

## **Assurance Sections**

### **Team Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit**

to

**Minot State University-Bottineau**

**105 Simrall Boulevard**

**Bottineau, ND 58318-1198**

**April 27 – 29, 2009**

For

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

#### **EVALUATION TEAM**

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## ASSURANCE SECTION

### I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

#### A. Purpose of Visit

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the associate's degree level.

#### B. Organizational Context

MSU-Bottineau is a two-year comprehensive community college based in Bottineau, North Dakota. Bottineau is a community of about 2,500 people located approximately 80 miles northeast of Minot, North Dakota (population 36,500) and 15 miles south of the North Dakota/Canadian border. The college was established as a School of Forestry by the North Dakota State Legislature in 1906. In addition to forestry, the school was directed to provide a comprehensive associate degree curriculum, as well as programs in agriculture and horticulture.

A relationship between the School of Forestry and North Dakota State University was established in 1968 when the Board of Higher Education approved the "administrative attachment" of the two institutions. The college became known as North Dakota State University-Bottineau.

In 1996, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education affiliated the school with Minot State University and the school's name was changed to Minot State University-Bottineau. The Board defined MSU-Bottineau as a branch of Minot State University and established a policy for governance and organization of the branch campus: "The main campus (Minot State University) shall provide consultative services to its branch to augment the efforts of branch personnel. Joint efforts and services in student affairs functions are required and in other areas are encouraged."

MSU-Bottineau is one of eleven colleges and universities in the North Dakota University System governed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education. Each institution has its own mission and vision statement, but, as part of the statewide system, they also share the following:

***Mission:*** *To enhance the quality of life for all those we serve and the economic and social vitality of North Dakota through the discovery, sharing, and application of knowledge.*

***Vision Statement:*** *The North Dakota University System is the vital link to a brighter future.*

The 2008-2010 College Catalog lists nineteen Associate of Applied Science degrees, Associate of Arts degrees, Associate in Science degrees, and seventeen diplomas or certificates. The College also offers non-credit continuing education and workforce development training programs. These programs reflect the College's focus on "Nature, Technology, and Beyond."

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

The President of Minot State University was interviewed as well as a member of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education. During the week prior to the visit, the North Dakota Legislature passed legislation renaming the College, Dakota College at Bottineau.

#### **D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited**

All Team Members visited the main campus in Bottineau. Team Member Dr. Larry Davis visited the Minot State University-Bottineau Center on the Minot State University Campus and the Practical Nursing Program located in the Burdick Job Corps Center.

#### **E. Distance Education Reviewed**

The team reviewed online courses and degree programs being offered in a distance education format through North Dakota University System Online (NDUSO). The team reviewed materials and the technology infrastructure associated with distance education. The areas reviewed included meeting with the MSU-Bottineau Distance Education Coordinator, the Minot Center Director, and faculty involved in the nursing program, which is offered in a distance education format. The IVN courses and network were also reviewed.

The newest program offered through distance delivery is the caregiver program offered through the NDUSO. New programs approved through the NDUSO program are approved by the NDUSO Advisory Committee prior to being offered by one of the member institutions.

College staff communicated increased enrollment expectations due to online learning.

As the College looks at budget, faculty load, and enrollment expectations, it should study various aspects that drive this particular learning modality, such as the affect of on-line enrollments on on-campus enrollments.

## **F. Interactions with Constituencies**

### **Governing Board and Executive Management**

1. Mr. Jon Backes, member of the North Dakota Board of Higher Education
2. Dr. David Fuller, President of Minot State University
3. Dr. Ken Grosz, Campus Dean
4. Mr. Larry Brooks, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
5. Ms. Paula Berg, Associate Dean for Student Services
6. Mr. Jim Borkowski, Director of Financial Affairs
7. Mr. Scott Johnson, Athletic Director

### **Faculty, Management and Staff**

1. Admissions Staff
2. Assessment Committee
3. Learning Center Staff
4. Financial Aid Director
5. Bookstore Manager
6. Athletic Coaching Staff
7. Physical Plant Services Supervisor
8. Information Technology Staff
9. IVN/Technology Coordinator
10. Faculty (27 in attendance)
11. Director of the Entrepreneurial Center for Agriculture
12. Foundation Director
13. Library Director
14. Business Office Staff
15. Professional Staff Meeting (12 in attendance)
16. Support Staff (Classified) Meeting (2 in attendance)
17. Meeting with nursing faculty from the Burdick Job Corps Center (7 in attendance)
18. MSU-Bottineau Minot Campus Center Director

### **Students**

A lunch meeting with 11 MSU-Bottineau students was held at noon on Tuesday, April 28, and attended by all Team members.

### **Community and State Representatives**

A lunch meeting with 19 community members from Bottineau and surrounding smaller communities was held on Monday, April 27 at noon.

