. However, campus sentiment indicates that the time may have come to consider instituting a formal summative program assessment mechanism.

The 2007-08 General Education Committee and Faculty Senate will engage campus constituents in discussions that address the relationship between general education courses and university and departmental reputations. Discussions will also focus on alignment of the general education program with Vision 2013 and the goal of strengthening MSU’s national reputation for academic excellence. The following difficult and broad questions will be raised: is five-strand assessment still relevant, or should MSU completely restructure general education? Does the current categorization of general education courses achieve desired results, or should these be reconfigured in some way? The Vision 2013 clear focus on engagement will provide a helpful new context in which to frame the issue and to guide potential reform of the general education program.

Undergraduate Education

Prior to the formulation of Vision 2013, faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) were already examining how MSU might increase the rigor of its graduation requirements for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. The menu of BA options seemed confusing to students, and the structure utilizing “concentrations” (small clusters of related courses) appeared not to be serving its originally intended purposes.

In the fall of 2000, six faculty members were invited by the Dean of CAS to prepare concrete recommendations for reform. “BA Committee” members consisted of five faculty from a range of Arts and Sciences disciplines and one from the Psychology Department in the College of Education and Health Sciences, which also offers a BA degree. The committee prepared a report in spring 2001 that called for an additional 20-23 semester hours beyond the extant 38 general education credits, including eight semester hours of a foreign language. The report also called for re-categorizing discipline-centered degrees as Bachelor of Science degrees, thereby giving students a choice between a true liberal arts degree and a degree with greater vocational focus. Those recommendations were never implemented, however, due to the retirement of the dean in 2001. The project lay dormant until fall 2006.

In light of Vision 2013’s Strategy Two (“Fostering Engaged learning and Place for the Benefit of Students”) and Strategy Five (“Focusing on Student Success and Future Achievements”), the faculty recently

23 General Education Faculty Survey Must determine link . . . Ron R, John G, Pay H, and Rita C-L all have copies
24 General Education Certification Must determine link . . . at present this evidence is held by Robert Kibler or Ryan Winburn

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renewed efforts to proceed with this initiative to reinvigorate the degree. A new dean reconstituted the BA committee in 2006, enlarging it as a “BA action team.” This new group included four from the original committee plus 10 additional faculty members. Following an initial campus meeting, the action team conducted a nation-wide survey of BA graduation requirements, prepared a purpose statement for the BA degree, and outlined a number of options for changing MSU’s BA requirements. The resulting proposal, reflecting input from a wide spectrum of faculty, would 1) eliminate requirements for minors and concentrations, and 2) replace them with “enhanced general education requirements” similar to those that had been suggested by the original BA committee. These “enhanced general education requirements” would ensure 16 semester hours (SH) of a foreign language, 3 SH of fine or performing arts, 6 SH of “communication-intensive courses,” 9 SH of social sciences, 9 SH of humanities, and 9 SH of history.

The BA action team completed its work in Spring Semester 2007 with a plan to present recommendations to assembled faculty at Fall 2007 Convocation, and to follow one week later with a faculty vote to determine whether or not to proceed to a “stage one” proposal to SBHE in Spring 2008. If the proposal is eventually approved, academic departments will have an option to upgrade existing BA degree programs or to redefine them as BS degree programs. As of fall 2007, administrative turnover in the CAS Dean’s office again renders the future of this plan uncertain.

All undergraduate programs at MSU build on the general education foundation by establishing mission statements, goals, and objectives to set standards and learning outcomes for their graduates. These are indicated in the undergraduate catalog. Many mission statements show programmatic intent to instill in students a spirit of inquiry and a passion for life-long learning. Illustrative learning outcomes include the following:

- Criminal Justice graduates are of the ethical issues and situations in the criminal justice field (p. 33).
- Art graduates are aware of diverse cultures, different art styles, and the periods of their production (p. 36).
- Communication Arts graduates have developed skills and attitudes which promote free inquiry, critical listening, receptiveness toward divergent view points, and willingness to support unpopular ideas (p. 56).
- Management Information Systems graduates have discussed issues surrounding ethics, security, and global management as they relate to Management Information Systems (p. 140).
- Biology graduates are prepared to articulate the fundamental importance of biology in their lives and in society (p. 77).
- Mathematics graduates are prepared to articulate the value of mathematics in their lives and in society (p. 86).
- Social Work graduates can apply critical thinking within the context of professional social work education and practice (p. 150).
- Nursing graduates have integrated knowledge for safe, effective care environments, health promotion and maintenance, psychosocial integrity and physiological integrity (p. 159)

The assessment practices fully outlined in Criterion 3 demonstrate that departments and divisions continue to be actively engaged in finding ways to improve actual student outcomes. Also detailed in Criterion 3C are the many experiential learning opportunities provided for MSU undergraduates; these also build on the general education foundation by helping students apply their knowledge base in the “real world” (see below for service learning initiatives).

