ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Northland Community & Technical College
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

April 26 - 28, 2010

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The team from the Higher Learning Commission conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Northland Community and Technical College for continued accreditation at the associate degree level. The team also examined the College’s low Financial Ratios and Composite Indices scores and its plans for increasing the acceptable levels.

B. Organizational Context

To understand and appreciate the College’s culture, it is important to note that the current institution is the result of a series of mergers. In 1949, the school district’s Technical Institute began offering vocational programs in Thief River Falls; it moved to its present site in 1968, where it began sharing space with neighboring Thief River Falls State Junior College, which opened in 1965. The two institutions were co-located in 1978 and commenced operating as a single institution in 1995. Meanwhile, in East Grand Forks (approximately 50 miles from Thief River Falls), the Area Vocational Technical Institute began offering its first classes in 1973.

In 1992, the Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks technical colleges merged briefly, along with technical institutes in Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, and Wadena to form Northwest Technical College. With the creation of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) System in 1995, the co-located Thief River Falls sites became Northland Community and Technical College, while the five remaining sites became Northwest Technical College. The final merger took place in 2003, uniting the campuses of East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls as Northland Community and Technical College, a comprehensive community and technical college, with on-ground sites at Roseau and Mahnomen and an online program. This is the first comprehensive review of the merged institution.

The team observed evidence of strong campus identification and affiliation on the part of students, faculty, staff, and local residents with one of the two main campuses. Such strong continuing campus loyalties have limited the rate of progress in achieving the one college concept. Yet, efforts to promote the one college, one mission, and one vision theme abound. The College President and Vice President are sensitive to this issue and have undertaken steps to promote the unified college concept.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

The team was well aware of the fact that Northland Community and Technical College (College), a valued member of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, has
two main campuses representing distinctly different communities. Respecting these differences yet evaluating the College as a single entity was a challenge for the team in terms of how it spent its time at each site. A decision was made to house the team in the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area and devote one full day’s visit to each campus (East Grand Forks on Monday; Thief River Falls on Tuesday). The exit conference on Wednesday was held at East Grand Forks. Another measure undertaken to ensure greater involvement of College faculty, staff, and community representatives was to schedule meetings in rooms with a poly com connection so that invitees could participate at times convenient for them. This also afforded College faculty, staff, and students multiple opportunities to be heard and to contribute to the team’s fact-finding and verification processes.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

The team visited the East Grand Forks (EGF) and Thief River Falls (TRF) campuses. In addition, the team toured the aviation site located just outside Thief River Falls. Telephone conferences were held with College representatives stationed at the Roseau and Mahnomen sites.

E. Distance Education Reviewed

The team reviewed the College’s distance education offerings and delivery systems. The team met with the executive director of Distance Minnesota, a Minnesota Learning Coalition Initiative, of which the College is a member. A thorough examination was made of the two Northland Community and Technical College programs offered online: AAS Practical Nursing and AA Liberal Arts and Sciences. The College takes measures of its online enrollment the following categories: (1) Regularly enrolled college students taking online courses or online clinical/internships—student headcount and count of courses offered; and (2) High school students taking college courses—student headcount and count of online courses delivered. For FY 2010, a total of 1,918 students (unduplicated) regularly enrolled college students took online courses through 181 courses offered directly by the College and 794 offered through Distance Minnesota. For the same period, there were 76 high school students (unduplicated) enrollees enrolled in eight courses offered by the College and 29 courses offered through Distance Minnesota.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

Executive Administration
MnSCU Board of Trustees (1)
MnSCU Chancellor
MnSCU Senior Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs
MnSCU Director for Academic Programs
MnSCU Associate Vice Chancellor – Financial Reporting
College President
Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs
Dean of Academic Affairs – EGF
Dean of Academic Affairs – TRF
Dean of Student Services – EGF
Dean of Student Development – TRF
Dean of Management Education
Dean of Workforce and Economic Development
Director of Human Resources/Executive Director of Administrative Services
Foundation Executive Director

Management and Staff
Physical Plant Supervisor – EGF
Physical Plant Supervisor – TRF
Director, Registration and Advising--TRF
Business Manager
Director of Lifelong Learning
Librarian – TRF
Librarian – EGF
Senior Personnel Officer
Interim Accounting Supervisor
Director of Marketing and Communications
Director of Aviation Program
Director of Learning Center/Disability Services
Director of Enrollment Management
Director of Financial Aid
Director of Workforce Development
Executive Director, Distance Minnesota
Registrar--EGF
Director of Technology
Interim Director of Finance
Academic Coordinator
Director of Institutional Research
Nursing Student Retention Specialist – Mahnomen Site
Dean of Student Services & Dean of Student Development

Faculty and Faculty Committees
Academic Affairs and Standards Council (13)
Open Meetings with Faculty (31)
Assessment and Program Review Committee (11)
Deans of Academic Affairs (2)
Aviation Program Faculty (4)
Nursing Faculty (3)

Administrative Committees
Self-Study Steering Committee
President’s Cabinet
Shared Governance Committee (17)
Marketing Enrollment Team
Diversity Committee (13)
Retention Committee (16)

Students
Student Senate – EGF (6)
Student Senate – TRF (11)
Open Meetings with Students (6)

Others
Community Advisory Boards Members (8)
Open Meetings with Support Staff (25)
Open Meetings with Supervisors (6)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

