

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, Minnesota

April 16-18, 2007

FOR

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

EVALUATION TEAM

Donna L. Brown, Assistant Director of American Indian Student Services, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND 58202

Jose D. Colchado, Professor of Education, Northern Arizona University, Tucson, AZ 85746

Mary A. Hedberg, Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Assessment, Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, MI 48640

John B. Mason, Dean, College of Liberal Studies, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI 54601

Renee Neely, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, NM 88130 (Chair)

John H. Schuh, Distinguished Professor, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011

Contents

I. Context and Nature of Visit	3
II. Commitment to Peer Review.....	7
III. Compliance with Federal Requirements	8
IV. Fulfillment of the Criteria	8
a. Criterion One	8
b. Criterion Two	9
c. Criterion Three.....	11
d. Criterion Four.....	14
e. Criterion Five	16
V. Affiliation Status.....	17

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The team visited St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minnesota to conduct a comprehensive visit for continued accreditation. The Team also reviewed two requests for institutional change. One request was to allow the University to offer programs at off-campus locations without prior Higher Learning Commission approval. The second was for permission to offer an applied Doctorate of Education (Ed.D) in higher education administration.

B. Organizational Context

St. Cloud State University is the largest institution of thirty-three institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system and the second largest within the state of Minnesota. It began in 1869 as a normal school and became St. Cloud State Teachers College in 1921. It began offering bachelor's degrees in 1925 and master's degrees in 1957. In 1975, the institution became St. Cloud State University when the legislature changed the designation of state colleges to state universities. The nature of higher education in Minnesota is again changing as the state legislature has now authorized state universities to offer doctoral programs in applied fields of study.

The University is situated in the city of St. Cloud and serves a seven-county metropolitan area with a population of 2.8 million people. It offers 205 degree programs, 129 at the undergraduate level and 66 at the graduate level. Programs range from the certificate level to the Education Specialist degree. It provides programs at various locations, online, and in evening and weekend formats.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

Two representatives conducted a pre-visit to St. Cloud State University on November 20-21, 2006 that also served as a portion of the continued accreditation review that is the focus of this report. The purpose of the pre-visit was to affirm that off-campus sites were operating with appropriate oversight of the institution and should therefore be included in the institution's affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission.

The University is part of the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) system. The MnSCU associate vice chancellor who serves as a liaison to the University participated in various meetings conducted by the Team.

St. Cloud State University is participating in the Assessment Academy conducted by the Higher Learning Commission.

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

The Team visited the campus in St. Cloud, Minnesota. During the pre-visit, members visited the off-campus site for the Minnesota Correctional Facility in the city of St. Cloud.

E. Distance Education Reviewed

During the pre-visit, the off-campus programs were visited. In addition, the visit included a review of off-campus programs and online programming.

F. Interactions with Constituencies

The Team met with the following individuals and groups during the April visit:

1. Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
2. Member, Board of Trustees
3. Associate Vice Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and St. Cloud State University liaison
4. President
5. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
6. Vice President for Administrative Affairs
7. Vice President for University Advancement
8. Vice President for Student Affairs
9. Director of Athletics
10. Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
11. Director of Affirmative Action
12. Advisor to the President
13. Director of University Relations
14. Director of the Career Services Center
15. Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
16. Dean of International Studies
17. Associate Vice President for Administrative Affairs
18. Assistant Vice President for Development
19. Dean of Undergraduate Studies
20. Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
21. Dean, Learning Resources and Technology Services
22. Dean, College of Continuing Studies
23. Dean, Herbergers College of Business
24. Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
25. General Education Committee
26. President of the Faculty Association
27. Department Chairs (28 members)
28. Open meeting with faculty
29. Director of the Career Services Center
30. Associate Director of the Career Services Center
31. College of Education Assessment Director
32. University Assessment Director
33. Director of Graduate Student Services
34. College of Fine Arts and Humanities Assessment Coordinator
35. College of Science and Engineering Assessment Coordinator
36. College of Social Science Assessment Coordinator
37. General Education Assessment director
38. Research Analyst
39. Director, Buildings and Grounds Management
40. Director, Information Technology Services
41. Director, Center for Information Services

42. Associate Athletic Director, Senior Woman Administrator
43. Director of Financial Aid
44. Director of Affirmative Action
45. Director of Distributed Learning
46. Open meeting for staff (100 participants)
47. Student Government leaders (6 students)
48. Open meeting for students (51 students)
49. Community representatives (6 community participants)

In addition, the following persons were interviewed during the November pre-visit.