**Graduate Education**

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25 BA Degree Statement of Purose. (add link)
26 MSU 2008-2008 Undergraduate Catalog – page numbers for examples indicated for ease of reference.
MSU graduate-level programs ensure that graduates are well-prepared in their fields through rigorous internal assessment procedures, execution of external accreditation standards, and performance on national licensure exams. Graduate program directors at Minot State University are charged with the responsibility of engaging in formative and summative assessment of their students throughout their programs (see Criterion 3A). In addition, graduate faculty committees, such as the Master of Education committee, constantly assess the curricular offerings, the standards, and the research requirements of students in order to be certain that students are adequately prepared for earning their degrees. Students in graduate programs must maintain a 3.0 (B) GPA in order to remain in Graduate School at MSU.

Each graduate program has clear objectives, which form the basis for all assessment.27 Five graduate programs at MSU engage in assessment as required by various accreditation agencies:

- Education: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
- Communication Disorders: the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
- School Psychology: NCATE and Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP)
- Business: International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE)
- Music: National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)

All other programs use an external evaluation component in their assessment plans. MSU has a regular schedule of program review for all graduate programs (see Criterion 3A).

Graduate level learning outcomes also demonstrate effective preparation for a life of continued learning. Examples from the Graduate Catalog include the following:

- Mathematics graduates are prepared to call upon a network of mathematics teachers for assistance and encouragement in teaching mathematics (p. 27).
- Education graduates are prepared to formulate plans for changes in professional practice, based on experience, professional literature and research, and then reflect on and evaluate those changes in relation to student learning (p. 32).
- Communication Disorders graduates have demonstrated self-assessment skills to facilitate self-supervision and independence (p. 37).
- Management graduates are prepared to evaluate knowledge creation and transfer (p. 43)
- Special Education graduates are prepared to engage in and facilitate appropriate communication and collaborative partnerships (p. 44).

Graduate students in the Communication Disorders program illustrate MSU’s success in preparing students. In the profession of Speech-Language Pathology, a minimum standard of competency is required before a master’s degree is conferred upon a student. National standards set by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) require that both knowledge and clinical standards be demonstrated by graduate students in order to meet accreditation standards. To ensure compliance, the Department of Communication Disorders has developed two separate publications, listing all standards that the student must complete prior to graduation. Each standard is checked off upon successful completion per semester.

Both employment rates and results from national licensure exams demonstrate MSU’s success in meeting the nationally-accepted knowledge and clinical standards in this field. Summary reports of past graduating classes indicate 100% employment rates for MSU graduates in Speech Pathology. Employer feedback in 2006 rated the MSU graduates between “4” and “5” (“5” being highest). Results of the national PRAXIS examination taken by graduate students upon graduation show that, in the past two years, the average score

27 Graduate Program Outcomes [http://www.minotstateu.edu/graduate/catalog/programs.shtml](http://www.minotstateu.edu/graduate/catalog/programs.shtml)

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for MSU Communication Disorders classes has been over 700, compared to the national average of 660. Furthermore, MSU graduates have passed the exam on the first trial at nearly a 100% rate.