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

##### **MSU-Bottineau Self-Study Documents and College Publications**

1. MSU-Bottineau Self-Study Report to the Higher Learning Commission 2009
2. MSU-Bottineau 2008-2010 College Catalog
3. MSU-Bottineau 2008/2009 Viewbook
4. MSU-Bottineau Student; Staff; and Faculty Handbooks, 2008-2009
5. MSU-Bottineau Campus Master Plan 2008

##### **MSU- Bottineau Administrative Documents and Reports**

###### **Reports and Other Documents**

1. North Dakota University System Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2007. Prepared by the Director of Financial Reporting, North Dakota University System Office
2. Creating a University System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2008, Prepared by the Director of Financial Reporting, North Dakota University System Office
3. Report of the State Board of Higher Education's Committee on Employer Compensation 2008
4. North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Action Plan and Objectives 2008-2009

###### **Resource Room Binders and Files**

1. Comparative Data, Surveys, Questions From All Accountability Measure Reports 2001-2007
2. 2007 Fall Enrollment (NDUS)
3. Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Surveys: 2001/2002-2007/2008
4. Transfer Migration Study For Student Transferring From NDUS Community Colleges 2006 (NDUS Four Year College Migration Study included For Reference)
5. Strategic Planning 2000-2009
6. Outreach Education
7. Student Affordability Report
8. Withdrawing/Non-Returning Student Surveys: 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2006/2007
9. Risk Management Handbook

10. North Dakota Department Of Career And Technical Education Program Evaluation Reports-2001, 2007
11. Fall In-Service Programs 2001-2008
12. Campus Physical Security Review/North Dakota Division Of Homeland Security
13. Campus Quality Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006
14. MSU-Bottineau Annual Enrollment Reports 2006/2007, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2002/2003
15. Growth Of Online Instructional Program 2001-2008
16. Campus Alignment Plans 2001-2002 through 2007-2008
17. Cumulative Student Evaluations of Faculty 2003-2008
18. Diversity And Demographics
19. 2006 – Assessment Program
20. 2008-09 Faculty Planning Forms
21. Advisory Committee Minutes
22. Campus Read Programs
23. Entrepreneurial Center For Horticulture Master Plan
24. Fall 2007-Spring 2009 Faculty Load Reports and Spring 2009 Class Schedules
25. Newspaper Articles and Flyers about Diversity Week
26. Institutional Support for Instruction
27. MSU-Bottineau Catalog 2008-10
28. MSU-Bottineau Campus Health And Safety Handbook
29. Outcomes Assessment Task Force
30. Professional Development Plan
31. Progress Report Submitted to NCA—2004
32. Self-Study Process

### **MSU-Bottineau Website and Miscellaneous**

The team members reviewed the College website ([www.misu-b.nodak.edu](http://www.misu-b.nodak.edu)) and verified that it accurately represented materials presented in the self study. In addition, the team reviewed the website for the North Dakota University Systems Online.

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

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

The current self-study process extended over a period of twenty six months, from February 2007 to March of 2009. A self-study steering committee was established along with self-study subcommittees. Several college employees have attended recent Higher Learning Commission annual meetings.

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

MSU-Bottineau involved faculty, staff, administrators, and students in the self-study process. Input was solicited from the college community at multiple points during the process. The process included group review and editing that allowed the criterion committees to actively participate in the process. The resource room materials as well as extensive team visits with MSU-Bottineau constituencies were used to verify the information communicated in the self-study. Resource room materials were well organized and were adequately identified.

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

The team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be adequate. However, the team recognizes further challenges the College will have integrating planning, enrollment management, and assessment of student learning.

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

The notification requirements were fulfilled. The team visit was communicated to the public and to students through campus newsletters and local media. The College complied with the Higher Learning Commission's third party comment requirement. Three comments were received from external audiences; all were positive and supportive of the institution.

**III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and student complaint information and all requirements were met.

**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**



Minot State University – Bottineau Mission Statement is evident in college publications such as the College Catalog, the College Viewbook, and the College website. The College adequately states its mission to the public which identifies its emphasis on nature and technology so that individuals are aware of the uniqueness of the institution. MSU-Bottineau statement of mission, vision, core values, campus focus, and goals are collectively supported by the College campus. These statements are clearly and publically stated, and can be found in multiple locations, from the more common listed above to the more interesting (tabletops, bulletin boards throughout campus, electronic viewboards, etc.).

The Mission and core statements address all factions of a comprehensive community college. It is aligned with the North Dakota University System's mission and core values, which together reflect that the College serves the University System's intent to provide community college level education to the state's constituents. The MSU-Bottineau practical nursing program held in partnership with Valley City State College would indicate collaboration within the system to meet unmet needs throughout the state and ties directly to board Objective #2 of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Action Plan and Objectives 2008-2009.