Self-Study Report (Hard Copy)
www.my.ims.MnSCU.edu/index.asp (Virtual Resource Room)
www.MnSCU.edu/board/index.html
www.northlandcollege.edu (including sub-sites)
www.youtube.com
http://distance.minnesota.edu
www.mntransfer.org/educations
www.northlandcollege.edu/handbook
Campus Crime Rate Report
Institutional Learner Outcomes
Academic Calendar
Student Handbook
2008-2010 Catalog
FY10 Integrated Planning and Budgeting Calendar
Northland Strategic Plan 2014
Adjunct Faculty Handbook
Northland Vision 2010
Technology Plan
Technology Committee Minutes
Facilities Plan
Fall Semester 2010/2011 Courses
Academic Advisory Committee Minutes
Diversity Plan
Marketing Enrollment Team Strategic Plan FY2010
Marketing Plan FY 2008
Foundation Annual Reports FY 2005-2009
Selected Academic Program Reviews
Student Affairs Assessment Plan draft
Selected Academic Assessment Reports FY 2008, FY 2009
MnSCU System Audits FY 2007 – FY 2009
Program Assessments
SENSE Data on Northland Survey of Entering Student Engagement
Bargaining Unit Contracts
Bonding Bill Chapter 258
Continuing Education Course Catalog
Money Management Brochure
Northland Profile
Perkins Consortium Report FY 2009
NCA Change Request Report
Opportunities for Improvement from 2005 visit
NCA Evaluation Team Report and Advancement Section
Local Economic Impact report (materials submitted on flash drive)
Position Description Institutional Researcher
Budget Book 2009 for FY 2010
Workforce of the Future
Historical Organizational Charts
Organizational Charts Oct 14, 2009
Organizational Charts April 14, 2010
The Pioneer News
Liberal Arts Program Matrix
Faculty Classification
Nursing Accreditation Library
Financial Calculations Document
Financial Trends & Highlights FY 2009
Composite Financial Index—Fiscal Year 2009
MnSCU Supplement to the Annual Financial Report for Year Ended June 30, 2009
Capital Appropriation Revenue Explanation (email)

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The College began its self-study process in December 2007 by appointing a steering committee, chair, and editor. This leadership group first attended a Commission sponsored workshop in February 2008 before establishing three overall goals for the
self-study process: (1) Inclusive as to the involvement of as many constituents as possible; (2) usefulness of the process beyond serving as an accreditation report; and (3) accessible in an electronic format. Once the goals were established, the steering committee sent several of its members to the Commission’s 2008 annual meeting in Chicago. Throughout the visit, the team was presented with evidence that a great many of the College’s community – internal and external – participated in the self-study process and it was indeed an internal push that led the steering committee to connect the aims of the self-study process to the newly undertaken strategic planning project. The overall timetable development for the self-study process was appropriate and met the objectives for success as articulated by the College.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The team agrees that the Self-Study Report provides an accurate assessment of the College’s resources, planning strategies, current challenges, and potential problems with proposed remedies. The report’s electronic format was appreciated as well as the College’s Virtual Resource Room. Further, the team appreciates the College’s willingness to provide an index (page 269) linking the evidence provided by the College in fulfillment of the core components with the five Criteria for Accreditation, which aided the team in matching evidence gleaned from on-site interviews and/or gathered from the various readings of prepared texts and source documents.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the set of responses offered by the College with respect to addressing previously identified challenges from 2000 (comprehensive) and 2005 (focused) visits to be adequate.

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

The team reviewed evidence that documented the College’s multiple notifications of the upcoming comprehensive visit to external and internal constituents and the opportunity to submit third-party comments directly to the Commission. One third-party comment was received from a current student. The comments referenced several issues from disappointment with the quality of instruction in a particular class to the cost of instruction for that class to the perceived unprofessional behavior of front-line staff. These issues were discussed in detail with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dean of Student Development, and Dean of Student Services. The College staff led, by the Vice President, offered pledges that while the issues might be debatable, steps would be taken to monitor more closely the quality of instruction in the delivery of the identified class and the behavior of all front-line staff. They acknowledged that nothing could be done regarding the tuition cost. The team accepts the College’s commitment to address the student’s issues.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team has reviewed the College’s responses to the Federal Compliance components. The team’s assessment is attached to the report.
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.

a. The College has aligned its mission, vision, and strategic plan with priorities established by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Board of Trustees which state a commitment to offering “higher education that meets the personal and career goals of a wide range of individual learners. . . [and which] sustains vibrant economies throughout the state. The System Strategic Plan has established priorities for increasing student access, promoting and measuring high-quality learning programs and services, enhancing the economic competitiveness of the state and its regions, and for promoting innovation to meet future educational needs. Discussions with the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students verify that the mission is clearly understood by the constituents. An inclusive strategic planning process, as well as the decision-making processes, keeps the mission of the College as the center focal point. The individuals interviewed were clear on how their role supports the mission of the College and how their work adds to providing a quality learning environment.

b. The mission statement is featured prominently on each campus, on the College’s website, in student handbooks, and in the college catalog. These documents are also made available in alternative media for those who have language or visual impairments. The team concludes that the College fully understands its mission and purpose and has articulated it very well to the general public.

c. The College’s mission statement attests to its commitment “to creating a quality learning environment for all learners through partnerships with students, communities, businesses, and other educational institutions” and to its commitment to support its learners “through the use of partnerships, innovation, and technology.” These attestations are supported by the priorities stated in its strategic plan and in its operational plans for facilities, technology, student life, enrollment management and retention. For example, the college has developed effective partnerships with area K-12 systems in support of dual enrollment, with four-year universities to support transfer for its students, and with area businesses in support of economic growth in farm management, business, allied health, and aviation.

d. The College most recently reviewed its mission documents as part of the 2008 strategic planning process. In support of its mission, college personnel defined three priorities: 1) Inspire Student Success 2) Cultivate High Quality Programs, Services & Employees and 3) Revolutionize Growth Strategies to Sustain Vibrant Learning Communities. This review process included both internal and external constituents who state a strong commitment to seeing the College achieve this mission. Conversations with the college staff and
external community members demonstrated a clear understanding of the mission and their respective roles in assuring the fulfillment of the College’s mission.

e. The strategic decisions of the College are mission-driven. The strategic planning process, the financial planning, the facility planning, and the work done on developing program outcomes are all done with the mission as the driving force. The East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls campuses are very conducive to student learning. The satellite site at the Thief River Falls airport is also conducive to student learning. The site at Roseau was developed in conjunction with the community members of Roseau, and in response to a need for higher education in the community. In addition, there are new and emerging partnerships in the aviation maintenance program, which includes the receipt of a $5 million dollar grant for an unmanned aircraft maintenance training center.

f. Through observation and discussions with members of the campus make it clear that planning processes are consistent with the goals of the strategic plan. The budgeting priorities are done with academics and the focus on quality programs at the forefront. While the State funding of the College is expected to drop in the upcoming years, the College is working through a process to prioritize where resources should be used. In addition, there are clear long-term goals put forth in the strategic plan to increase foundation revenue by the year 2014.