**Independent Research and Capstone Experiences**

MSU programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels encourage students to engage in independent research and measure student progress through some kind of summative assessment mechanism. Students are generally expected to demonstrate not only a solid knowledge base within the major, but also the skills they have developed through a broad general education (rhetorical, analytical, and critical thinking skills, in particular). At the undergraduate level, these summative assessments generally take the form of a either a “capstone” experience (Senior Science Seminar, Senior Music Recital, Senior Honors Essay), a comprehensive examination (e.g., “Mock GRE” in biology), or a summative licensing examination (PRAXIS II in Teacher Education or National League for Nursing Comprehensive Examination in Nursing). Each program has its own rubric or benchmark level for defining success. In the Division of Science, for example, every senior seminar paper is formally read and refereed by two designated faculty members, and its public presentation is evaluated by all attending science faculty members according to a rubric\(^{28}\) that assesses not only the scientific knowledge and contribution of the presenter, but such factors as degree of originality in the work, presentation skill and use of media, rhetorical effectiveness, and audience-appropriateness of presentation. The table below offers a sampling of principal undergraduate majors and their summative assessment methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Means of Summative Outcomes Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Senior Show, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biology</strong></td>
<td>“Mock GRE,” PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chemistry</strong></td>
<td>Senior Seminar, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senior Project, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal Justice</strong></td>
<td>Field Experience, Senior Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>Senior Seminar, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Languages</strong></td>
<td>Senior Capstone Project, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geoscience</strong></td>
<td>Senior Seminar, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Historiography Course, Senior Seminar,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{28}\) Science Senior Seminar Evaluation Form. (add link)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Program Outcome Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>4 SH Capstone Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Senior Recital, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Senior Seminar, PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Senior Research Project, Practicum/Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>Senior Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Controllership Experience Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Information Systems</td>
<td>Information Plan Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Business Management Plan Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education and Health Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Senior Seminar, Practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addiction Studies</td>
<td>Senior Seminar, Practicum, Licensing Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Field Experience, Practicum, Licensing Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Disorders</td>
<td>Clinical Practicum,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Practicum, NLN Comprehensive Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>PRAXIS II (for BSE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1** -- Examples of undergraduate majors and specific program outcome assessments.
MSU likewise requires graduate students to conduct research and produce scholarship. Master’s degree students conduct research through capstone or culminating experiences to develop theses and project papers, to find solutions to business problems, and to engage in internships in various fields. Some examples of recent research conducted by graduate students include: ascertaining effectiveness of the use of journals in a second-grade math class, examining the guardian ad litem system in North Dakota, and determining the efficacy of a blended pedagogy (both face-to-face and online) in teaching college students.

Findings

- In the last decade, MSU has developed a solid, faculty-governed general education program that values the importance of the liberal arts and meets SBHE standards
- The 1997 “Five-Strand” model and four-year recertification process have provided uniform assessment practices for general education coursework across disciplines, though MSU needs to consider comprehensive program assessment
- Recent evidence of student and faculty dissatisfaction with the program has prompted serious faculty discussion about potential general education reform, with increased rigor as a goal. Furthermore, the general education program will need to be aligned with Vision 2013.
- Undergraduate and graduate-level programs delineate clear student learning outcomes and measure solid student achievement through summative assessments such as capstone coursework, licensure exams, senior projects, independent research, and theses.
- Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences have recently explored possible reform of the graduation requirements for a BA degree, with the aim of increasing rigor and requiring foreign language skills. MSU needs to follow up on this work and implement changes that will align its BA degree with national standards.

Core Component 4C

Minot State University assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Overview

The ongoing, faculty-guided curriculum development process at MSU is pragmatic, flexible, and responsive to student needs. Recent initiatives at MSU in the areas of diversity, innovation, and technological proficiency all indicate a campus that listens carefully to its constituents and responds proactively to change. The success of MSU graduates in securing employment within their disciplines attests to the usefulness of their programs. Data are collected by our career services team, and recent placements results are very positive:

MSU graduates have secured placements in many valued community and industry positions. Two graduates from MSU’s Math and Computer Science Department, for example, are the Director of Information Technology and the Network Manager for the state of North Dakota, while yet another has developed software essential to SEO Precision Optics’ laser steering mirror, a product marketed to such customers as Boeing.

**Diversity Curriculum Requirement**

Perhaps the most striking campus curricular development in recent years has been the 2006-07 institution by Faculty Senate of a six-credit “diversity” requirement for undergraduate students: three credits from general education and three credits within non-general education coursework. The Faculty Senate, responding to an increased need to foster diversity awareness among its largely rural and homogeneous student body, also concurrently established a Campus Diversity and Curriculum Committee (CDCC) to give proper oversight to diversity course certification. Only courses reviewed by the Curricular Diversity and Campus Climate Committee will be accepted as meeting the new diversity requirement. Certified courses will demonstrate a substantial and pervasive emphasis on issues, topics, and perspectives on race, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic class, gender, sexuality, age, (dis)abilities, language, nationality, or religion that have traditionally been underrepresented and/or marginalized in programs of study. Critical analysis of human diversity will be central and essential to the course content and course goals. Every course that is certified as meeting the MSU diversity requirements will be assessed using learning outcomes and a pre-test and post-test method developed by the CDCC.