MSU-Bottineau's mission is influenced by the Roundtable of Higher Education which is a document put together by state legislators, the private sector, higher education, and the executive branch of the state. This collaborative effort to put together a coordinated approach to higher education in North Dakota has the goal of enhancing the economic vitality and the quality of life of the citizens of the state through a quality, responsive, flexible, accessible, and accountable higher education system. MSU-Bottineau's inclusion in this effort strengthens the integrity of the institution through ongoing review of its role in this effort.

The administrative organization of Minot State University-Bottineau seems to provide adequate administration of all college functions. MSU-Bottineau is administratively attached to Minot State University and the president of MSU serves as the president of MSU-Bottineau. The chief operating officer of MSU-Bottineau is the Campus Dean. After interviews with each individual, the relationship between the Campus Dean of MSU-Bottineau and the President of MSU would appear to be very collaborative. The inclusion of the Campus Dean in the North Dakota University System Chancellor's Cabinet as a voting member adds to the strength of the College as part of the state system for higher education and for receiving resources within the system.

The integrity of the institution is demonstrated by the support for and confidence in the college expressed by community members, students, Minot State University administration, and discussion with a member of the North Dakota Board of Higher Education. Interviews with students indicate that college staff assists in the transfer

process and that credits have transferred easily to other institutions. Discussions with students and community members would indicate a confidence in the quality of instruction at MSU-Bottineau and would indicate that this confidence is communicated so that prospective students are aware of the opportunity of a quality education in a personalized and supportive atmosphere at the College.

It is obvious from campus signage and campus documents that an understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization. Although the mission was reviewed and changed in 2008, each area on campus has (or is working to complete) a mission statement for that area. Documentation of most of those statements was found in the resource room (2006- Assessment Program booklet) or through the campus website. The student profile of the embodiment of the mission and focus is used to determine the student speaker at graduation while multiple volunteer efforts (faculty, staff, and students) in the community were documented as examples of the caring environment and community involvement the mission entails.

A more extensive review of the campus web site and additional documents from the resource room reveals a wide range of mission statements for different areas of campus. The career and technical programs had the most comprehensive mission statements, especially those connected to external ties (such as the North Dakota University Online system or the Dakota Nursing program). The nursing program listed both the campus and state missions and objectives. The central theme to all these academic program mission statements is focused on the terms quality, foundational hands-on skills, and the centrality of the ability to continue to learn. The other administrative/service areas on campus focused on ensuring their areas provided the support and services to ensure the campus mission was reinforced in the areas of quality and caring. Quality and caring were reinforced in face to face discussions with students and external groups.

MSU-Bottineau has clearly articulated mission statements were supported through information garnered from team meetings with the community, students, and employees. MSU-Bottineau strives to serve its students, employees, state, surrounding states, and country. The emphasis on nature and technology indicates a dedication to serve the greater society and the challenges of the coming decades, including natural resource management and the need for global communication and understanding through advanced technology.

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

None

**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. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion One is met. No commission follow-up recommended.

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

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

Minot State University – Bottineau's levels of planning meet the requirement of aligning with the organization's mission and enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission. The college has multiple arenas for planning including the general education committee, curriculum committee, and assessment committee. They have a strategic plan and the desire and intention to build an enrollment plan.

MSU – Bottineau has increased its capacity to fulfill its mission through the 2.4 million dollar Thatcher Hall building addition that is the result of a facility planning effort and legislative allocation. The building, furnishings, and equipment were funded by a one-time allocation from the state legislature, thus the addition did not add the burden of additional instructional equipment to the institution. In addition, there have been additional physical plant improvements which include implementation of an energy management system.

The increase in scholarships and apparent student satisfaction of instruction, along with the prioritization of requests for funding, should help MSU-Bottineau with the areas of effectiveness and improvement. The efforts of the College Foundation and the athletic booster club resulted in \$240,000 being raised for support of a college football program to attract additional students to the college.

MSU-Bottineau is responding to emerging demographic changes and technology opportunities. Online and IVN enrollments have increased. The plan to hire an online

coordinator is a demonstration of commitment to continue to build the quality of online courses and assist students in learning through alternate delivery systems. The move to centralize and pull under one umbrella both the IVN and online functions is an effective move that will improve efficiencies in both areas. The IVN studio will advance the quality of presentations and enhance student engagement in online courses.

A further review of the campus online enrollments from the fall of 2001 through the fall semester of 2008 revealed growth from four courses and nine students in 2001 to 83 courses with 215 unduplicated student headcounts by the fall of 2008. A list of faculty responsible for the development of specific courses showed the college is tracking progress in the development of courses and programs being designed to hopefully attract more students.

MSU-Bottineau's levels of planning meet the requirement of aligning with the organization's mission and enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission. The college has multiple arenas for planning including the general education committee, curriculum committee, and assessment committee. They have a strategic plan and the desire and intention to build an enrollment plan. However, the College needs to have a more collaborative planning process – one that eliminates duplication and isolation. The college staff can be described as dedicated and competent. Multiple groups are charged with various aspects of planning. Through creative consolidation, the college may be able to reduce some of the planning time and practices that may duplicate each other; thereby, freeing up time and energy to focus on implementation.