g. One of the primary goals of the administrative and academic subunits was to develop program outcomes for all of the degree programs offered at the College. They have accomplished this goal and as such can ensure that the graduates are receiving a high quality learning education. The College is also in the process of hiring an additional dean (new position) of nursing which will strengthen the academic team and shows a commitment to students. The College’s collaboration with other higher education institutions is demonstrated through the various articulation agreements that are in place at other Minnesota colleges and universities as well as the University of North Dakota. They also participate in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum which ensures that students will have a seamless transfer of general education courses.

h. The Board of Trustees of the System endorses the mission, aims, and purposes of Northland Community and Technical College while allowing it sufficient autonomy to develop its unique set of programs and services. Testimony to the team by the Chancellor of MnSCU System that the current president was selected, in part, because of her ability to carry out the College’s unique mission underscores the fact that all parties operate with the state management philosophy. An important demonstration of the MnSCU commitment to the College is the fact that Chancellor met with the visiting team in-person and had one of his liaisons at the campus for the duration of the visit. In addition, the Board of Trustees was available via poly com for a meeting with the visiting team. These meetings show a dedication to the College and the importance of the College within the overall Minnesota higher
education system. It also shows that the Board understands its role and acts accordingly.

i. The MnSCU Chancellor stated that the College President is vested with the autonomy to lead the College; the team accepts this pledge as proof of the Board’s ability to allow the College President to exercise appropriate leadership at the local level. In hiring the current president, the MnSCU Board set forth three main goals as a means of providing upfront guidance and support deemed necessary to ensure the College’s success: manage the collective bargaining process, manage and build external relationships, and change the infrastructure for processes and systems at the College. These pillars provide another example of the attention and appropriate measures taken by the Board and the Chancellor.

j. There are standing committees at the College that have unique charges. The President’s Cabinet is made up of many administrators from the College. It is responsible for setting the direction of the College, creating policy, and budgeting for each fiscal year. There is a representative from the Cabinet on each standing committee which allows for ease in communication between the groups. Five members of the Cabinet serve on the Shared Governance Council. The Shared Governance Council is made up of faculty and administrators from both campuses and meets on a monthly basis. It is a faculty-driven committee per the committee makeup and does not make decisions but serves in an advisory capacity for other committees, including the Cabinet. The team feels the College has effective governance structures in place to accomplish its mission based on statements rendered by faculty, staff, and students.

k. There has been progress made in creating positions that are College-based rather than campus-based. In Summer 2008, a Dean of Student Services and a Dean of Student Development position were created for the oversight of respective responsibilities at both campuses. This was a positive step towards the integration of services college-wide rather than a single separate campus focus. In meetings with students at both campuses, the assignment of responsibilities for these two dean positions was praised. Students applauded the recognition to the uniqueness of the campuses and the diversity of the programming led by these deans. For example, the Thief River Falls art and athletics programs are solid and bring great visibility to the College. Efforts made to include East Grand Forks students in such activities has been made and viewed positively by all participants.

l. The College’s web-site has a page which promotes diversity; and college personnel have developed a diversity plan and a retention plan which focus on increasing enrollment/persistence rates for students of color and other under-represented populations and has begun national marketing of programs like aviation to attract students from other parts of the country. The College has increased the number of Native American, African-American, and Asian students over the past two years; it started a nursing program at the White Earth Reservation. Another evidence of support for mission is The Access, Opportunity, and Success Initiative which provides a mentor at each campus to work with students of color, Pell-eligible, and first-
generation students and a recent proposal submitted for a TRIO Student Support Services grant in the fall of 2009 to augment services to at-risk students. Overall, the team found the College’s goals of increasing diversity congruent with its mission.

m. The two Community Advisory Boards for the College are well aware of the mission of the college. Conversations with members from both boards demonstrated their commitment to the mission of career training as well as academic transfer of the merged college district. The board members’ understanding of the role of the college and its two campuses to the communities served is clear and strongly articulated. Community members stressed a strong commitment to the students served and attested to the quality of education which appears to meet both the needs of the communities and the expectations of transfer institutions.

n. The organizational chart provides a visual and current structure for the operations of the College. It was apparent from conversations with faculty and staff that there is understanding within the organization as to which positions hold responsibility for specific ongoing operations. Even in times of change, interim appointments are made and communicated to all employees. The leadership of the college is provided by the College President, the President’s Cabinet, the Shared Governance Council, the Academic Affairs and Standards Council, and Division and Department chairs. The President has set the tone for shared governance while maintaining appropriate executive leadership of the institution. Additionally, the President serves on leadership committees for the MnSCU system. This service adds value and insights to the college district.

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

a. In reviewing the policies of the College, there are different bodies shown as the last and maybe final approval. In some cases it is the President’s Cabinet and in others the Academic Affairs and Standards Council. Although it is appropriate for policies to originate from different committees and that the titles of governing committees may change over time, it would help clarify the authority of policies if the final approval was relegated to one official body.

b. Although the College’s mission and vision statements do not specifically address a commitment to multiculturalism, there appeared to be loosely developed operational plans for retention, diversity, and student life that seeks to improve inclusion and multiculturalism. While some faculty reported adding multicultural components to their curricula, and the College plans to continue recruiting students of color, the College remains less-than-fully committed to the MnSCU System goals and outcomes. The students and some staff point to the College’s decision to discontinue its support for the Mahnomen nursing program as proof of the lack of commitment.

c. Working in conjunction with the MnSCU System, the College has its own set of policies that direct the specific work of staff. Policies are reviewed and
updated as needed. A review of the existing policies showed revisions as late as 2009. As some policies showed final review and approval by the President’s Cabinet, some by the Academic Affairs & Standards Council (AASC) and others by the Shared Governance Council, it is unclear as to which body has the ultimate approval over policies.

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

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up.