The CDCC has approved learning outcomes that include the following:

*After successfully completing the required diversity classes, students will:*

- Appreciate the value, dignity, and worth of each individual, understanding that cultural differences will be manifested in multiple cultural expressions and differing points of view.
- Recognize the historical and current status of relations between minority-majority populations in order to appreciate the effects of socioeconomic status, gender, ethnic category, racial identification, and cultural aspect in the past, present, and into the future.
- Understand the components of effective citizenship as it relates to diversity, including global and multicultural perspectives, gaining awareness of socially just and equitable concepts in society as a whole as well as in specific cultures or subcultures.
Responsive Program and Course Initiatives

Response to societal trends may be seen in many areas of the university curriculum, in all colleges. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, for example, interdisciplinary programs have been or are being developed in such areas as Gender Studies, Forensic Chemistry, and Native American Studies. One outstanding example of programmatic innovation is the budding “Community and Environment Program,” now in “stage one” of the two-year NDUS approval process. This program emerged in 2005, initiated by faculty representing the natural sciences, social sciences, and business. Their goal was to create an interdisciplinary campus program aimed at contemporary issues of environment and energy. First discussions proposed three curricular tracks: (1) environmental quality monitoring, (2) environmental policy and social issues, and (3) environmental issues in the energy industry. Subsequent deliberations resulted in an expansion of program coursework beyond currently existing campus classes and the reconception of the proposed curriculum around a central theme of “sustainability.” If approved, the program will be offered in fall 2009.

Various departments on campus make particular effort in curricular planning to listen to the concerns and wishes of their constituents. The Department of Teacher Education and Human Performance holds a retreat each semester to examine and assess its programs, inviting a variety of stakeholders to join in faculty deliberations: alumni from teacher education programs, superintendents, local teachers, and current graduate and undergraduate students. These constituents help assess the currency of the curriculum and its application in the world of teaching, and they make suggestions for curricular change and implementation. The Department of Accounting and Finances likewise utilizes an advisory board, composed of local business leaders, to ensure its curriculum remains current and relevant. Feedback from a recent board meeting, for example, resulted in the curricular adoption of a new software application that has become the industry standard. The Department of Communication Disorders department recently created a new class, CD 540 “Supervision and Professional Issues” in Speech-Language Pathology, as the result of feedback from professionals in the field who have requested such a course for years.

Enhanced attention to diversity is now routinely shown in a large number of individual classes on campus. For example, the school music curriculum includes a focus on literature about diversity. Undergraduate teacher education majors must take the course “Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in America” as well as satisfy a diversity requirement within pre-service practica; teacher candidates are typically required to create and respond to a diversity profile of their students. The course “Globalization and Diversity in Education” is now required of MAT-Science graduates.

In acknowledgement of the many ways that technology is transforming student lives, the College of Business now offers a general education class, BIT 123 “Technology for Personal Development.” This class addresses both the positive and negative aspects of living in the “knowledge era” and includes issues such as identity theft. The approval of this class within the MSU general education program (after some campus debate) challenges traditional notions about how the generally educated person in the 21st Century will need to be equipped.

Social Responsibility Initiatives

Two recent campus initiatives have reflected a will on the part of all campus constituencies to exercise and impart principles of social responsibility: (1) a collaborative effort to promote service learning at MSU, and (2) the successful student-led effort to make MSU a smoke-free campus.

Individual courses at MSU have often united the goals of student learning with service to the community. Students in Social Work Methods III (SWK 247) complete a Social Action/Community Change Project, and in doing so serve the community in many innovative ways. Student projects have included: working with the American Red Cross to implement an emergency call center for Hurricane Katrina relief; serving as a volunteer coordinator for a local food pantry; and coordinating an athletic event between the Minot State University baseball team and the Minot Dream Catchers, a softball team for youth with physical challenges. The course “Service learning in Guatemala” (SWK 299) takes groups of students and community leaders to

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Guatemala, where they help build houses and do other volunteer work to meet the needs of the community. The trip is preceded by a semester spent studying theories and contexts regarding the culture and social issues participants will encounter; students also receive practical preparation for international travel. A new Honors Program class called “Global Citizenship and Service” helps students connect global and local social justice issues, to better understand their own potential leadership in effecting change (see Criterion 5C for further individual service learning initiatives on campus).