49. Director of Distributed Learning
50. Professor and Coordinator, Center for Information Media
51. Professor and Graduate Director, Master of Engineering Management Program
52. Coordinator of Off-Campus Programs
53. Associate Dean of G. R. Herberger College of Business
54. Dean, Center for Continuing Studies
55. Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Community Psychology
56. Dean of the College of Science and Engineering
57. Professor, Department of Teacher Development
58. Associate Warden of Operations, Minnesota Correctional Facility-St. Cloud
59. President of Data Recognition Corporation
60. Associate Dean of the College of Education
61. Professor, Higher Education Administration Program
62. Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs, MnSCU
63. Professor, Department of Special Education
64. Research Director for the College of Education
65. Chair of the Department of Special Education
66. Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
67. Vice President for Student Life and Development
68. Director of the Master's of Business Administration Program
69. Director of Instruction for Minnesota Correctional Facility-St. Cloud
70. Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
71. Director of Training Program Development
72. Coordinator of Applied Behavior Analysis Program
73. Dean of the College of Management, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, MN
74. Director of University Assessment
75. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
76. Dean of the College of Education
77. Dean of Learning Resources and Technology Services

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. Self-Study Report
2. Faculty Handbook 2006-2007
3. Undergraduate Bulletin 2006-2008
4. 2006-2009 Graduate Bulletin
5. Annual Financial Report for the Years Ended June 30, 2006 and 2005
6. Annual Financial Report for the Years Ended June 30, 2005 and 2004

7. St. Cloud State University Student Code of Conduct and Related Student Policies
8. Agreement between the State of Minnesota and the Middle Management Association, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007
9. Agreement between Minnesota State Employees Union AFSCME, Council No. 5, AFL-CIO and the State of Minnesota, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007
10. Agreement between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Nurses Association, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007
11. IFO Inter Faculty Organization 2005-2007 Master Contract between the Minnesota State College and University Board of Trustees and the Inter Faculty Organization, October, 2005
12. Minnesota State University Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF) 2005-2007 Master Contract between the Minnesota State College and University Board of Trustees and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Affiliated with Minnesota Teamsters Local 320, November 2005
13. Unit 14: General Professional Labor Agreement between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2007
14. Managerial Plan, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007
15. Commissioner's Plan, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007
16. Personnel Plan for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Administrators, 7/1/2005 – 6/30/2007
17. Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Designing the Future Strategic Plan
18. Learning Resources & Technology Services FY06 Annual Report
19. Student-Athlete Handbook 2006-2007
20. St. Cloud State University Self-Study Report, April 2007 Addendum: Request for Change in Statement of Affiliation Status, Off-campus Degree Programs
21. Institutional Snapshot
22. Report on Diversity Programs at St. Cloud State University, 2003
23. St. Cloud State University Cultural Audit Final Report, 2002
24. A Summary of Recommendations for Departments that Provide Support for Sub-Populations of the St. Cloud State University Community, 2003
25. Anti-Semitism at St. Cloud State University as Perceived by Selected Jewish and Non-Jewish Faculty, Students and Staff, 2001
26. SCSU Campus Climate Assessment Project, 2003
27. Minnesota State Colleges & Universities magazine, Fall 2006
28. Fact Book 2006-2007
29. Facilities Master Plan
30. www.stcloudstate.edu general pages
31. www.mnscu.edu general pages for policy