None

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.

   a. The College uses an integrated planning and budgeting process to establish funding priorities in relation to its mission and strategic goals. Over the past few years, it has renovated both campuses to include impressive entries which underscore its commitment to quality education, exceptional student commons areas with comfortable furniture, workstations, new computers, wireless access, and centralized student services. Classrooms and labs are well-equipped and modern, testifying to the college’s commitment to quality learning environments. Although the pullback of state operating funds presents a financial challenge, the College’s leadership team has developed a clear and transparent strategy for realigning costs to ensure core services and programs are minimally affected.

   b. Recent financial challenges have caused the College to cut some positions and to terminate some low-producing programs while sustaining key student services and academic programs. College leadership wisely decided to use some Recovery Act funds to employ a Director of Institutional Research to improve the use of data in decision making in tough times and to provide some student services personnel to ensure students have access to academic support services. Other cost efficiency measures include a re-examination of faculty release time, developing a two-year course rotation schedule, consolidating some...
sections to ensure the most efficient use of faculty resources, eliminating low-producing programs, eliminating some technology mentors for faculty, and raising student/faculty ratios slightly. These measures indicate that the College’s planning processes are flexible enough to respond to the current economic challenges.

c. By Minnesota law, the College must ensure a balanced budget each year. For FY2010, the College’s share of the state’s educational deficit is expected to be $1.6 million. To meet this challenge, the President has engaged all college employees in an examination of current expenses to propose possible budget reductions. The president communicates frequently and openly with employees about the challenges and has engendered a general commitment to sustaining educational quality despite the financial challenges. Team members found strong evidence through conversations with college personnel and their examination of planning documents of employee commitment to accepting additional duties and reducing non-mission critical expenses in order to weather the current difficulties.

d. Faculty, administrators, and support staff all indicated a wide variety of professional development opportunities provided by the College and/or the MnSCU System, including tuition waivers, technology training, safety training, diversity and teamwork training, as well as line item funds for faculty to attend conferences related to their disciplines. The College annually provides $250/per faculty member for professional development and $500,000 for administrators, staff, and faculty through several funding options including payroll advances.

e. The College began a new strategic planning process in 2008, using the Appreciative Inquiry technique to engage a broad contingent of constituencies from the College and its communities. Currently, the institution is in the final stage of this planning process. Although it is too soon to evaluate the efficacy of this planning process, team members were impressed by employees’ knowledge of the plan and their commitment to its fulfillment by developing well-detailed departmental plans which support defined strategic goals. The MnSCU Chancellor also expressed strong system support for the College, as well as the commitment from the System to helping the College address the financial challenges facing the state.

f. The state of Minnesota is running a multi-billion dollar deficit and as such, the public higher education institutions received less funding. During FY 2009 the state decided to pullback $381,000 of encumbered funds from the College, which was prohibited from covering the short-fall from its reserves. In addition, the College expects to receive a decrease of $1.6 million in state support for FY 2010. In light of these budget constraints, the College now has a Budget Book that explains the financial reality at the College and how they can work their way through it. The financial plan has been developed in a collaborative manner with input from various constituents from within as well as outside the College. The President’s Cabinet also did a sealed-envelope exercise in which they
came to a meeting with suggested cuts within their respective departments. This exercise made clear that any area could be cut and that there is a collaborative approach to decision-making. The team recognizes the severity of such budget impacts on the College and offers some advice in the Advancement Section for dealing with the low financial ratios and indices.

g. There is now an integrated budgeting and planning process throughout the College. This process links budget requests to a strategic goal which ensures that projects being funded are in alignment with the overall direction of the College. As part of the process, any employee can provide suggestions or comments regarding the budgetary issues via an online form accessible through the College website. The process has been clearly articulated and received favorably by administrators and faculty who spoke of everyone having to share the sacrifices that must be made.

h. The Strategic Plan 2014 lists, as one of its objectives, “develop new programs and delivery methods to address the needs of learners and regional economies.” This objective will be met by providing short-term and flexible training for students and by enhancing the use of online technology. The need for alternative learning options is being addressed through short-term and flexible training as this is what is being requested by many students. The infusion of technology into programs, either through Desire2Learn, or through on-line course delivery, points to a pedagogical shift in learning. The College-wide technology needs are covered in the Technology master plan and link to goals in the strategic plan. In meeting with the Chief Technology Officer there is evidence that the College is keeping up-to-date with the technology needs of students and staff.

i. As with all colleges during this time of limited state resources, the College operates with a conservative philosophy of aligning institutional priorities with the budget realities. The fact that the College was able to achieve this during the FY2010 year without an increase in student tuition is another testimony to the appropriate and careful alignment of budget to priorities set by the strategic plan. Meetings with faculty and staff consistently stated that the college budget is more transparent and systematized. Staff is assured of opportunities to share ideas for increased efficiencies, new revenue streams, and enhancement of effective processes and procedures. To meet the projected constricted revenue from the state for FY2011, the College has suspended two programs but still continues to provide administrative support at the TRF campus for these programs as well as online on the EGF campus. Other areas for increased efficiencies are also under review. The team took note of the College’s realism in terms of future programs when considering whether or not to pursue certain options.

j. Comments from faculty, students, staff and the community members consistently attest to the College’s commitment to the fulfillment of its mission in providing accessible, quality education to its students.
Records indicate that students are able to achieve a quality education that meets the needs of the community in career training and also allows students, who choose, to go onto four year institutions to successfully achieve bachelor degrees. In meeting with the College’s advisory board members it was clear that they were part of the visioning and environmental scanning exercises involved with strategic planning. Their participation in the process also demonstrates their commitment to providing insight on emerging trends in their respective industries.

k. To appropriately meet the College’s mission within the allocated resources, the President and her Executive Committee implemented strategies which are increasing the efficiencies of the organization while maintaining the integrity of the college’s mission and commitment to excellence. All Cabinet members assisted in the identification of areas for budget cuts as well as opportunities for resource development. An online budget forum allowed all employees to generate ideas that could be reviewed and implemented if appropriate. One example of a revenue generating idea was the implementation of a transcript fee. Examples of efficiencies include reductions in utility consumption and a modest increase (15/1) in the student/faculty ratio with a goal of 17/1. Realizing that data analysis is critical to making long range decisions, a commitment was made to the hiring of an institutional researcher. This decision has been applauded by faculty and staff across the College.

l. Professional development opportunities exist for the faculty and staff. Money is available in each budget year for employees to participate in conferences and webinars. Faculty can take sabbaticals every seven years, or alternatively after six years, with full pay for a half-year or 2/3 for a full-year. Moreover, both campuses have Centers for Teaching and Learning which is evidence of the College’s commitment to improving the quality of instruction by offering services for its faculty-staff at no charge to them personally or their departmental budgets. The team viewed considerable evidence of the College’s use of resources to support the degree completion of its employees.