Vision 2013 Strategy Six (“Creating a Commitment to Civic Engagement, Service, and the Common Good) calls upon the institution to “[help] students understand the value of providing meaningful service for the welfare of others,” and it specifically recommends “support to promote and stimulate civic learning and service learning.” In 2005, MSU sent a group of interested administrators, faculty, and staff to a conference in Indianapolis to learn more about the possibilities of institutionalizing service learning on campus. That conference attendance inspired a year of volunteer research, grant investigation, and community focus group activity designed to explore what resources would be needed to fully incorporate service learning into the MSU curriculum, and what approaches to joint faculty/community development would help enhance such an effort. These efforts culminated in the planning and execution of a 2007 two-day regional conference at MSU called “Great Plains Connections: Linking Education and Community through Service.” Three nationally-known experts gave a variety of perspectives on service learning, and participants were invited to offer presentations about initiatives their classes, organizations, and institutions have undertaken in this area. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Intellectual Climate Committee (see Criterion 5B), the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the office of the President, the Center for Extended Learning, all three colleges, the Graduate School, the Minot Convention and Visitors Bureau, and area hotels. MSU faculty and students were invited to participate free of charge. This effort was highly successful, but in the future MSU will need to find or provide substantial funding for the support of continued progress in the service learning arena.

An organization named “Tobacco Free MSU” was first formed in Fall 2003, through informal partnership between the Nursing Department and Healthy Communities International (HCI). The American Colleges Health Association (ACHA) reviewed a potential plan for the campus, based upon current tobacco use and existing policies at MSU, and an informal coalition between campus and community members submitted a proposal for a tobacco-free campus policy to President Shaar and the MSU President’s Council on March 24, 2004.

Coalition members met informally with President Fuller in July 2004, and he recommended that an online survey open to all students, staff, and faculty first be conducted in order to assess support for the concept. Healthy Communities International subsequently conducted a survey in April and May of 2005 and developed a formal report. In Fall 2005, as part of an MSU class, Community Health Nursing students conducted a community assessment on tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke within the college-age population, focusing on MSU and incorporating results of the HCI survey. Nursing students subsequently recommended a campus policy to the MSU President, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, the Student Association, and the University Cabinet with favorable response. Healthy Communities International developed draft policy language and provided it to the Office of the President. President Fuller met with all of the above committees and requested formal votes; the policy was approved with recommended edits and became effective on June 1, 2006. Nursing students subsequently developed and led an extensive media effort during Spring Semester 2006 that included a focus group of smokers, a policy education campaign, a cessation education program, and a “social norming” campaign.

Findings

• The MSU faculty-led curriculum is useful and responsive to changing societal needs, as evidenced by a high rate of graduate placement, the development of the new six-credit diversity graduation

30 Vision 2013, p. 16
31 Healthy Communities International report (add link).
requirement, the creation of up-to-date interdisciplinary programs, attention given to the needs of industry, and the specific efforts of individual courses to acknowledge social and technological change.

• Service learning efforts have been ongoing across campus in individual courses, and progress has been made in raising awareness regarding these pedagogies. Identified as a new institutional priority, service learning initiatives will require a central coordinating office and resources devoted to faculty, staff, and community development.
• Effective student-led effort has resulted in MSU’s new “Smoke-free” policy. While not all campus constituents agree with the policy, it clearly demonstrates the concrete results of student activism and concern for social issues.

**Core Component 4D**

*Minot State University provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

- Undergraduate Policies
- Graduate Policies
- Faculty Policies
- IRB and IACUC
- Library Instruction

**Undergraduate Policies**

MSU publishes the following academic honesty statement for undergraduate students in its printed and online course catalog:

> Honesty and integrity are central to academic life at Minot State University. They create a trust necessary in a community of scholars. When that trust is violated by cheating in any form, the atmosphere of academic freedom is threatened. Cheating may affect the student in accordance with the faculty member’s grading policy, and/or it may result in student disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy (available in the Office of Student Affairs).  