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

St. Cloud State University developed an inclusive self-study process that began in the spring 2005. Co-chairs from two different colleges were identified, and a steering committee of seventeen members representing faculty, staff, and students was formed. The work evolved to include fifteen committees with responsibilities for different topical areas or support functions. Committees began their work in fall 2005 and met regularly through the

year. Committee work was posted to a website for review and comment by the entire University community. Drafts of the report were posted on the website to allow for comments.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The Team found that the report accurately reflected the activities of the campus and served the University well in making the case that the criteria for continued accreditation were met. The two requests for institutional change, one requesting approval to provide programs off-campus without prior Higher Learning Commission approval and the other to offer an applied Doctor of Education with a major in higher education administration, helped establish the readiness of the University to pursue these initiatives.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The Team considers the response of the organization to previously identified challenges to be adequate.

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

Requirements were fulfilled.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

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

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The University's mission is clearly stated, publicly available, and understood by its constituents. It aligns with the mission of the Minnesota State College and University system and is understood and supported by the Board of Trustees.
- The institution provides multiple venues to display its mission and vision. The website is particularly effective in making documents available for a wide audience and demonstrating the work of the institution in promoting its mission and vision through publicizing its strategic plans and linking to the minutes of meetings related to those plans.
- Units are able to articulate their role in support of the mission through various

departmental documents such as strategic plans.

- The University has undertaken several definitive steps to enhance the diversity of its curricula and its constituent bodies. It has adopted an official diversity statement that appears on all printed materials. Requirements in diversity and racial issues have been added to the existing General Education Program, and courses on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies are available. Diversity training has been required of some staff and made available to faculty, including those serving on search and screen committees. The University implemented the Community Anti-Racism Education (CARE) Team program.
- Community members express strong support of the University and its mission. The University is viewed by community members and organizations as an essential partner.
- SCSU has established policies, procedures, and structures to assure that it operates with integrity with its constituents.
- SCSU is actively engaged in MnSCU and sees itself as a leader in that system. The institution is clearly considering how to adapt to developments within the MnSCU system and forge a position in it that represents new opportunities.

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.

B. 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

- SCSU demonstrates its ability to carefully manage its physical resources through the maintenance of an attractive campus and modern learning environment. In addition, the amount of deferred maintenance is comparatively low and quite remarkable, given the state's budget challenges.
 - The University has demonstrated a significant institutional commitment to data-driven planning and continuous improvement through the expansion of the Institutional Research office and the use of the planning task force and various assessment committees. It has made strides in linking planning and budgeting and shares this information with faculty through the use of co-chairs from faculty and the Institutional Research director.
 - SCSU manages its financial resources well. It maintains a balanced budget and has operating reserves that meet MnSCU standards. Funding for capital projects has improved facilities. SCSU has wide latitude in carrying funds forward across fiscal years and is able to allocate funds for special purposes.
 - Despite a decline in the percentage of its operating budget available from state funds, SCSU has established a sound and stable operating budget that provides opportunities for new initiatives and additional resources. Its focus on data-driven decision-making has guided the allocation of resources to ensure quality instructional programs. A review of its financial documents and discussions within the University provide evidence of a financially sound institution.
 - The institution is developing a number of processes to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic programs and is improving its assessment processes. These processes appear to be well-supported through reassigned time and the development of the Institutional Research office.
 - The Dome, a new athletic facility has been well-received by everyone on campus. The students are highly praised for contributing to this effort through student fees, knowing that at the time the facility would not be available for their use, but rather would be used by students in the future. The Dome is highly utilized by students and allows for physical activities not previously available in the winter months.
-
- The University has adjusted its organizational structure in a variety of ways including the addition of a Provost, a Dean of Undergraduate Studies and college assessment coordinators to increase institutional effectiveness.
 - The University undertakes substantive reviews of potential programs before making a commitment to pursue them. It establishes appropriate resources to implement them, such as in the case of the proposed doctoral program.
 - SCSU has strengthened its development and fund-raising efforts. It is

positioning itself for even better fund-raising efforts in the future through restructuring efforts and placing fund-raising officers within the colleges.

- The department of undergraduate admissions has developed an enrollment management plan that should be in place for fall 2007. The plan will help shape the size, quality, and mix of undergraduate students at the University in 2010-2011. Various committees, units and advisory bodies have been reviewing the plan.