m. Change is the one word that can best describe what has been the primary focus since new president was appointed. The College has done a lot of restructuring and is looking to further this effort in the coming years. In addition to restructuring they have changed the way that budgeting is being done by getting input from faculty and staff across the College. The changes are innovative and part of the overall strategic plan. Innovation was witnessed in talking with the Aviation Program Director. Knowing the employment prospects on the commercial side of aviation are not growing, the focus has been on training for unmanned aerial operations because the employment prospect for Unmanned Aircraft Systems Maintenance Technicians has been and continues to grow significantly. The Department of Defense has named the Grand Forks Air Force Base as the center for unmanned aerial operations. The College has positioned itself to be the only training center in the country.
n. The College understands the importance of program review and intentionally engages in a series of processes that ensure timely assessment of its programs linked to efforts for continued improvement. Many of the efforts are led by the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs who reviews all program outcome statements and provides feedback as needed. He was able to report to the team that all programs now have measurable outcomes. Further, the Shared Governance Council has put together metrics to measure program sustainability and discussed such with the team while on-site. The Council led the sustainability process and while not directly involved in program decisions it does lend support to programs in an attempt to strengthen them as needed.

o. The Assessment and Program Review Committee is a standing committee at the College and is made up of faculty and administrators from both campuses. Members are selected based on their role at the College and/or their interest and expertise in assessment. Their primary role is to ensure that student learning is measured the same way at both campuses. The main focus has been on program-level assessments as well as some assessment within individual general education courses. The focus of the committee will move to College-level assessment of institutional core competencies and a strengthening of the link between this committee and the Shared Governance Council.

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

a. The team found through conversations with faculty and administrators some inefficiency and deviation from the college’s commitment to “one college culture” created by different academic structures at the East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls campuses. In addition to the Vice President for Academics and Student Affairs and an academic dean at each campus, one campus has designated faculty department chairs; and the other, faculty division chairs with different compensation systems on each campus for performing administrative duties.

b. The College has three committees whose roles and responsibilities appear to overlap: Assessment and Program Review; Academic Affairs & Standards Council; and the Sustainability Committee. The Assessment and Program Review Committee is charged with providing five year reviews of all academic programs. Specific outcomes data are used for this review. The Academic Affairs & Standards Council reviews curricula changes, additions and deletions. Currently this information is not fed back to the Assessment and Program Review Committee. The Sustainability Committee makes suggestions on how to contain the budget but does not suggest program deletions. The College should look at how these committees might utilize information collectively and see how functions can be further clarified so that all committees are working most effectively.
3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up.

None

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

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.

   a. Faculty have identified institutional learning outcomes, learning outcomes for each of its credit programs which are shared through the Desire2Learn software system, and course syllabi which reflect learning objectives for each course. Requirements for the program plans posted on the Desire2Learn LMS include both the plan and an annual program effectiveness report. Report components include direct and indirect measures of student learning including graduate survey results, employer survey results, graduation rates, and placement rates. Additionally, program reviews, which are shared with Advisory Council members, are done on a 5 year cycle and include indirect measures. Team meetings with faculty and the Academic Deans confirm that College faculty has direct responsibility for defining student learning outcomes and the strategies and instruments for measuring those outcomes.

   b. Although the formal assessment program is not yet mature, faculty reported numerous examples of assessment results informing improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services. Examples provided include curricular and pedagogical improvements to the nursing program, the revitalization of the aviation maintenance program, the provision of the on-line practical nursing classes, the renovation of science labs, the implementation of the Desire2Learn Learning Management Software, and the creation of the Student Services and Student Support Deans at the two campuses to provide more intrusive support services.
c. The team found the learning environments at the College to be outstanding, with comfortable and technologically current classrooms and open student commons. The College also provides a strong array of student organizations and athletics, running shuttles between the two campuses to ensure that all students have access to activities regardless of their location. Diversity is a challenge because of the homogenous nature of the communities that the college serves, but efforts are being made to attract a more diverse student population through athletics, through national promotion of programs such as aviation, and by establishing programs on White Earth Indian reservation.

d. The College employs a qualified faculty that determines the content and adopts appropriate teaching strategies for its subject matters. A sampling of the personnel files of the faculty determined that files are complete and faculty has the degrees required for their areas of teaching. Moreover, the College’s faculty falls under collectively bargained guidelines, which are respected by College administrative staff.

e. The College’s Academic Affairs and Standards Council is comprised of two-thirds faculty and one-third administrative staff as identified in the faculty contract. All members have a vote. Curricula decisions are made by the Council. They meet monthly to review curricula and program changes, additions and deletions. The chair is elected from within the Council and this position rotates every two years. All Council members are volunteers. A secretary keeps official minutes of the proceedings. In reviewing the length of service of members there was a range from five to eighteen years with one or both of the college campuses. Careful review is given to creating “stackable” certificate programs which align with the college’s strategic plan. The team visited several times with this Council to fully understand and appreciate its role. The team determined that it functions as advertised and offers stability in the critical curriculum areas.

f. Both of the college campuses have libraries that are appropriately staffed and “stocked” to meet the needs of the students. Libraries are equipped with computers available for student use. Library staff secures necessary resources for the faculty through their own collections and through interlibrary loans. Professional development days for librarians are built into the academic calendar. The team toured both libraries, met extensively with the College’s Librarians, and examined the budget allocated for learning resources. The budget allocated was deemed sufficient especially with the advent of electronic resources. In addition, students were asked for their opinion in terms of satisfaction with available library services. Students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the College library services, its staff, and its linkage to technological resources.

g. The assessment process consists of four steps: 1. Validating program learner outcomes; 2. Identification of direct and indirect assessments & tracking graduation & placement rates; 3. Conducting assessments & analyzing results; 4. Sharing results with faculty & others and using
results to develop plans for program improvement which are submitted to academic deans and the Assessment & Program Review Committee. Progress had been made since 2007 with this assessment process. In FY2007, 25 programs submitted assessment plans; FY 2008 assessment plans were submitted for 37 programs and by FY 2009, the majority of programs had submitted assessment plans. These assessment plans provide specific activities that can be done to improve the program based on the analysis of the direct and indirect assessments of student learning.

h. The new nursing laboratory is well equipped and maintained. Simulation equipment will be set up for additional student access to training outside of the clinical sites. The aviation program demonstrates the level of equipment access that promotes quality learning situations for students while at the college site.