MSU-Bottineau has an ongoing assessment process. This process includes an established outcome assessment task force, one assessment chair or champion at the faculty level, as well as a general education assessment activity. They have built on past assessment practices with the intent to broaden their assessment activities to include program assessment, course assessment, and assessment of multiple non-direct teaching and learning activities (library, student services, business services, and the foundation). Though their assessment process has been intermittent and sporadic in terms of 100% participation on the part of faculty and staff and in terms of the consistent and available record keeping (including data collection, documentation, and closing the loop), it is clear that there is progress. The college would benefit from a consistent and comprehensive method by which information concerning assessment is disseminated and thus used for program improvement.

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

**attention.**

For MSU-Bottineau to meet the criterion that the organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future, additional funding sources need to be developed.

Although the team found funding information that showed an increase in both the state general fund appropriations and tuition, the information also showed the percentage of total institutional funding becoming more dependent on student tuition as a percentage of college income. With a decreasing regional secondary student base and grant and contract funding for 2007-2008, until such time as new programs produce increased student enrollments that offset their costs, distance education course enrollments will be critical in maintaining revenue and keeping quality faculty.

While MSU-Bottineau has multiple ongoing evaluation and assessment processes in place that produce data, much of this is based on satisfaction surveys rather than documentation of institutional effectiveness. The OATF report indicates multiple sources of input and requests that in many cases could result in improved effectiveness. However, it is too early to determine whether the data collected from the last mission development and strategic plan changes which resulted in requests to the OATF committee will lead to increased effectiveness.

Although MSU-Bottineau had various, if not many levels of planning (department, college, university system), each level of planning could have been more fully aligned with each other. Often it seemed as if there was duplicated and non-communicated planning occurring. The College and NDUS System could strengthen their planning results and reduce the time, effort, and cost of planning activities if all levels of planning were communicated and cross-referenced with each other.

Review of the FY2007 and FY2008 Annual Financial Report of the North Dakota University System indicates that the appropriations by the North Dakota Legislature to MSU-Bottineau for FY2007 through FY2008 was \$4,594,499. The FY08 appropriation increased 8.7% from the FY07 appropriation. Tuition revenue also increased 8.9% from FY07 to FY08. While the increases in both state appropriations and student tuition and fees reflect a positive trend, an increase of 10.4% in total operating expenses has resulted in a larger annual loss before capital grants and transfers. Interviews with financial administrators indicate this is due primarily to the increase in cost of utilities. This trend is one that needs to be reversed through additional state appropriations and/or additional enrollment and tuition and fees revenue to continue the financial viability of the institution.

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

up.

The Team has concerns about the College's ability to realistically prepare for a future shaped by societal and economic trends. A review of the self-study information along with the financial reports for 2006-07 and 2007-08 show demographic and enrollment trends that will challenge MSU-Bottineau in attaining the enrollment numbers to sustain and expand current course and program offerings. The addition of sports programs has aided the college in attracting students, but those also add to the college's expenses. MSU-Bottineau may want to examine the possibility of creating partnerships in putting together new programs and using business/industry dollars and donations to supplant or use to fund these programs. Self-Study Table 2B-3 shows a declining number of full-time students from 2003 – 2007, while Table 2B-8 indicated the financial position of the college is such that a dip into campus reserves the last two years was necessary for meeting expenditures.

Multiple and competing planning processes indicate that there is not an overall centralized planning process in place. The overlapping, yet uncoordinated nature of different departments' documents, e.g. a fledging recruitment and enrollment management plan not fully integrated or coordinated with the college's strategic plan, indicates that very basic questions about the College's future have not yet been answered.

While MSU-Bottineau has targeted increasing enrollment in the past, because of its small student enrollment and rural location within a relatively sparsely populated area with a decreasing K-12 student base, must have a unified enrollment management plan in place. The College has major strengths, and they must be identified and capitalized upon in the planning process in order to respond to educational competitors. Only when there is a clear and shared vision about what the college is and what it wants to be in five years, in ten years, and beyond, can resources be best utilized.

A campus wide enrollment management plan (or other similarly titled plan) should be formally developed to guide the institution's allocation of monetary and human resources. As a part of this plan, quantitative evidence (carefully gathered and not anecdotally based) must provide the basis for decision making.

A comprehensive enrollment management plan must be a campus-wide endeavor, not solely assigned to student services and/or recruitment personnel. Total College involvement should be attained from program and support staff to attain college-wide ownership in the process. Information is being gathered currently in terms of enrollment numbers and satisfaction levels, but it is not being systematically reviewed or disseminated campus wide for data-based decision making. Quantitative goals and specific budget allocations must be linked to each enrollment goal.

There are model programs from community and technical colleges that may provide ideas and guidelines to assist in growing the student population.