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.

C. 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

- SCSU has built a high level of accountability through its pursuit of external review and accreditation. It has the most accredited programs in the MnSCU system and cites over 30 in the self-study. Examples of the discipline-based accreditations include those from the Association to Advance College Schools of Business (AACSB International), the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, National Association of Schools of Arts and Design, and the National Association of Industrial Technology.
- The University values and supports effective teaching in a variety of ways. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning serves faculty by offering a variety of programs including leadership development, instructional development, and sharing of best practices in teaching.

- SCSU has a campus-wide movement to create a campus that is knowledgeable and supportive of assessment and that practices assessment to improve student learning. It has developed a number of plans to assess and evaluate various aspects of the student experience.
 - The acceptance of the University to the HLC Assessment Academy indicates a commitment to assign both human and fiscal resources to institutional improvement especially related to student learning. The University has appointed faculty to serve as assessment directors for each college, and they are assisting with the development of program goals and the mapping of the curriculum to those goals. It is crucial that the University continue to develop and refine its assessment activities and use the data for institutional improvement.
 - St. Cloud State University offers a variety of degrees and certificates for students not on the home campus. Delivery methods include online, correspondence, interactive television and live classes at five off-campus centers. In fall 2006 the University offered over 200 online courses, the largest number in the MnSCU system.
 - The University has sought to encourage faculty in the use of online education, and success has been notable, especially in hybrid courses.
 - The University has initiated a First Year Experience for incoming freshmen. The experience includes a living and learning residential option, a three-day orientation, and special advising and registration days.
 - The library at SCSU is fairly new and is highly utilized by students, faculty, and staff. The library is designed to be conducive to learning, and the students enjoy using it. Over 400 computers are available for student use in the center, and a student designed technology system allows users to know at a glance which rooms contain areas where computers are available for the next user.
 - Academic programs are supported by a variety of services, many of which are integrated through Learning Resources and Technology Services under the direction of a dean. These services and support functions can be accessed via the website along with annual reports and assessment reports for these services.
-
- The Learning Resources and Technology Services dean is responsible for maintaining learning environments and central planning for libraries and technology support with additional responsibilities to secure grant funding to further the work of this unit. Bringing these functions together seems to have the effect of creating an integrated environment that provides training for students with professional development for faculty and support in the use of these systems for all, for example, from traditional library resources to course management technology, to computer labs.
 - SCSU has created a strong telecommunications infrastructure and has invested

in advanced technologies for classrooms, lecture halls, and labs to enhance student learning.

- Off-campus programs have strong support and are well conceived. They demonstrate exceptional success in the creation of partnerships between SCSU and other institutions, including educational entities and private businesses. Students may receive off-campus support services. Faculty are well qualified, and most are members of the full-time faculty at the home campus.
- The University has been planning for a doctorate in education since 2005 when changes to state law made it possible for MnSCU universities to develop and offer doctoral programs. Documents and interviews demonstrate that the University and college have: assessed the need for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration, identified potential applicants for the program, made realistic projections for the enrollment and needed resources including needs in technology and the library, committed resources to carry the program through its first years until state funding applies, hired two new faculty with qualifications appropriate for a doctoral program and committed to hiring additional positions, received support from appropriate university committees, and developed an appropriate curriculum. SCSU has made significant commitments to ensure the successful implementation of the doctoral program.
- Faculty and administrators are aware of the need to promote and support scholarship among the faculty of the doctoral program. Development programs through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the allocation of resources to support faculty scholarship are in place.

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

The Bachelor of Elective Studies continues to need institutional attention. Program goals with measurable direct and indirect outcomes need to be clearly articulated and implemented. As is, it seems amorphous without clear expectations for what it will provide students.

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

While the University has extensively prepared for and is ready to implement an applied doctoral program, the Team believes that some substantive issues remain to be addressed. However, these issues can be addressed while the program is in the early phases of implementation. The assessment program for the doctoral degree is not well developed at this time, and work load issues also need to be negotiated with the system.