i. The two campuses either provide computer labs and/or cyber areas and wireless network access. Equipment is replaced on a scheduled basis. For some programs, students are required to purchase their own laptops. Information Technology Services (ITS) is available weekdays at East Grand Forks and also on the weekends at Thief River Falls. The Desire2Learn platform is supported by the college in conjunction with the MnSCU system. Instructors are provided opportunity to learn and use the technology.

j. The College has adopted the Accuplacer tests to identify academic development needs of entering students and a system of intrusive advising to ensure the best academic support services for students through the Learning Center and tutorial services. Two new student support positions have been created on each of the campuses, and the draft Student Activities Assessment plan includes annual assessment of advising as a major component. In conversations with Student Affairs staff, they acknowledged the need to improve retention and degree completion rates. A successful strategy identified by students was Supplemental Instruction and almost all forms of student-to-student tutoring. Services provided by academic advising and planning staff members have been highly rated by students completing the Survey of Enrollment Experiences with 89 percent selecting "satisfied" or "very satisfied" in FY2008, and 90 percent in FY2009.

k. The College evaluates learning through a system of assessment plans and annual reports, program reviews on a 5 year cycle, and a program sustainability process. It also implemented a College-wide institutional research work group in FY2009 to develop strategies to assess institutional effectiveness. College personnel indicated to the team that they have a wealth of data, but have previously had no formal process for compiling and sharing data across the institution. Recently, the work group has focused on developing mechanisms for collecting and sharing data with campus and community constituents through GroupLink, and the college has also employed a Director of Institutional Research in the spring of 2010 to lead and facilitate improved institutional effectiveness.
measures and strategies. The Student Affairs assessment plan draft is one example of the current effort to establish benchmarks and measures for assessing effectiveness.

l. The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs has led the process of having programs develop program outcomes. He reviews all of them and provides feedback as needed until they are at the level he deems acceptable. He was able to report that all of the programs now have measurable outcomes.

Faculty have identified institutional learning outcomes, learning outcomes for each of its credit programs which are shared through the Desire2Learn software system, and course syllabi which reflect learning objectives for each course.

m. Requirements for the program plans posted on the Desire2Learn LMS include both the plan and an annual program effectiveness report. Report components include direct and indirect measures of student learning including graduate survey results, employer survey results, graduation rates, and placement rates. Additionally, program reviews, which are shared with Advisory Council members, are done on a five year cycle and include indirect measures. Team meetings with faculty and the Academic Deans confirm that faculty has direct responsibility for defining student learning outcomes and the strategies and instruments for measuring those outcomes.

n. The College supports students who enroll in Distance Minnesota courses, utilizes ITV for training and staff meetings, and has provided an impressive array of wireless computers and laptop supports throughout the campuses to support student learning. The use of Desire2Learn as a learning platform has been done through extensive training and mentoring of instructors on how to use it effectively to enhance the learning experience for students. In addition to training on how to use the platform, faculty have received training on how to use for the benefit of the students. In addition, The Minnesota State College System provides a comprehensive support structure for distance learning students in the state (http://www.distance.minnesota.edu/) that includes academic advising, on-line library access, and training for both on-line learning and on-line instruction. The team was impressed with the College’s support for distance education, which was highlighted by community advisory board members in their comments regarding what works well at the College.

o. The Assessment and Program Review committee provides evidence that assessment is moving forward at the College, particularly with respect to ensuring that assessment is consistent across the two campuses. This committee has been focused on program-level assessment, but the goal for the next year is on college-level assessments. This committee was very energetic and very proud of the work that they have accomplished since the merger.
2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention

   a. Assessment plans and reports are shared among faculty and academic administrators through the Desire2Learn online program; however, these plans have been in place only since 2007, and 2009-2010 is the first year that all programs have been represented. As yet, the quality of assessment reports varies with some well-developed and others still somewhat rudimentary and/or incomplete. This facet of Desire2Learn is not currently available to students, nor did the team find evidence that there is an articulated methodology for sharing results with students and the larger community.

   b. College faculty, the Academic Assessment Committee, and the Academic Deans confirmed that the College has purposely focused on program level outcomes to date in order to maximize faculty buy-in from two campuses whose academic history has been diverse. Institutional and course-level outcomes are clearly articulated, but the faculty have not yet addressed how to consistently measure and report institutional learning outcomes across the curriculum or to develop strategies for the consistent assessment of course-level learning outcomes across multiple sections of the same course. These initiatives are planned to begin in 2010-2011. Program-level assessment plans include a matrix for report both direct and indirect measures of student learning; however, an examination of more than 15 program plans revealed that many lacked data for indirect measures and that some rely solely upon course grades or exit examinations for direct measures.

   c. College personnel reported to team members that all credit programs had completed assessment plans for FY2009; however, that accomplishment is recent since a pre-visit examination of the Desire2Learn site indicated that several liberal arts disciplines and career programs had not completed plans or submitted data for previous years in response to all measures. Currently, non-credit offerings of the College are assessed only by student satisfaction surveys and/or employer satisfaction surveys for customized training.

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

   None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up.

   None

Recommendation of the Team
Criterion is 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.**

a. The College’s general education philosophy aligns with the Higher Learning Commission Statement on General Education and is infused in its institutional learner outcomes: Foundation Skills, Thinking Skills, Global and Civic Responsibility, Applied and Information Technology, and Personal Development. General education has been integrated into all of the degree programs offered at the College. The philosophy of general education at the College is “to establish a foundation of broad-based learning that exposes learners to a diversity of views and attitudes, which enhance the intellectual capacity to be active participants in a global, diverse society.” The outline for each course indicates which institutional learner outcomes are being addressed. Graduates are expected to demonstrate proficiency in all five areas. Testimony taken from both faculty and students confirmed the fact that student learner outcomes are published, evaluated, and used to improve the quality of instruction. The College has a clear definition of what it expects its graduates to look like, be able to perform, and how to contribute to their communities as citizens.

b. The Professional Development program at the College encourages staff and faculty to take courses necessary for degree completion. Ongoing professional development programs are developed by faculty and staff for in-service days. Additionally, some career and technical faculty members are required to keep their professional certification current in their disciplines. These activities promote a culture of lifelong learning and assist faculty instruction and enriches student learning. The College’s budget supports participation of faculty in professional organizations, professional development, and degree completion. Students in the career and technical areas learn the standards for their professions through both their technical and general courses and develop work ethic as part of the College’s philosophy.