Furthermore, the Student Handbook indicates, under “Standards of Conduct,” “Notwithstanding actions taken by civil authorities, the Vice President for Student Affairs or his/her designate may initiate disciplinary proceedings as outlined in Section IV against a student who: . . . Engages in any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to the misrepresentation of another’s work as one’s own.” The Student Handbook also states that “[u]se of NDUS computing facilities to commit acts of academic dishonesty will be handled through existing campus procedures which address allegations of academic dishonesty.”

Maintenance of the academic honesty policy is generally given over to individual instructors, and in cases of infraction the faculty is expected to document carefully any instances of cheating. If accused, the student is expected to appeal first to the instructor. If the situation remains unresolved, the instructor files an incident report with the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the student conduct process described in the Student Handbook (p. 37-38) is followed. Students can ultimately appeal to the Student Rights Committee.

Recognizing the increasing problem of internet-inspired plagiarism, the Faculty Senate in 2005 determined that MSU needed to improve the clarity of its academic honesty policy, because, as the minutes

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32 Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, p. 22
34 Student Handbook, p. 40
indicate, “infractions and consequences are at present vague. A guideline on plagiarism needs to be written.”

The Faculty Senate Executive Board on September 15, 2005, thus formally charged the Academic Policies Committee with production of a new policy on academic honesty (“including both preventative and punitive measures”) and with presenting prospective language to the senate. The committee reported to the Faculty Senate in December that it recommended the following: (1) an academic honesty link should be provided on the Minot State website, and (2) an academic honesty policy should be included in all campus syllabi. The committee believed such policy to be meant more for students than for faculty. A motion was passed by the Faculty Senate to accept the recommendations presented, and the committee was charged with making changes in language for the Faculty Senate to review at its next meeting. It was also proposed that entering students should receive not only the policy itself but examples of what proper citation ought to look like. The policy was again returned to committee in January for added language, and an official new Academic Honesty Policy was finally approved on February 2, 2006:

Minot State University is committed to academic integrity. Incidents of academic dishonesty may be documented by the faculty member with a copy of the documentation maintained by the department/division chair. A letter of explanation will be sent to the student. Cheating may affect the student in accordance with the faculty member’s grading policy. The student may appeal the faculty member’s penalty to the department chair. Student disciplinary action may result in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy. Academic dishonesty would include, but is not limited to, the following types of behaviors:

1. Misrepresenting another individual’s work as one’s own, e.g. plagiarism from hard copy or the Internet.
2. Copying from another student during an exam.
3. Altering one’s exam after grading for the purpose of enhancing one’s grade.
4. Submitting the same paper to more than one class without the prior approval of the instructors.
5. Use of any material or device not approved by the instructor during an exam.
6. Turning in reports which are intended to be based on field collection data but, in fact, are not.
7. Failure to respect the confidentiality of persons served or studied and to maintain the professional standards for ethical conduct as set forth in The Handbook of School Psychology published by the National Association of School Psychologists.

Despite these excellent intentions and the formation of a solid policy, nothing new or faculty-approved appeared on the MSU website, in print, or on any faculty syllabi until after this self-study discovered the lapse during summer 2007. The only exception is an appearance of an early version of the new policy in the online MSU Adjunct Faculty Handbook.

This apparent lack of communication and follow-through after official Faculty Senate action, sometimes blamed on the turnover of elected officers, shows a structural deficiency that needs to be addressed. The lack of central, accessible archiving, mentioned in Criterion 1E, may also contribute to failed implementation of measures passed by the Faculty Senate. This policy is of particular concern, as students need clear guidelines, and faculty members, while increasingly encountering plagiarism in the classroom, do not clearly understand methods of institutional recourse. With its strong emphasis on integrity and strength of character in Vision 2013, MSU must find ways to communicate its expectations and policies in clear and timely fashion.

MSU does follow up when clear infractions of the Academic Honesty Policy occur. Because, in casual reference, education students are sometimes advised to “steal” their lesson ideas (the jist being to learn from the experience of others), it is not surprising that MSU education students have sometimes seen it as perfectly acceptable to lift lesson ideas and lesson plans directly off the internet for use in their practice teaching. However, education faculty are united in denouncing this as legitimate submission of original lesson designs. In

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35 Faculty Senate minutes of 1 September 2005
(http://www.minotstateu.edu/senate/min_05_06/fs_o_09_01_05.pdf)
36 Faculty Senate Minutes, February 2, 2006. (Add link)
37 Adjunct Faculty Handbook (p. 32) section on academic integrity
(http://www.minotstateu.edu/adjunct_faculty_handbook.swf)
fall 2005, for example, eight students in one education class responded to an assignment by presenting substantial segments of obviously plagiarized material, some under the name of more than one student. A meeting was called by the Teacher Education Department chairperson for all faculty and practicum students. For each student named on plagiarized lesson plans (whether alone or in partnership), a copy of the standard “Inappropriate Dispositions” reporting form was forwarded to the academic advisor. All students were referred to the MSU Student Handbook policy and to policies on other campuses relating to academic dishonesty. A formal declaration was made that detection of any further cases that term would result in failure of any course involved. The faculty chose to view this event as an opportunity for all teacher education candidates to understand plagiarism as a legal and ethical matter, and to recognize that true teaching is not simply borrowing ideas from others.

**Graduate Policies**

A relatively clear “Policy on Academic Honesty” has been listed in the MSU Graduate Course Catalog:

> Each department has established policies on Academic Honesty. Should a student become involved in circumstances which breach a program's policy, that policy will be adhered to in resolving the honesty issue. The department chairperson will inform the Dean of the Graduate School and the student in writing of any changes in the student’s standing in the department as a result of the Academic Honesty Policy and of specific honesty infraction. The Dean of the Graduate School will officially inform the student by letter of any changes in graduate status.38

The catalog then details an “Appeal for Academic Honesty” process which can occur at four progressive levels: individual faculty, relevant department, Graduate School, and Graduate Student Rights Committee, which makes final decisions and notifies all parties. This procedure appears on the Graduate School website as well, although the original honesty policy did not at the time this self-study was written. The new electronic document, the “Graduate Toolkit,” indicates an additional statement under “Academic Honesty”: “Graduate students are expected to submit work that is their own. In the event that your academic honesty is questioned, you should consult the Appeal Policy for Academic Honesty outlined in the Graduate Catalog.” (p.3) Honesty policies and procedures therefore appear to be communicated more clearly to MSU graduate students than to undergraduates.

**Faculty Policies**

The faculty is bound by statements concerning allegations of misconduct in research as defined by the Faculty Handbook. The statement defines misconduct as: “…fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the research community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research.”39

Minot State University has both patent and copyright policies as defined and discussed in the Faculty Handbook.40 In general the patent policy says that any invention developed by faculty, students, employees, and associates through the use of MSU’s facilities, time, or materials must be reported to the Faculty Development and Research Committee. Profits from such inventions shall be shared by the inventors, MSU, and any other involved parties. The copyright policy states that ownership of written work rests with the individual faculty member. If MSU supports the production of the work, the University will be reimbursed out of the royalties.

In recent years, no action has been required on these policies.

**IRB and IACUC**

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38 Graduate Catalog 2006-2008, p. 21
39 Faculty Handbook, p. 55
40 Link to faculty handbook, p. 57

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The Institutional Review Board (IRB) operates out of the MSU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The IRB reviews and approves all research involving human subjects to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed to protect those subjects from harm. The Assistant to the Dean of the Graduate School chairs the committee. Most of the reviewed protocols come under the exempt category. Over the past six years, no protocols have been denied. The most frequent reason for requiring resubmission of protocols has been due to corrections or additions needed on informed consent letters. Protocols are archived for up to seven years and then destroyed. During the six years from 2001-2006 the following numbers of people had their research protocols approved by MSU’s IRB:

- 2001: 47 students, 7 faculty and staff
- 2002: 47 students, 10 faculty and staff
- 2003: 54 students, 21 faculty and staff
- 2004: 31 students, 16 faculty and staff
- 2005: 28 students, 15 faculty and staff
- 2006: 29 students, 15 faculty and staff

In the context of the INBRE program in the sciences (see Criterion 4A), under the National Academy of Sciences Guidelines for the Care and Use of Mammals in Neuroscience and Behavioral Research (IACUC), three cases have been reviewed since MSU’s assurance became effective in March of 2005; all were approved. One project has since been completed, and two remain in progress.

**Library Instruction**

The Gordon B. Olson Library plays an integral part in providing Minot State University’s students, faculty, and staff with skills and resources necessary for the responsible use of knowledge. Instruction librarians introduce new students to the library during the new student orientation program. MSU’s librarians collaborate with faculty to tailor instruction to student assignments in all levels of classes, so that students are challenged to develop increasingly sophisticated information literacy skills and are instructed and encouraged in the ethical use of such skills as they proceed through their programs.

In addition, the library at Minot State University subscribes to two services through the Copyright Clearance Center that help members of the MSU community to use information ethically. The Transaction Reporting Service assists the library in convenient payment of royalties to publishers for journal articles obtained for students and faculty through interlibrary loan. “Electronic Course Content Services” also allow the library to pay royalties to publishers for materials placed on electronic reserve by professors for students to use. The Gordon B. Olson Library, with its seating for 900 students, room for more than 500,000 volumes, fully-equipped computer laboratories, 151,000 books, 1,000 periodical titles, 98,000 maps, and 575,000 pieces of microfilm, continues to play a fundamental role in ethical research conducted by faculty and students at MSU.

**Findings**

- MSU has exercised a longstanding undergraduate Academic Honesty Policy that is carried out most often by individual faculty. Students have appeal recourse through the Office of Student Affairs and the Student Rights Committee. While the old policy has been officially updated by Faculty Senate, it has not been communicated effectively to students.
- Institutional follow-up to Faculty Senate action is not consistent. Clear implementation procedures for approved actions need to be established, and more attention paid to communicating change to constituencies.
- Academic Honesty Policies for Graduate students are clear and communicate appeal procedures effectively. Graduate student research follows IRB protocols.
- Faculty are bound to clear guidelines for academic integrity, as published in the *Faculty Handbook*.  

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The Gordon B. Olson Library offers valuable services which strengthen student and faculty research integrity.

**Strengths, Challenges, and Actions Relating to Criterion Four**

**Strengths**
- MSU supports high-quality, nationally acknowledged faculty and student research efforts, through policy, financial resources, and public recognition of achievements.
- MSU supports a multitude of continuing education opportunities for constituencies of all ages, through the Graduate School and the Center for Extended Learning.
- Since 1997, MSU has undertaken the thoughtful institution and reliable execution of a five-strand general education assessment model. The campus shows a willingness to consider seriously how best to deliver a liberal arts and sciences background, evident in MSU’s recent scanning efforts regarding general education, the open debate about its future, and a concerted effort within the College of Arts and Sciences to raise the standards for the BA degree.
- Student learning outcomes are clearly defined and communicated for MSU programs, and potential graduates demonstrate both their proficiency within the discipline and their critical thinking/rhetorical skills through required capstone classes, independent research projects, and theses.
- The new, thoughtfully crafted six-credit diversity requirement for graduation reflects MSU’s ongoing commitment to the inclusion of diversity issues within its curriculum.
- The Gordon B. Olson Library provides extensive information literacy and research integrity training for students, and follows best practice regarding copyright.

**Challenges and Proposed Actions**

- **Challenge:** MSU needs to identify resources for important initiatives that will assist in the production of first-rate research and teaching.
  - **Proposed action:** -- Find the necessary resources to:
    - implement a faculty sabbatical policy.
    - provide adequate staff and administrative support for the Academic Projects and Research Office.
    - create a central campus clearinghouse for service learning initiatives.

- **Challenge:** The rapid growth of online and distance learning has created market-driven pressure for course and program development.
  - **Proposed action:** -- Continue to improve communication between CEL and campus units, streamline processes, and align goals.

- **Challenge:** Dissatisfaction with general education on the part of students and some faculty reveals concerns about sufficient rigor.
  - **Proposed actions:**
    - Conduct serious campus-wide reconsideration of the current model.
    - Consider summative program assessment for general education.

- **Challenge:** The authentic consideration of policies such as the Academic Honesty Policy is undermined by a lack of institutional follow-through for Faculty Senate measures.
**Proposed actions:**
- Create a communications loop that tracks the status of implementation for approved measures.
- Create an institutional system that identifies responsible parties for implementation and that requires conclusive action and clear reporting.