Recommendation:

Progress Report by June 30, 2010 to address the doctoral program regarding the assessment of program effectiveness, the completion of negotiations with MnSCU on faculty work load, and the completion of staffing plans.

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.

D. 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

- Academic programs are varied and available to multiple constituencies. The institution provides appropriate support services such as the Writing Center, technology support, statistical computing for both students and faculty, and outreach programs such as Study Abroad, Evening College, and Distance Learning.
- SCSU is making efforts to provide access for all students to experience study abroad by providing affordable options. For example, the South African experience provides free housing, and faculty and staff are exploring funding sources to defray travel expenses.
- SCSU has undertaken significant revision of its general education curriculum to make the program more streamlined, more assessable and comprehensive, and more integrated with the academic majors. The curriculum is overseen by the General Education Committee with faculty representation from each college. It solicits broad-based input on possible changes and successfully petitioned the Faculty Senate to adopt a mission statement for general education.
- The University values external accreditation for its programs and has successfully accredited its programs where such opportunities are available. It also undertakes systematic program review.
- SCSU demonstrates strong support of student engagement in research, including that for undergraduate students. Annual programs like the Student Research Colloquium and research grants are examples of the University's commitment.

- Support services and centers have been developed for a number of different constituencies. The Multicultural Student Services is a link to other student organizations such as the African Student Association, Asian Students in Action, All Tribes Council and the Council of African American Students. The University also supports a Women's Center and a Child Care Center. It also has links to special tutoring services and events that support a diverse student body and community constituencies.
- SCSU offers professional development training opportunities through the Center for Teaching Excellence as well as through Learning Resources and Technology Support.
- Institutional policies and infrastructure are in place for compliance with federal and state requirements, responsible scholarship, ethical conduct, intellectual property rights, and academic integrity.

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.

E. 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

- The University promotes a variety of service learning experiences, volunteer opportunities, community partnerships, and internships. The Volunteer Connection on its website makes these readily available. The University's Co-Curricular Transcript allows students to document these activities and use them for career development. The University offers various service learning grants

and awards. It is also involved in national service learning programs such as the American Democracy Project for Civic Engagement. These efforts appear to be having an impact on the students. At the open meeting with students, about 90% reported participation in some type of community volunteer experience outside of the SCSU campus.

- The institution is an important element in the community and is recognized as vital to the region's economy and culture. To facilitate its role in the community, the University makes strong use of community advisory groups.
- The University provides programs in formats that are important to the community. It offers continuing students and distance education opportunities in a variety of formats. Evening University offers evening and week-end classes, and a Senior to Sophomore program is available for high school students. In addition, the Center for Continuing Studies provides professional development and training for adults.

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.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

No change.

B. Nature of Organization

1. Legal status

No change.

2. Degrees awarded

Doctor of Education in higher education administration. Prior Commission approval required to offer additional doctoral programs.

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. Stipulation on affiliation status

No change.

2. Approval of degree sites

No Commission approval required to offer courses and degree programs at off-campus sites in Minnesota.

3. Approval of distance education degree

No change.

4. Reports required

Progress Report – A progress report regarding the doctoral program is to be submitted to the staff of the Higher Learning Commission by June 30, 2010.

Rationale and Expectations – It became clear that some issues regarding faculty load and assessment are still being discussed. These issues are critical to the success of the program. Expectations for the progress report are that it address the assessment of program effectiveness, the completion of negotiations with MnSCU on faculty work load, and the completion of staffing plans.

5. Other visits scheduled

None

6. Organization change request

St. Cloud State University offers the degree Doctor of Education in higher education administration. Prior Commission approval required to offer doctoral programs in other areas.

D. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit: academic year - 2016-2017

Regarding the request for approval to go off-campus in Minnesota without prior commission approval, the Team recommends approval.

Regarding the request to offer the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Higher Education Administration, the Team recommends approval.