c. The Digi-Key University Program has been developed for the company’s employees as a way to provide training in electronics technology. As part of this program, the students are required to take liberal arts courses which stressed the importance of general education to a local company. The applied science degrees require a minimum of 30 credits of general education and the applied science degree requires a minimum of 15 credits. The students enrolled in either of these degree options are exposed to general education courses that will also transfer to one of the four year partners within the MnSCU system.
d. The College reviews its academic programs on a five-year cycle and also engages in a program sustainability process that tracks indirect measures to identify programs which may be low-producing or which are not meeting targeted licensure pass rates. When problems are identified, programs are placed on alert, and a cross-functional Program Sustainability taskforce is appointed to devise solutions. Progress in effecting improvements is tracked over a two-three year period with those programs not showing improvement targeted for suspension or deletion. The team discussed the realities associated with this approach. Some faculty expressed concerns that the “targeting process” at times seemed arbitrary.

e. The College espouses the importance of independent learning throughout its literature and program offerings. Independent learning in programs of applied practice is supported by internship opportunities included in the Career programs, which give students opportunities to apply their learning in real-world environments. Independent learning is also touted at the College through clinical experiences. Students who are enrolled in health-related fields are required to complete a clinical as part of their program. The clinical training provides the hands-on experiences in their respective fields. For example, the Practical Nursing program has been offered at the White Earth Indian Reservation and provides an example of a way that learning can be brought to students. The students at the reservation also served to expand the diversity of the College as a whole even though the students were not physically on either of the two campuses. Both campuses have created and support a number of athletic and student clubs in addition to Student Senate. Based on the history of the TRF campus, students take an active role in Music and Theater productions that add to the value of the communities in which they reside. The institutional learning outcomes clearly demonstrate that graduates of the College are prepared for continued learning. This can be seen through the transfer curriculum that is in place between the College and the MnSCU system.

f. In 2006-2007, the college implemented a service learning component that involved as many as 36 courses with 33 faculty participating and a number of student organizations that directly supported community service learning through events (such as, Marketplace for Kids, the Robo Storm Summer Camp, assistance with income tax preparation, summer athletic clinics, and Nurse for a Day). However, state cutbacks have resulted in the elimination of the service learning coordinator positions at each campus and a reduction in the overall participation.

g. The College’s strategic plan, financial allocations to professional development, operational plans developed by the Assessment and Program Review Committee, the Student Life Committee, the Academic Affairs and Standards Council, the Retention Committee, the Facilities Committee and others attest to the institution’s commitment to promoting life-long learning.
h. The College has strong internship and/or clinical programs for its career programs which provide students with practical applications for their students and encourage life-long learning. One notable program is the college’s partnership with the Mayo Clinic which provides a variety of clinical experiences that result in employment of many Northland graduates. The Farm Business Management program engages faculty directly in agribusiness management with the state’s farmers.

i. The College has instituted an effective system for program accountability by gathering survey data, graduation rates, and placement rates to effect educational and organizational improvements and by creating a cross-departmental taskforce of marketing staff, faculty, counselors, and financial staff to develop and implement an improvement plan. Evidence of the efficacy of this approach is evidenced by the revitalization of the aviation and paramedic programs and the suspension of the cosmetology and office administration programs at one campus.

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

a. Although learning goals established by the College include skills and professional competence essential to a diverse workforce, examination of Program Advisory Committee minutes indicates that the College should better utilize input from supporting business and industry in its service area to ensure that learning goals and outcomes reflect the skills and competence expected by employers in its service area. Some programs have no minutes filed for a year; others have no minutes listed since 2006, and one program has no minutes at all.

b. The College gathers data from student, employer, and graduate surveys, as well as from licensure examinations and job placement to analyze whether or not graduates have gained the expected skills and knowledge of their programs of study. However, no formal evaluation of the Institutional Learner Outcomes has yet been implemented, and measurement of these outcomes is essential to the college’s determination of whether or not its students have the critical thinking, citizenship, cultural awareness, and professionalism skills defined as learning outcomes.

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

None

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up.

None
Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is 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 values.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

   a. In addition to promoting student participation in service learning, the College has forged a partnership with the Minnesota State Workforce Center, which is located on the campus, to support services and training for job entry or re-entry. The Center for Outreach and Innovation collaborates extensively with area employers and other local/regional agencies, such as the Digi-Key Corporation and Polaris to develop certification pathways for their employees. The College’s Management Education department has served the area's farmers for many years by providing training and education for all aspects of agribusiness management. In 2008, over 600 students were served at 11 sites across the region.

   b. The College supports its community with a variety of continuing education courses such as aerobics, fitness, bowling, choir, band, and theatre; and it provides concerts, theatre productions, and art shows which garner local participation and interest. The President and staff members from the Center for Outreach and Innovation serve on a number of local boards and organizations including the Greater Grand Forks Workforce Development Task Force, and the Rural Economic Alliance. The college is participating in local grant initiatives such as that funded by the Knight Foundation to foster economic development in northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

   c. The College’s Strategic Plan 2014 includes a clear commitment to continuing its engagement with and service to the community. The third priority, “Revolutionize Growth Strategies to Sustain Vibrant Learning Communities,” includes specific objectives for increasing outreach to high schools and to expanding credit-based customized training, continuing education, or short-term certificates. The plan is sound, well received, and linked to the budget preparation and development processes. Faculty openly sing praises of the Plan, and the steps taken to include a great many of the College’s external and internal constituents. The team cites this as one of the College’s better initiatives accomplished since the last merger.

   d. The College routinely surveys its constituents to ascertain their views and to determine their needs. In 2004, the College surveyed (1) transfer institutions regarding the preparation of its students and reasons for their success or lack thereof, (2) community agencies
seeking their interest in outreach activities, and (3) participants who took non-credit business/industry classes wanting their feedback on what worked and what are their future interests. The feedback was reviewed by the team, which also contained copies of the survey instruments. The College regularly surveys its regular students through either the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey or the College Student Survey of Student Engagement and the Institutional Priorities Survey and obtains additional input through graduate and employer surveys. Survey results are generally positive indicating that constituencies are well-satisfied with programs and services. Areas such as advising and faculty availability and responsiveness where some dissatisfaction was reported have been addressed with subsequent increases in satisfaction.