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

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

The recommendation of the team is that the Criterion needs further attention. The team recommends a progress report regarding the use of data in the planning process. This report should focus on enrollment management planning and how this will be integrated into the financial planning of the College. This report is to be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

**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**

The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible. MSU-Bottineau has clearly documented specific student learning outcomes for the general education area departments with documented results as to student success for each outcome. They have also documented from the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education Program evaluation report from 2007 (with limited 2008 information on select programs) which showed the MSU-Bottineau career/technical programs met or exceeded expectations in every category. Copies of these reports were reviewed in the resource room.

The Bottineau, ND Courant printed an article in the Tuesday, April 21, 2009 edition regarding the MSU-Bottineau annual student recognition dinner held April 1 on the MSU-Bottineau campus. A listing of students and areas of recognition were included. This is further evidence that the College promotes, supports, and communicates its excellence in learning in the programs it offers.

The criterion that the organization creates effective learning environments has been met. The college's technical training, especially in allied health, with faculty keeping offerings current and relevant are pluses. The effectiveness of these areas has been improved through use of advisory committee input. However, the information included in the self-study was not inclusive of any input offered for the past few years. The college has good transfer communication processes, good faculty interaction with students, and an increase in diversity activities, outside (nature-related) lab activities in science, agriculture, and forestry that all contribute to effective learning environments. A diverse list of health care, facilities providing clinical learning opportunities for health care students enhances the student experiences. The College has clearly demonstrated strong evidence for this criterion.

Further review of the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education Program Evaluation reports for 2001 and 2007 shows the college generally meeting all state department expectations in the 12 standard areas used as quality indicators for each program. These same 12 quality indicators were still being used in 2007, which allowed for a comparison of the state evaluation reports between 2001 and 2007. A review of the comments section from the 2001 report indicated that the programs were very complimentary of the faculty and the coursework, but indications were that the frequency and recoding of advisory meetings and input needed improvement. A review of the same standards in 2007 indicated the college was asked to show increased enrollments and to (once again) ensure that advisory groups are in place, meeting twice per year, and providing active input. Faculty professional development was encouraged and the allied health programs received multiple positive remarks from the state evaluators.

MSU-Bottineau's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. MSU-Bottineau has a well developed and dedicated Learning Center. Discussions with students and staff indicate that the Learning Center is responsive to teaching and learning needs. Within the Learning Center, students have the opportunity to secure a variety of services including free tutoring, career services, advisement, accommodations for individuals with disabilities, support for online learning and distance education. MSU-Bottineau has a new library – which provides free and open access to multiple types of learner support including a stack room, a reference area, a full time librarian, banks of computer, access to electronic resources, and quiet study space.

MSU-Bottineau values and supports effective teaching. Evidence of valuing and supporting includes the diverse professional development activities supported by the College and completed by the faculty, the new faculty mentoring program, the week-long summer institute immediately prior to the beginning of the fall semester, and the teaching and learning collaborations mentioned in discussions with campus faculty in the sciences and the social science disciplines. These activities all indicate a



commitment to support the improvement of instruction and innovative approaches to the teaching/learning process.

Additional evidence that the college values and supports effective teaching was supported through a review of the Faculty Load Reports for terms ranging from the fall of 2007 through the fall of 2008 semesters. A random sampling of faculty load per section shows the student headcount numbers to be single digits in many cases and an observed maximum of 24 for some composition courses. These numbers indicate the opportunity for greater faculty interaction and individual work with students. However, the low class counts that seem typical for most sections also demonstrate the college's need for enrollment increases as it positions itself for the future.

Additional review of the resource room information pertaining to the faculty/staff in-service programs revealed the types and quantity of break-out sessions provided to faculty/staff during these professional development opportunities. However, other than the first day's sessions where all employees appeared to be involved, the rest of these sessions appeared to be directed only towards faculty (full-time and adjuncts).

Although the offerings are limited, academic skills courses (ASC prefixes) are in place to remediate underprepared students. Under the umbrella of student services, staff members work together to ensure student success. ACT or ASSET placement testing is done to ensure student success. Also, students with personal issues have access to a counselor provided by North Central Human Services Center. A substance abuse counselor who also participates in the mandatory Freshman Orientation course is available for appointments. These efforts by the College add tremendously to the support system for student success on campus.

Although MSU-Bottineau is one of the smallest among the numerous North Dakota public institutions, its learning resources support student learning and effective teaching in broad sweeping ways comparable to many larger institutions. MSU-Bottineau has a more than adequate learning resource center for students, faculty, and the general public. Its new design and development encourage the use of hard copy volumes as well as electronic resources, elevating the strength of the library significantly. Antidotal comments heard throughout numerous meetings and interviews with faculty, staff, and students indicate that challenges to student learning and effective teaching are often met through one on one contact with those involved. Students readily mentioned faculty and staff by name. Faculty mentioned facing challenges by contacting individual support personnel for assistance and receiving it immediately. A review of a learning center response log indicated immediate assistance and support was provided to those leading the learning – which is a sign of strong support for student learning and effective teaching.

A team member did review faculty qualifications with Larry Brooks, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. In a spot checking, all faculty credentials met and/or exceeded the requirements. In addition, a Team member reviewed faculty professional development activities which were reported. Faculty are required to submit a form on which they outline their anticipated activity, the cost, the approvals, and eventually the result. Faculty (and staff) from all areas of the campus pursued teaching and learning excellence. There was no delineation between full time faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff regarding funds being allocated for all employee groups. A few faculty attended national conferences – with the focus on the HLC annual meeting and assessment of student learning conferences. Many faculty and staff had attended state and regional activities on a variety of teaching and learning topics, and many faculty and staff had collaborated on professional development activities with each other or on campus. The Team found it to be positive that MSU-Bottineau provided funding for all employees, regardless of group, a confirmation on the importance they place on creating expanded learning environments for students.

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

Although documentation of assessment of online and dual credit offerings and programs is limited, the College recognizes that as an area needing improvement. The College might benefit by defining what percent of the students need to achieve a minimum level of success as to whether a program outcomes are being met. The current process reveals the data collected as sufficient without an acceptable minimum standard defined. However, the college does meet the criterion of clearly stating student learning outcomes for each educational program with effective assessment possible.

**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. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

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**

Interviews with the Campus Dean, Minot State University President, and a member of the North Dakota Board of Higher Education would indicate that each place value on MSU-Bottineau creating a life of learning for its students. Support of the Minot State University President and the State Board for a \$2.4 million capital appropriation for an addition to Thatcher Hall on the MSU-Bottineau campus to be used as learning resource and classroom space demonstrates a value of a life of learning on campus, and has provided an improved learning atmosphere for the college.

MSU-Bottineau has demonstrated strong evidence that acquisition of breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs. Multiple examples are all centered around the college's emphasis on their general education goals, which were reviewed and updated in 2008-2009 and included in their latest 2008-2010 catalog. The process of integrating these new goals with the new core value emphasis on nature, technology, and beyond is ongoing within each department. This integration of the general education core gives the students the adaptive process learned through the achievement of objectives under each goal for any given department to make them life-long learners.

With no state-mandated minimum number of credit hours required in the general education area for AAS and diplomas, the number of general education course credits required by MSU-Bottineau(19 credit hours for their AAS degrees) also shows the commitment to a breadth of knowledge beyond normal expectations. The 42 credit hours required for their AA and AS degree demonstrate that same commitment. The career/technical programs also have five objectives that permeate each program, including integration of general education courses and an awareness of life-long learning. The five career/technical curricula objectives are stated in the college catalog (page 68) and in many of the specific program information links on the school web site.

Intellectual inquiry is required of students with experiential learning opportunities through environmental research activities and lab/capstone courses, all involving documentation and report writing. This enhances the student desire for further inquiry as life-long learners.

Advisory committee meeting minutes, newspaper articles, and interviews with staff, faculty and students indicate the high degree to which students are active in the community. Several classes and student organizations have service-oriented activities, often designed to assist community members. The student and employee handbooks clearly outline expectations in terms of ethical practices and codes of conduct.

MSU-Bottineau has documented that it values and supports effective teaching through its mentoring and professional development activities. The team heard repeated student comments as to the quality and effectiveness of the teaching that takes place and of the caring attitude of the faculty. Enrollment caps and equipment purchases aid the faculty in maintaining an effective teaching environment. However, the professional development activities have been limited and a tight budget has caused the faculty to exhibit some concerns as to compensation and appreciation.

A listing of the numerous community activities sponsored by the College is a reflection of MSU-Bottineau's commitment to modeling a life of learning for those in the Bottineau area. Recent on campus community activities included a community day of service by student athletes, numerous athletic camps for the area youth, a campus sponsored book club, and a rummage sale held on the MSU-Bottineau campus, sponsored by the faculty/students/staff. Profits are given back to the community, e.g., hospital, domestic violence, ambulance squad, firemen, etc. In addition, the Foundation and Booster Club board members are involved in numerous activities on campus engaging themselves in activities and indicating the value the community values MSU-Bottineau as a place of learning.

Assessment of the usefulness of the curricula to students was also documented in the team review of the Cumulative Student/Faculty Evaluations from the spring of 2003 through the spring of 2008 semesters. These evaluations asked for student responses to such questions as the quality of the course, whether course objectives, grading procedures, and classroom procedures were clearly explained at the beginning of the course, and instructor responses to students in terms of questions, explanations, return of assignments and tests, as well as overall instructor effectiveness. A high percentage of positive student responses were noted for all categories.

The student and faculty handbooks clearly outline expectations in terms of ethical practices and codes of conduct. There are all college staff and faculty meetings held annually before the start of the fall term to review new college policies and procedures. SafeAssign has been made available to faculty and syllabi include student expectations in terms of original work and what constitutes plagiarism, helping to insure integrity in the

acquisition and communication of knowledge.

As a member of the Dakota Nursing consortium, a collaboration of five colleges (MSU-Bottineau, Bismarck State College, Lake Region State College, Williston State College, and Ft. Berthold Community College) to deliver nursing education The College's nursing program is evaluated by the North Dakota board of Nursing. This board recommended approval of the MSU-Bottineau Program and found its curriculum meeting standards for the associate degree in nursing. The success of this program in preparing nurses for the workplace was communicated in discussions with hospital and long term care administrators on campus at a community leaders meeting, as well as discussion with nursing faculty and students. Employer satisfaction surveys viewed in the Resource Room indicated similar satisfaction. The College's focus on Nature, Technology and Beyond and its long tradition as the "North Dakota forestry School" all contribute to its excellence in providing programs and students for the workplace in related areas. The housing of the North Dakota State Foresters office on the MSU-Bottineau is also witness to its ability to educate students in related areas. Again, employer satisfaction surveys viewed show graduates in these areas demonstrating exceptional performance.

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

None

**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. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

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 value.

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

MSU-Bottineau values student satisfaction as well as academic achievement as witnessed by the use of external satisfaction instruments. The College utilizes the annual North Dakota University System Accountability Measures Report in assessing student satisfaction. MSU-Bottineau also administers the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System College Student Inventory and results are given to student program advisors. These instruments provide student input which can be used by faculty and administrators to improve the college learning environment.

The college uses multiple satisfaction surveys, including the Noel-Levitz Retention Survey and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, to learn from various constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations. A review of resource room materials related to the CCSSE survey results showed that gaps in student satisfaction in advising, retention, and effective teaching were noted and are being addressed by the College staff. Alumni surveys, the alumni newsletter and committees on which alumni serve also resulted in suggestions for change, including the recently approved college name change effective August, 2009.

One of the strongest areas for MSU-Bottineau is their work with internal and external constituencies who clearly value the services the college provides. The North Dakota Forest Service continues to maintain offices on the MSU-Bottineau campus with MSU-Bottineau serving as fiscal agent as well. The newly funded Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture will be working with growers across the state in greenhouse production of specialty and organic vegetables. Community activities involving the Campus Read project, raising funds for the improvement of campus technology and extracurricular activities, use of campus facilities by the community for many events, and community service and involvement by the college employees, have all combined to strengthen the bond between the College and the community.

MSU-Bottineau demonstrates its commitment to the community through its willingness to co-sponsor the national Chautauqua Program with the Bottineau Community Theater in 2009 as one of three sites in the state of North Dakota.

Strong evidence of the college's commitment to identifying and serving its constituencies is also demonstrated through its commitment to working with its students wishing to transfer and the work with off-campus facilities and staffs in serving students and the community beyond Bottineau.

Through such activities as Diversity Week, MSU-Bottineau demonstrates its commitment to preparing students for an increasingly diverse workforce. Opportunities to interact with community members of all ages and backgrounds include athletic events and community service projects.

The college's work with transfer students as part of the North Dakota University System transfer initiative was documented in a 2004 report on MSU-Bottineau's transfer students. A group of 74 MSU-Bottineau students were tracked in transferring out to other ND system colleges. Nearly one half of the students transferred to Minot State University, with 26 of the 74 completing their general education requirements before transferring and 47 of the 74 transferring prior to completing degrees. Grade point averages were noted prior to and after the transfers occurred as well as the distribution of majors. Students are advised while at MSU-Bottineau about the coursework needed to complete the degrees on each different campus, and what is needed for the completion of the degree at the receiving institution. Students and faculty both reinforced the efforts of the college in dealing with this particular identified constituent need when the team met with each group.

Another joint effort that demonstrates the college's commitment to serving its constituencies external to the MSU-Bottineau campus is its program offerings at the Minot State University (MSU) campus. A site visit to MSU revealed a very strong commitment on the part of both campuses to meet an identified need of students wanting associate degree level programs without having to be on the MSU-Bottineau campus. A discussion with both the Minot Programs Director for MSU-Bottineau and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs at MSU revealed a true partnership in terms of staffing, classroom space, and availability of student support services for students enrolled in those programs. The specific programs available at MSU for MSU-Bottineau students are included in the college catalog (page 125). All services for MSU students are also provided to MSU-Bottineau students enrolled on the MSU campus. The MSU-Bottineau program director is officed across the hall from the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and also teaches many of the courses offered in some of the programs (as well as recruits, advises, and tracks student progress). The programs have produced an average of about 75 students per year from 2004-2009.

The College's collaborative efforts in serving its external constituencies is also demonstrated through the Dakota Nursing Consortium and in MSU-Bottineau's involvement with the Burdick Job Corps Center in Minot, ND, providing the practical nursing program at that site. The Dakota Nursing Consortium is a collaboration of five colleges (MSU-Bottineau, Bismarck State College, Lake Region State College, Williston State College, and Ft. Berthold Community College) to deliver nursing education program with a common curriculum. Theory courses are delivered over the interactive Video Network (IVN) while clinical courses and labs are coordinated by each of the colleges. MSU-Bottineau also has practical nursing students at sites in Rugby and Valley City, as well as the associate degree registered nursing students on the campus in Bottineau. Training instructors and clinical coordinators at the various sites are under the direction of the Program Director at MSU-Bottineau.

The College's involvement in the North Dakota University System Online (NDUSO) has been targeted by the campus administration as one of the keys to future enrollment increases necessary for future funding for the College. A review of the NDUSO web site and a visit with the MSU-Bottineau IT Director gave the team good insight into the history and direction of the school's involvement with this state-wide initiative. The original distance education offerings for MSU-Bottineau involved mostly interactive video networking (IVN) back to the MSU campus for courses needed by MSU-Bottineau students enrolled in associate degree programs or nursing students at the Job Corps Center. Online courses have been added to the IVN offerings, and the College has begun to target potential students who cannot get to the MSU-Bottineau campus.

MSU-Bottineau students may take online classes from other NDUSO colleges but are a degree-seeking student at MSU-Bottineau. According to the NDUSO web site, "A collaborative student can be simultaneously enrolled at more than one North Dakota University System (NDUS) institution during a single term. The institution from which the collaborative student is earning a degree is the **Home Campus**. NDUS institutions that may supply courses for the collaborative student are identified as **Provider Institutions**. This collaborative process permits the Home Campus to combine credits from more than one institution for the purpose of financial aid. At the Home Campus, a single billing statement and an academic record will reflect the combined credits at both the Home Campus and Provider Institutions." A number of the benefits of the collaborative process are 1) courses from multiple campuses of the NDUS, 2) single registration, 3) one bill for tuition and fees, 4) single application, 5) financial aid and advisement from Home Campus, and 6) a single transcript. This approach state-wide is an attempt to avoid duplication of effort and hold down costs for any given college. The web site shows which programs are available and through which college. One of the links from the NDUSO site takes a student to Connect ND where actual enrollment for specific courses could occur.

Through its efforts with transfer students, the programs offered at the MSU Learning Center, the state nursing consortium, and the college's involvement in the North Dakota University System Online programs, the college has extended its efforts well beyond the campus boundaries to better serve identified constituent needs.

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

None

**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. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up is recommended.

**V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

**A. Affiliation Status**

No change

**B. Nature of the Organization**

**1. Legal status**

No change

**2. Degrees awarded**

No change

**C. Conditions of Affiliation**

**1. Stipulation on affiliation status**

No change

**2. Approval of degree sites**

No change

**3. Approval of distance education degree**

No change

4. Reports required

The recommendation of the team is that Criterion Two needs further attention. The team recommends a progress report regarding the processes for planning as it relates to finance, assessment results, and resource allocation, to include an enrollment management plan, be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

Rationale:

While the last comprehensive visit held on April 26-28, 1999, there has been a Focus Visit to Minot State University-Bottineau focused on Planning, Assessment, and General Education. The Focus Visit held November 13-14, 2000 did find progress on the part of the institution with regard to program assessment and general education integration into the curriculum. That team did request a progress report on the integration of planning, budgeting, and use of assessment information for decision making which was submitted in spring 2004 and accepted by HLC staff. This Team would concur that much progress has been made at MSU-Bottineau in assessment and general education. The Team does have concerns however with the small on-campus enrollment, the competition for funds within the North Dakota University System, and the College's reliance on athletic programs and on-line registrations for student enrollment increases, and how this may affect available resources in the future. The Team would like to see a progress report submitted in 2012 regarding the institution's addressing of these concerns.

5. Other visits scheduled

None

5. Organization change request

None

\* 3 DIFFERENT EXPLANATIONS OF WHAT REPORT SHOULD COVER??

**D. Summary of Commission Review**

Timing for next comprehensive visit: 2018-2019

Rationale for recommendation:

The institutional climate at Minot State University-Bottineau is outstanding. This College may be the most positive, yet the smallest, community college that team members have visited. This feeling of pride was also verified by external surveys by Noel-Levitz and others. It is a College with extensive community support. The leadership at MSU-Bottineau and the President of Minot State University, who is ultimately administratively responsible for the College, have had an on-going positive relationship and shown stability in the administration of the College. The dedication of the faculty and the satisfaction of the learning environment by the students was obvious to Team members in all discussions and meetings held. While there is some concern on the part of the Team regarding the challenges of planning for the future, there is also confidence that it will be addressed seriously by administration, faculty, staff, students, and other constituencies, and the Team concludes that Minot State University-Bottineau meets all five Criteria for Accreditation and that a ten year cycle is warranted.