Rationale for recommendations:

Based on a review of the self-study materials and extensive discussions during the pre-visit and site visit, the Team confirmed that St. Cloud State University meets all five of the criteria for continued accreditation. The mission of SCSU is understood, supported, and effectively carried out. Faculty, staff, and administrative leadership are committed to the institutional goals. The University uses its financial, physical, and

human resources with good stewardship and demonstrates that it is capable of facing the challenges may come within the next ten-year cycle.

Off-campus programs are compatible with the institution's mission and strategic plan and are based on solid partnerships. Appropriate oversight with quality controls exists, and the University must have MnSCU approval to take these existing programs off-campus. Student support services are available.

The Doctor of Education program is carefully developed to meet the needs of the state. The University has carefully studied the feasibility of implementing the program and has strong support from the MnSCU system to implement it. Adequate resources have been allocated for the program to be successful.

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, Minnesota

April 16-18, 2007

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Donna L. Brown, Assistant Director of American Indian Student Services, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND 58202

Jose D. Colchado, Professor of Education, Northern Arizona University, Tucson, AZ 85746

Mary A. Hedberg, Associate Vice President for Academic Planning and Assessment, Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, MI 48640

John B. Mason, Dean, College of Liberal Studies, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI 54601

Renee Neely, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, NM 88130 (Chair)

John H. Schuh, Distinguished Professor, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011

Contents

I. Overall Observations about the Organization	3
II. Consultations of the Team	3
A. First Year Experience.....	3
B. Procedures Designed for Early Intervention.....	4
C. Policy Regarding Carry-Forward of Funds	4
D. Assessment Activities.....	5
E. Serving Under-Represented Students and Other Constituents.....	5
F. Doctor of Education Degree.....	5&6
G. Diversity.....	7
III. Recognition of Significant Accomplishments, Progress, and/or Practices.....	7

I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

St. Cloud State University is the largest institution of thirty-three institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system and the second largest within the state of Minnesota. It began in 1869 as a normal school and became St. Cloud State Teachers College in 1921. It began offering bachelor's degrees in 1925 and master's degrees in 1957. In 1975, the institution became St. Cloud State University when the legislature changed the designation of state colleges to state universities. The nature of higher education in Minnesota is again changing as the state legislature has now authorized state universities to offer doctoral programs in applied fields of study.

The University is situated in the city of St. Cloud and serves a seven-county metropolitan area with a population of 2.8 million people. It offers 205 degree programs, 129 at the undergraduate level and 66 at the graduate level. Programs range from the certificate level to the Education Specialist degree. It provides programs at various locations, online, and in evening and weekend formats.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

A. First Year Experience

The First Year Experience (FYE) was described in a number of places in the self study and also was referenced in conversations with members of the SCSU community during the visit to the University. The purpose of this program is to "...help students make the transition from high school to college through a system of mutual support" (Self Study, p. 22). It was begun in 2005-2006.

The program consists of a number of elements, including students who live in the same residence hall and take courses together. An advisory board assists in providing direction for this student learning experience.

The Team's view is that a number of administrative problems are associated with the FYE. For example, students can begin to apply for residence hall space substantially in advance of when the learning communities are announced. As a consequence, space may not be available to accommodate students who wish to live proximate to one another and participate in a learning community.

The Team recommends that SCSU develop a strategy that provides for more direct oversight of the FYE program. A person or an office ought to be assigned to provide oversight for the FYE rather than leave coordination of the program to the good will of the staff and faculty who work directly with elements of the program.

B. Procedures Designed for Early Intervention

Noted in the Annual Financial Report for 2005 and 2006 on page 35, funds had to be repaid to the US Department of Education under Title IV. The Team understands that these funds had to be repaid because students left the University and received financial aid in error. Much of this, from what the Team was told, was due to the fact that the students left the institution after receiving aid and were ineligible for certain disbursements. That the students had left the institutions was identified a substantial period of time after they had stopped attending classes and the aid they received was in error.

The Team believes a policy should be developed so that an early warning system can be put in place to determine the whereabouts of students who stop participating in class, living in campus housing, or staying engaged with the university in other ways. Initiatives should be undertaken so that interventions can be undertaken to determine the student's whereabouts and intent to continue with enrollment or to leave SCSU. Counseling sessions also could be made available to help students clarify their goals and to assist students with the procedures they would need to complete should they wish to change their relationship with the University.

C. Policy Regarding Carry-Forward of Funds

SCSU enjoys having the administrative authority to carry funds forward from one fiscal year to the next. This is a tremendous asset available to the University that is not available to a number of public institutions of higher education.

The Team learned that some policies are in place to govern how year-end funds are to be used but also that in some cases administrators have wide latitude to make decisions about the use of these funds. A perception exists that in some cases the carryover of funds for a specific project might be approved but in other cases the carryover of funds could be denied, more on the basis of personal relationships than the essence of the circumstance.

The Team recommends that the policy regarding the carryover of funds and their use in subsequent fiscal years should be reviewed and tightened. Even those who administer the carryover of funds expressed concern with the relatively wide discretion they have in such cases. Their view, if the Team understands correctly, and the Team's is that more details ought to be built into a policy that governs the expenditure of carryover funds.

Assessment Activities

SCSU has a campus-wide movement to create a campus that is knowledgeable and supportive of assessment and that practices assessment to improve student learning. Through the self study and during conversations with members of the SCSU community the Team learned that the University had developed a number of plans to assess and evaluate various aspects of the student experience but that the plans had not been put into operation or that the data had not been used. Examples of these comments in the self-study are included on p. 46, p. 61, p. 73, p. 82 and p. 102.

The Team is encouraged that SCSU has chosen to participate in the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. This is an excellent initiative on the part of SCSU. But, now that SCSU has committed itself to this level of participation, it is crucial that the University continue to develop and refine its assessment activities and use the data for institutional improvement. Participation in the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning means that the University is fully committed to improving its assessment and evaluation activities. The Team hopes and trusts that when the institution participates in its next decennial accreditation process that ongoing assessment and evaluation will be a central part of institutional life.

D. Serving Under-Represented Students and Other Constituents

On page 131-134 of the Self Study, SCSU acknowledges that it needs "...to implement better ways of understanding and serving students, particularly under-represented and diverse populations. Linking curricular and co-curricular experiences in the area may be one way of creating a truly welcoming environment for diverse constituencies."

The Team's view is that this must happen, in a curricular sense as well as in learning opportunities and experiences for students outside the classroom. Many members of the SCSU community when interviewed freely acknowledged that the demographics of Minnesota are changing, and that the University must be ready to adjust so as to better serve the students and other constituents of the future. It is crucial that the University put programs and services in place to do just that.

E. Doctor of Education Degree

The University has been planning for a doctorate in education since 2005 when changes in state law made it possible for MnSCU system universities to develop and offer doctoral programs. Documents and interviews demonstrate that the University and college have: assessed the need for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration, identified potential applicants for the program, made realistic projections

for enrollment and needed resources including needs in technology and the library, committed resources to carry the program through its first years, hired two new faculty and committed to hiring additional positions, received support from appropriate university committees, and are working to develop assessment strategies. They have positioned themselves well to successfully implement the proposed program.

The University's commitment of the resources needed to support the implementation of the doctoral program in its first years is significant. Over time University leaders should assess whether the resources needed to support the doctoral program will affect the availability of resources needed by existing programs in the college.

The college's assessment of demand for the doctorate among present master of science in education program students, other perspective students, potential employers, and career opportunities data indicate that there will be sufficient demand for the degree. The faculty and administrators of the college of education are aware that they will need to establish clear and appropriate admissions criteria to ensure the students most likely to complete the program will be admitted.

Faculty and administrators are aware of the need to promote and support scholarship among the present and future faculty of the doctoral program. Development programs through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the allocation of resources to support faculty scholarship are in place. The College of Education and program administrators will need to assist faculty to ensure that the teacher-scholar model is evenly and consistently evidenced in the faculty's work and supported in their work load assignments and the retention, tenure, and promotion process.

There appears to be some differences of opinion among faculty and administrators as to whether the proposed doctoral program will focus on meeting a regional demand for higher education administrators or seek to become a national or international program. The implications of where this focus will lie are major. Considering this is the first doctoral program to be offered by the University and since there appears to be a strong regional demand for graduates of the proposed program, these factors will need to be considered in the strategic planning for this program. Careful monitoring of the program over the first few years will ensure that the program is properly focused and support systems appropriately directed. Assessment of both student learning and program goals will help ensure the appropriate focus and implementation of the program.

F. Diversity

The University's data on the composition of its workforce and faculty document an increase of 37 Asian faculty in the last ten years while the increase among Blacks and Hispanics are 11 and 8 respectively over the same ten year period. While SCSU has made progress in this area, other reported workforce figures are similarly low. Although the University has many strong initiatives in place that reflect a value of and respect for diversity, there is a perception among some faculty and staff that issues of racism, discrimination, and retaliation for speaking out are present in the way the University conducts its business. The extent to which this perception is accurate or widespread may be less important than the fact that this perception exists and affects the way people relate to the institution and the way they fulfill their responsibilities. Because of its stated commitment to diversity and the increasing diversity of its student pool the University would do well to review existing initiatives and reports and undertake an objective effort to assess the needs and concerns of faculty and staff of color in order to better utilize their knowledge and expertise to better serve all students and students of color in particular.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

None

*Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

INSTITUTION and STATE: St. Cloud State University, MN

TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS): Continued Accreditation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: The visit will also focus on the request to offer the Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration and the request to offer degree programs at off-campus sites in MN.

DATES OF REVIEW: 4/16/07 - 4/18/07

Nature of Organization

LEGAL STATUS: Public

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

DEGREES AWARDED: A, B, M, S

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: A, B, M, S, D

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS: None.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: Accreditation at the doctoral level is limited to the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration

APPROVAL OF NEW DEGREE SITES: Prior Commission approval required.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Commission approval required to offer courses and degree programs at off-campus sites in Minnesota.

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES: No prior Commission approval required for programs offered through MnOnline.

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: No Change

REPORTS REQUIRED: None

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: By June 30, 2010; a progress report regarding faculty work load and assessment of learning in the doctoral program is to be submitted to the staff of the Higher Learning Commission.

OTHER VISITS REQUIRED: Sequential Visit: 2006 - 2007;

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: None

Team Recommendations for the
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 1996 - 1997

YEAR OF NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2006 - 2007

TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2016-2017

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

INSTITUTION and STATE: St. Cloud State University, MN

TYPE OF REVIEW: Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, including two change requests--to add a doctoral program and to change a stipulation that limited the establishment of off-campus sites.

NOTE: A pre-visit was conducted earlier, during which the team members verified the existence of sites that were in operation but were not cited on the SAS. Therefore, no new sites are listed here.

Educational Programs

		Program Distribution	Recommended Change (+ or -)
Programs leading to Undergraduate	Associate	2	
	Bachelors	132	
Programs leading to Graduate	Masters	52	
	Specialist	1	
	First Professional	0	
	Doctoral	0	+1

Off-Campus Activities

<p>In-State:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Campuses:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Sites:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Course Locations:</p>	<p>Present Activity:</p> <p>Maple Grove (Maple Grove) Coon Rapids (Anoka-Ramsey Community College) ; Maple Grove (Data Recognition Corporation Headquarters) ; Minneapolis (Metropolitan State University) ; North Branch (North Branch School District) ; St. Cloud (Minnesota Correctional Facility)</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>
<p>Out-of-State:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Campuses:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Sites:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Course Locations:</p>	<p>Present Wording:</p> <p>None None None</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>
<p>Out-of-USA:</p>	<p>Present Wording:</p>	<p>Recommended Change: (+ or -)</p>

Campuses: None
Sites: None
Course Locations: None

Distance Education Certificate and Degree Offerings:

Present Offerings:

BAS Aviation Maintenance Management offered via Internet; MS Applied Behavior Analysis offered via Internet

Recommended Change:

(+ or -)