e. Members of the College’s Community Advisory boards expressed strong appreciation and support for the college’s economic and workforce development activities, stating that the institution provides a well-trained workforce for a number of local entities including small businesses and the Mayo Clinic, which hires a substantial number of the College’s allied health graduates.

f. Community members participate in the art, theatre, and music productions of the college, take advantage of the college’s radio station, and also take advantage of the educational programs hosted by the College in fitness, ABE and GED, ESL, art and music. The College’s Center for Outreach and Innovation offers continuing education programs for area professionals including certifications in Production and Inventory Management, Six Sigma, and ISO 9001.

g. The College community is very supportive of the campuses. Conversations with community advisory board members demonstrated the broad representation of community sectors. All attested to the value of the college to the communities served. All stated they had appropriate access to college staff and valued the quality of educational programming available to students. They applauded the success of students in transferring to four year institutions and also in their active participation in the community workforce.

h. The College is focused, in the team’s opinion, on creating a quality learning environment for its learners. This was witnessed from the first observation of the physical facilities that considerable thought has been given and significant resources devoted to creating a warm, learning friendly environment. The College with MnSCU’s support spared no expense in upgrading the facilities.

i. The College offers quality instruction at two off-campus sites. The delivery of the nursing program at the White Earth Indian Reservation is a good example of how the College responded to a community need. Students enrolled in the Practical Nursing program or the Associate Degree Nursing program can complete up to 100 percent of their degree at the Reservation. The completion of the courses has an
impact on the economy of the reservation. The Roseau site, which is about 65 miles north of the Thief River Falls campus, also provides an opportunity for students to study nursing. This site was created in conjunction with the Roseau Medical Center as there was an identified need for skilled workers in this profession. The site also provides certificate programs for employees of the Polaris Corporation. Both operations demonstrate the College’s responsiveness to its constituents.

j. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program had been provided by faculty and students at the College from 2003-2008. These are purely volunteer opportunities and members of the community take advantage of the service. In 2008, 117 tax returns were prepared for community members, which is up from 84 in 2003. College employees regularly volunteer in the delivery of theatrical productions. These individuals assist in the operations backstage and at the box office. These productions are enjoyed by the public in the Thief River Falls area as that is where the theatre arts venue exists. Students regularly volunteer their services for activities related to their field of study. The nursing students volunteer their time at an elementary school for a Nurse for a Day program. Architectural Technology students have volunteered their time for beautification projects in downtown Thief River Falls. The above mentioned activities were among those cited by College advisory board members are adding value to the community in ways that attract businesses and contribute to the overall quality of life.

k. The Thief River Falls campus has beautiful facilities for co-curricular activities. It has a theatre, gymnasium, art gallery, radio station, and athletic fields. The public takes advantage of the activities stemming from these venues and the College is viewed as a place to enhance the arts within the community. The public attends the theatrical and musical productions offered by the College. While the College has had to reduce the number of productions offered during the year, they still able to provide the community with a number of fine arts focused events. In addition, there is a community band at the College for members of the student body as well as community members to participate.

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

a. Through a systems grant, one of the academic deans started a service learning program across the college campuses. From the initial two students in the program, it has expanded to 513 students by 2006 with 33 faculty participating. By 2007 the number of students and faculty participating had declined to 346 and 23 respectively. Without grant funding the two service learning coordinator positions were eliminated. Data in the self study report states that the numbers of students and faculty engaged may not be comparable to information gathered in 2006 and 2007. The email responses from faculty for the self study report indicate 236 students and 17 faculty members are still engaged.
in this activity. The College, resources permitting, may want to explore ways of continuing this initiative given its widespread popularity with both students and faculty.

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

None

4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up.**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

V. **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**

3. Stipulations of Affiliation Status

   No Change

4. Approval of Degree Sites
5. Approval of Distance Education Degrees

No Change

6. Reports Required

No Change

D. Commission Sanction of Adverse Action

None recommended

E. Summary of Commission Review

Next Comprehensive Visit: 2019-2020 Cycle

The team’s recommendation for continued accreditation is based on the team’s assessment that the College met each of the five criteria, has engaged in serious strategic planning as to its future goals, and has, with the state’s support, adequate resources to carry out its mission. Further, the team found an institution with capable administrators and superbly talented faculty. The institution’s recent upgrading of student learning and recreational facilities was viewed by the team in a favorable light. While the College must still bridge the gap resulting from the merger, the team is confident the leadership is in place to sustain the current operation and improve the educational and workforce conditions throughout its region.
WORKSHEET ON
Federal Compliance Requirements
Northland Community and Technical College

INSTITUTIONAL MATERIALS RELATED TO FEDERAL COMPLIANCE
REVIEWED BY THE TEAM:
- Northland Community and Technical College Website (www.northlandcollege.edu), including accreditation site and sub-sites
- Northland Community and Technical College Self-Study 2010
- Northland Community and Technical College Virtual Resource Room
- HLC Federal Compliance Program Guidelines 2009-2010
- The Higher Learning Commission’s Use of Financial Ratios
- Northland Community and Technical College Student Compliant Log

EVALUATION OF FEDERAL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The team verifies that it has reviewed each component of the Federal Compliance Program by reviewing each item below.

1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition: The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).
   - The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

2. Student Complaints: The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.
   - The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

3. Transfer Policies: The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.
   - The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.
4. Verification of Student Identity: The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education.

- The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities: The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program. The team has reviewed these materials and has found no cause for concern regarding the institution’s administration or oversight of its Title IV responsibilities.

General Program Requirements: The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution’s fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.

Financial Responsibility Requirements: The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department’s review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution’s fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.

Default Rates, Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information, Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies: The institution has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution’s policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.

Contractual Relationships: The institution has presented evidence of its contracts with non-accredited third party providers of 25-50% of the academic content of any degree or certificate programs.

- The team has reviewed these components of federal compliance and recommends the ongoing approval of such contracts.

6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials: The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.

- The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards: The institution has documented that it discloses its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence. Note that if the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is currently under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor in the past five years, the team must address this in the body of the Assurance
Section of the Team Report and provide its rationale for recommending Commission status in light of this information.

- The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.

8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment: The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.

- The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance.