REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

Dickinson State University
Dickinson, North Dakota 58601-4896

March 2-4, 2015

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A commission of the North Central Association

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit
The purpose of this visit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continuing accreditation.

B. Institutional Context
Dickinson State University is a part of the North Dakota University System. According to the ESS provided for this visit, the University enrolled about 1,800 students, with about 1200 who are full-time and an additional 600+ part-time. However, the Fall 2014 head counts reported by the institution reflect a total of 1479 students, with 980 of these being full-time. The university offers 51 (reported as 53 on the ESS) baccalaureate degrees; four associate degrees; and two certificate programs. It is located in a geographic region that has been enjoying an economic boom due to energy production.

Issues in 2011 had led to the University's being placed On Notice. The initial issues were revealed as a result of random calling as part of the annual NSSE survey in early February 2011. Several were called who had not been Dickinson students but had instead attended events on the campus. NSSE reported this concern to the North Dakota University System office, which began an investigation that ultimately led to termination of the president and other actions. In August 2011, the University received a letter from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) concerning accuracy in its IPEDS reporting and was asked to respond within 30 days. While the original USDOE concern was with IPEDS reporting, subsequently issues with degree completions of international students and other policy violations were also uncovered, as a result of a review initiated by the new president.

There were several key personnel changes, including the president, as a result of these discoveries. In 2012 there was an HLC advisory visit to the institution to examine the institution's compliance with former criteria One, Two, and Three. That team recommended that the university be placed On Notice and reported that each of these criteria were "met with concerns." That team concluded that the institution (with its many new leaders) was addressing its many problems, but that insufficient progress had been made and requested that an On Notice report be filed in February 2013 with a follow-up visit in April of 2013. The July 2012 letter from HLC that reports the board action regarding this On Notice determination enumerates the many violations of internal and state-level policy and the inadequacy of systems to provide appropriate oversight to avoid these failures.

These problems were deemed remedied as a result of a focused visit, and the University was removed from its Notice Status October 31, 2013. It is important to note that the university had a favorable outcome from its April 2005 comprehensive visit, with no required follow-up.

Significant as well in setting the context for this visit is the fact that the Criteria for Accreditation changed from the time of its On Notice responses and after the university started its self-study process for this visit. The university's early efforts and alignment with strategic plans were related to the former criteria, and much work had to be redone in adapting to the new criteria. As readers of this report will appreciate, from 2011 through late 2013, the university leadership was significantly focused on improving its internal operations sufficiently to address the concerns raised by the USDOE, the state of North Dakota, and the Higher Learning Commission.

The team was advised by Commission staff that the institution was provided with the opportunity to postpone this comprehensive evaluation, and the institution reported that it chose to retain the original date because of its desire to get on with its primary work and place this phase of its history in the past. It asserts "that to have delayed it for another year would have diverted the University's person-power and energies into continuing a study rather than using its resources to press forward with action on those efforts which were revealed to need prompt attention (institutional response to corrections of fact)."

An additional contextual element is the economic boom of the region which has added to challenges for the university because of cost of living, the ability of residents to earn sizeable salaries without attending college, the inability to recruit faculty because of the high costs of living, and more.

C. Unique Aspects or Additions to the Visit
A few months prior to the team's visit, another discovery was made concerning the operations of the university's affiliated Foundation. Although the Foundation is separate from the university, it does impact the university's operations in multiple ways that are addressed later. The Foundation's finances are reported jointly with those of the University in the HLC annual reporting cycle. Oversight of the Foundation should also have been within the purview of the statewide Board that oversees the University, a topic that will also be addressed later, as it raises additional concerns about the effectiveness of governance within the State of North Dakota.

An additional unique aspect of the visit was the announcement by the current president that he would be retiring as soon as a replacement could be found. The state system office has already begun the search process by gathering input regarding expectations for that new president.

D. Additional Locations or Branch Campuses Visited (if applicable)

No additional sites were visited.

E. Distance Delivery Reviewed

The university offers some courses through distance delivery and several of these courses and the systems supporting these courses were reviewed. According to a HLC Action letter from November 2013, the institution, utilizing new Commission policy on distance education, is approved for distance education courses and programs.

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The University was highly inclusive in its self-study process. Committees had diverse representation and active engagement throughout. The turnover of recent years, the change of HLC criteria, and the university's laser focus on securing removal from its On Notice status negatively impacted the depth of study and the array of evidence that the process may have enjoyed. At the same time, the team concludes that the current leadership of the institution has been transparent in its processes so that people are fully aware of the institution's status, including its significant challenges.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

There are no questions in the minds of the team about the honesty in the report. The institution has identified its shortcomings and recognizes the immense work that still lies ahead. However, the self-study could best be described in most sections as descriptive, and a very limited amount of analysis of the data was provided. Some reports were of pilots, that are simply not mature systems yet while some, such as the graduate exit surveys, do not provide information about the number of respondents nor the number who were sent the survey.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The University has adequately addressed previous challenges, but many still remain that have resulted in the university's not being at the place it should be with key elements of institutional development. As the timeline provided in the context section above will suggest, there has been insufficient time for a fair determination to be made about whether the new processes and policies are strong enough to withstand turnover in administration.

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

The University provided appropriate notice and there was only one comment received and that one was positive.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The federal compliance requirements were reviewed and determined to have been met. The Federal Compliance worksheet is included at the end of this team report.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

CRITERION ONE: MISSION. The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Core Component 1A: The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

Subcomponent 1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.

Subcomponent 2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

Subcomponent 3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

Team Determination: X_ Core Component is met
                               _ Core Component is met with concerns
                               _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- Dickinson State University is one of 11 institutions that comprise the North Dakota University System (NDUS) which is governed by the North Dakota State Board of Education (SBHE). Reviewed and endorsed three times since its original approval in 1992, the Dickinson State University (DSU) mission statement has been reaffirmed. It reads that "Dickinson State University is a regional four-year institution within the NDUS, whose primary role is to contribute to the intellectual, social, economic, and cultural development, especially to Southwestern North Dakota. The University's Mission is to provide high-quality, accessible programs to promote excellence in teaching and learning; to support scholarly and creative activities; and to provide service relevant to the economy, health, and quality of life of the citizens of the State of North Dakota."   The mission statement is determined to be reflective of the present activities of the university and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

- The Mission includes the four elements that guide DSU's work: 1) provide high-quality, accessible programs; 2) promote excellence in teaching and learning; 3) support scholarly and creative activities; and 4) provide service relevant to the economy, health, and quality of life of the citizens of the State of North Dakota. Since 1992, the state universities have been given the opportunity twice to revise or update their missions. DSU's mission aligns with the NDUS mission and state-level Roundtable Cornerstones. The original DSU Mission was reaffirmed in 2013. The institution has reviewed and endorsed this mission.

- As part of the self-study process the criterion teams hosted meetings and led

conversations focused on the DSU mission, values, and vision to determine if the current guiding documents remain relevant. The procedures and processes for developing the new Strategic Plan (Path Forward Planning Synthesis 2014) were also part of these conversations. The results of the conversations indicated that the current mission statement originally developed and approved in 1992 is still relevant and should continue to guide DSU's activities and planning. Thus, the university community has concluded that the mission is aligned with current initiatives and meets their needs.

- The University identifies itself as offering liberal arts and sciences complimented and partnered by and with mission-responsive professional programs. The team does raise the question of whether this mission is still serving the institution and region most effectively given the extensive commentary offered by all stakeholder groups on the challenge in higher education generally and more specifically at DSU, with its significantly diminished enrollments and the dramatic changes in the communities it serves. However, DSU cannot offer workforce development because of the NDUS and Legislative TrainND Mandates and changing this status would require legislative action.

- The DSU Vision Statement was created as part of the 2015 DSU Future Focused Planning Committee's work in 2008-2009. The Vision Statement was circulated for comments in 2012. As a result of comments received, the wording of the Vision Statement was revised. The Vision Statement states "Dickinson State University will educate a diverse population through innovative teaching, learning and scholarship fostering responsible citizens who impact the world." This new wording was approved and adopted by the President's Cabinet on May 19, 2014 and appears in the DSU Policy Manual. The DSU Values reflect the university's beliefs about how the institution operationalizes and prioritizes the components of the Mission. The Values Statement was also approved and adopted by the President's Cabinet on May 19, 2014 and appears in the DSU Policy Manual.

- DSU's liberal arts focus is demonstrated in its mix of its 57 programs (51 bachelor's; 4 associate; and 2 certificate programs). Graduate courses are limited to Teacher Education and the CPA experience; no full graduate degrees are offered.

- Although there was general understanding of the mission, as revealed in both the self study and in multiple conversations across the campus, it is difficult to discern the extent to which DSU personnel own their mission versus relying on the system office for direction. With its extensive number of programs for the size of the institution, its variety of campus ventures, the many initiatives promulgated from the state level, and its recent history, the mission may not be central to on-campus thinking. Evidence of this potential lack of centrality is that not one of the 34 faculty attending the open faculty session named mission as a strength of the institution on their written comments regarding strengths and

opportunities for improvement. Instead, the quality of faculty, student focus, and small class sizes were the central strength themes.   Additionally, several mentioned community needs that the institution was not now serving, such as in workforce development, but no one voiced any concerns about whether the mission should be altered to adapt to the changing environment. The team concludes that there may be an opportunity to continue to reflect on the appropriateness of the mission in the context of the community's changing needs.

- Student support services are provided through a number of offices and units including the Academic Success Center, campus activities programming, support of veterans, and information technology services. The federally funded TRiO program also provides advising and tutoring to low-income, first- generation students. Veterans receive support and advising from the Veterans Certifying Official. The support services provided indicate institutional support for the mission.

- Each of the 11 institutions of the NDUS submits to the System Office the President's Goals and a campus master plan as part of the budgeting process. The annual sets of President's Goals and campus master plans must align with the NDUS Mission and Roundtable Cornerstones. DSU budget requests must be aligned to the university mission demonstrated on the standardized forms completed as part of the budget development process. Requests for new personnel, professional development, and components go through this process. Meetings with faculty and staff members confirmed that decisions and planning activities include attention to the university's mission and values.

- At the end of fall 2014, the new NDUS strategic plan, *Daring to Be Great,* was published. The SBHE directs that individual institutions' plans account for the major tenets in the system plan. One of these is "provide programs people want, where and when they need them," which DSU has already embarked on. The DSU President will lead the process to integrate components of the NDUS strategic plan with DSU planning documents, including the new strategic plan, with the goal of having it meet the needs in the region. This structure from the state may provide valuable context, but the team also raises the question of the extent to which the local conditions – which were determined to be significantly different in this region – can be adequately addressed with a statewide perspective. DSU will need to ensure that its strategic planning process includes attention to the regional challenges facing it.

Core Component 1B: The mission is articulated publicly.

Subcomponent 1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

Subcomponent 2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic

development, and religious or cultural purpose.

Subcomponent 3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                                            _ Core Component is met with concerns
                                            _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The University's mission is published on the DSU website and in the faculty, student, and staff handbooks. The mission is also posted in locations around campus. The vision and values support and extend the mission, but the posters do not include the Vision and Values Statements. The Vision includes reference to diversity and educating students to be "responsible citizens who impact the world." The Values include references to diversity and demonstrate the institution's shared beliefs that provide guidance and direction to the university's work and are aligned to the mission. The team finds that publication is sufficient and notes that the vision and values statements add important enhancement.

- The Mission, Vision, and Values documents were reviewed and discussed as part of the Self-Study process. Discussions during the process resulted in the confirmation of the Mission, Vision, and Values as still being relevant to the goals and work of the university. During the meeting with the team that focused on Criterion 1 for the Self-Study, the suggestion was made that the Mission, Vision, and Values Statements should always be shown together to make clear that diversity and global awareness are integral parts of the University's activities. The university sufficiently publicizes its mission and related documents.

Core Component 1C: The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

Subcomponent 1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.

Subcomponent 2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Team Determination: X Core Component is met
                                            _ Core Component is met with concerns
                                            _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- North Dakota is one of the least diverse states in the country; 90% of its population is white and the DSU enrollment reflects that same statistic. Attempts to increase the institution's diversity by recruiting and admitting international students has faced challenges. The agency retained to recruit international

students for the Special International Programs (SIP) disregarded some admissions requirements and best practices. In the ten-year period from 2005 through 2014, international students as a percentage of the DSU enrollment ranged from 5.9% to 16.7%. The highest percentages were during the years 2006-2011. Conversations with faculty, deans, and senior administrators demonstrated the reasons for setting the international student enrollment at its current level of 7-10%. The reasons included perceptions of the campus and greater communities that enrollment of large numbers of international students was at the expense of enrolling domestic students from the region and the need to help faculty members develop understanding of the special needs of English Language Learners. It was also a challenge for international students to integrate into the campus and larger communities. The team recognizes the challenges associated with recruitment of a more diverse domestic clientele and concludes that the institution adequately addresses issues of diversity.

- The DSU General Education requirements include Multicultural Studies as one of the six groupings. Students must complete three courses from this group to meet the student learning outcome "Students will demonstrate knowledge of national and international multiculturalism and the importance of global citizenship." Inclusion of these general education outcomes is an indication that the university embraces the importance of multiculturalism in the curriculum.

- The lack of diversity in the region also impacts DSU's ability to hire diverse staff members. The Provost/VPAA acknowledged the difficulty in recruiting and hiring diverse faculty members. The energy boom in the region has resulted in an increase in diversity in the region's population as people move to the area for the available jobs. This new population may help DSU increase its diversity, However, the high cost of living in the region is a challenge which impacts DSU's ability to hire more diverse staff and faculty members. The university has identified the need to increase diversity as a priority.

- Through faculty efforts, a Multicultural Committee was formed to plan and offer programming and activities to help the campus community understand international students' needs and increase global awareness. The Multicultural Committee consists of faculty and staff who are dedicated to enriching students and the community with different cultural perspectives. The University sponsors programs and activities that encourage multicultural exchanges and experiences. The Associate Director of International Programs designs an orientation program for incoming international students. These include the lunchtime Global Tables program during which presentations about the cultures of other countries are made by international students and members of the campus community with experiences traveling to other countries. These sessions are videotaped and are accessible for viewing by individuals who are unable to attend the sessions. Excellent efforts are being made to educate the university community about diversity and varied perspectives.

- DSU's attention to diversity includes recognition of the needs of LGBTQ students through the establishment of Safe Zones on campus and in homes in the community. The increase in distance education courses has resulted in more non-traditional students (Students Other Than Average) through online and hybrid courses. The university provides access and opportunities for its many constituencies.

Core Component 1D: The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

> **Subcomponent 1.** Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
>
> **Subcomponent 2.** The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
>
> **Subcomponent 3.** The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                             _ Core Component is met with concerns
                             _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- DSU has increased its program and course offerings to meet identified community needs. For example, DSU received permission from the state to offer courses online leading to the Kindergarten Endorsement in response to area schools' need for kindergarten teachers. The Teacher Education Department offers graduate courses to help teachers work towards a master's degree through multiple modalities (face-to-face, IVN, hybrid, and online) to bring higher education to the Williston and Bismarck areas which do not have a four-year public institution close by. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to service to the community.

- DSU's Nursing Department has a birthing simulator which allows nursing students opportunities to experience and practice a variety of birthing situations. The university makes the birthing simulator available for use by doctors and nurses from the local hospital. The DSU Environmental Health program, which received national accreditation in 2010, is the only accredited program between Wisconsin and Colorado. These represent examples of the university's responsiveness to meeting the needs of its community.

- To meet the need for a DSU sports complex and the community need for an activities center, a partnership was formed between DSU and other public and private entities to plan and build the Biesiot Activities Center (BAC). During fiscal year 2014, 344 events were held including DSU sports events and programs for area K-12 schools, area businesses, organizations, families, and community

groups. Especially because Dickinson is historically a small community, these resources are valuable in contributing to the vibrancy of the community.

Team Determination on Criterion One:

_X_ Criterion is met

__ Criterion is met with concerns

__ Criterion is not met

Summary Statement on Criterion:

Dickinson State University's Mission Statement was first approved by the State Board of Higher Education in 1992. The Mission has been reviewed twice since then and was discussed by the campus community as part of the Self-Study process. After each review the Mission was determined to still be relevant and an appropriate guide to the University's activities. DSU's 57 undergraduate programs reflect the institution's liberal arts focus. The Vision and Values Statements were created as part of the Strategic Plan development in 2008-2009. These Statements expand the Mission and reflect the institution's beliefs about the ways the university will operationalize the Mission, including attention to diversity to help create "responsible citizens who impact the world."

The Multicultural Committee offers programs and activities to raise awareness of various cultures and increase global awareness. DSU offers a variety of support services to ensure students' success. DSU's outreach to the community includes offering graduate programs in Teacher Education in response to requests from area teachers. DSU also offers courses in various modalities to the Williston and Bismarck communities which do not have a four-year public institution nearby. As one of 11 members of the North Dakota University System (NDUS), Dickinson University's Mission and planning activities must coordinate with and complement the System's goals and focus. At the end of fall 2014, NDUS published its new strategic plan, *Daring to Be Great,* which DSU will use as a guide during the university's strategic planning process. Dickinson State University presented sufficient evidence to support that it meets the components of Criterion 1.

CRITERION TWO: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct. The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Core Component 2A: The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Team Determination: __ Core Component is met

X_ Core Component is met with concerns

__ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- DSU has made significant efforts and advances in correcting the structural, procedural, personnel, and campus climate issues which led to the previous HLC Notice Report issued in February 2013. This is evidenced by both documented changes to policies and procedures and through interviews with a wide variety of faculty, staff, and administrators from across the campus. For example, the university has developed a web page which contains links to the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) Policy Manual and the North Dakota University System Procedures Manual. These policies and procedures govern operations of DSU and align with the expectations of HLC.

- Since the termination of the former president in December 2011 and the issuance of the Notice Report in 2012, campus leadership has initiated or updated 72 DSU policies including:

  - DSU100.001 Policy on University Policy
  - DSU100.5.001 Core Values and Beliefs, which affirms the meaning and value of integrity
  - DSU308.1.001 Code of Conduct, which provides an explicit obligation for ethical conduct and integrity, responsible management, promotion of a culture of compliance and reporting of suspected violations through a variety of sources. Each employee must annually certify that they have read, understood and are in compliance with the Code.
  - DSU440.002 Attendance Policy
  - DSU611.10.001 Reporting and Investigating of Theft and Fraud, which defines theft and fraud to include "making or altering documents or files with intent to defraud," "purposely inaccurate accounting or financial reporting at any level," "improper handling or reporting of financial transactions," and includes anonymous reporting through a third party fraud hotline.
  - Twenty-six Financial Affairs policies including eleven concerning various forms of tuition waiver and DSU840.1.001 Contract Review.

  Many of the new and revised policies are designed to respond to specific concerns that arose in prior years and led to the HLC Notice. These policy enhancements should contribute to better institutional operations.

- In the wake of two failed searches for a Compliance Officer and an NDUS decision to consolidate legal counsel within the University System Office, the university created a Compliance Council, meeting once a semester, to serve as a check and balance across all divisions of the university. Institutional vice presidents make up the Council, which is chaired by the Provost/VPAA and includes the Affirmative Action Officer and HLC Accreditation Liaison Officer as *ex officio* members. During a meeting with the Compliance Council, members stated that the main benefit of the Council has been improved communication about compliance issues and creation of a culture of

collaboration in dealing with issues. Despite the fact that the NDUS commissioned and issued an Enterprise Wide Risk Assessment report with a specific chapter for each institution in 2011, the Compliance Council has not undertaken a systematic review of the findings of this report nor has it developed a comprehensive plan to address the high and moderate risk areas. It is notable that the report, issued before the problems with enrollment reporting at DSU came to light, was accurate in assessing enrollment as a high risk area. While the university has also been subjected to a number of NDUS internal audits since 2011, the Council did not see a role for itself in coming together to address any past or future audit findings or recommendations. The University notes, however, that it has spent extensive time in Risk Assessment and Performance audits and continues to address overarching university-wide policy and procedure development, so that more than just the Compliance Council is attending to this work. The team is concerned that the institutional structure for this work going forward is appropriate to assure proper attention. It is also concerned that the current council may not be adequately separate from administrative decision-making to render independent judgements.

- A review of the Compliance Council Action Log, which appears to be a running report on Council actions, confirms that the Council does not have a clear sense of purpose or a clear charge. Its most notable function is to undertake a once-a-semester review of complaints regarding theft and fraud, harassment and code of conduct violations, and reports being received by the third party fraud hotline. Such a review by this cross-divisional group has the potential to spot troublesome patterns of behavior.

- The Council members rely on NDUS General Counsel and various system-wide, functional groups (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Financial Affairs, Human Resources, Records and Registration) hosted by NDUS to make sure they are aware of compliance issues and use this mechanism to stay abreast of changing compliance rules and to identify best practices. The system office is valuable to the University in this regard, but ownership must also be taken by the university.

- Both Affirmative Action and Title IX compliance, which are complicated, are vested in the Director of Institutional Research, who is new in his role and has limited staff. While staff and administrators at the university are routinely accepting multiple assignments in a constrained enrollment and budget environment and the university has supported attendance at national trainings in Title IX compliance for the Director, it is concerning that two areas which involve complex legal rules and a high level of institutional risk are added to the duties of an administrator who may lack experience and who has multiple other roles. At the same time, the university's need for institutional data is addressed later as an area in need.

- An interview with the Registrar confirmed that investments in two new registration and records positions and new procedures which have introduced higher levels of internal control through division of duties and greater utilization of electronic record systems capabilities have led to greatly improved integrity of student records and lowered the risk of inappropriate enrollment or granting of credits or degrees. As an example, students are required to apply for graduation after earning 90 credits, which triggers a degree audit. The assistant registrar checks general education requirements and sends major and minor requirements to the appropriate department chair. The academic dean then checks and signs off on the audit and returns it to the assistant registrar. The results are available to students immediately through the online Campus Connect portal. Other processes such as the posting of D, F, or U midterm grades, tightening review of course substitutions, and the establishment of equivalencies in the Transfer Evaluation System are all efforts which enhance the integrity of the academic awards. In addition, the registrar noted a change in climate and feels free to bring issues that concern her to the attention of her supervisor, the provost.

- A spot, on-site review of a random selection of five files of individuals authorized to teach dual-enrollment courses in area high schools reveals that more attention needs to be given to assuring appropriate credentialing of instructors offering courses which carry university credit. While a process of credential review is in place involving the department chair, dean, and now the provost, it was observed that of the five individuals, two had Masters degrees, both in Education rather than in the content area. One individual had completed graduate workshops through continuing education at the University of North Dakota and was licensed to teach AP courses; one had additional course work in desktop publishing. Official transcripts were only found in one file. Attention to faculty qualifications is important in assuring compliance with good academic practices.

- The DSU Foundation's (DSUF) goal was to raise funds to award to students as scholarships. Recently identified findings of mismanagement and lack of fiscal oversight caused the state to place the DSUF into receivership. Although the DSUF is a separate entity from the University, the resulting media attention on the Foundation and the perceptions of the public have impacted the reputation of DSU. At the time of this report, the Receiver has submitted four reports to the court but it is unknown what impacts the final findings will have on the University.

Core Component 2B: The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met

         _ Core Component is met with concerns
         _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The university has a wide array of publications which it has developed to inform prospective students and families about DSU programs. This area is overseen by an individual hired to serve as Director of Communication. The team found these publications to be accurate.

- The university revamped its website in 2014, adopting a new content management system and implementing a new, more intuitive navigation system making it easier for prospective students, current students, alumni and visitors and faculty and staff to find the information relevant to their needs. This website enables the university to accurately portray itself to its multiple constituencies.

- The president and the provost have demonstrated a commitment to open, respectful, and transparent communication. As issues have emerged regarding the DSU Foundation, the president has immediately prepared video and e-mail communications to share information with the campus and holds open campus meetings. The provost has developed a regular communication called "Provost's Boasts," which provides updates on accomplishments and activities within academic affairs. Efforts exist to communicate effectively with varied publics.

- Cabinet meeting summaries, agendas, and summary notes for the VPAA Council, staff and faculty senate minutes, meeting notes and reports from the Retention Committee, and the Compliance Council Action Log are all readily available on the DSU website. The webpage for Institutional Research and Planning includes links to campus organizational charts, the National Center for Education Statistics DSU information page, and all HEA student consumer information. Webpages and links appear to be updated frequently and the most recent information is posted. These examples indicate a commitment to accurately representing the university.

Core Component 2C: The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

Subcomponent 1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

Subcomponent 2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

Subcomponent 3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

Subcomponent 4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to

the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Team Determination: _ Core Component is met
 _X_ Core Component is met with concerns
 _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- DSU is governed by the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE), which has oversight of the eleven institutions in the North Dakota System. In a telephonic meeting with State Board members, they affirmed their full and complete authority, other than the authority to appropriate public funds, to govern DSU and the other ten institutions as a constitutional mandate. At the same time, the team was not convinced that there was a deep understanding of the issues that confront Dickinson State nor an ability to address their distinctiveness. The many issues that have confronted Dickinson are ultimately the responsibility of the governing board, and it is unclear that they are prepared to fulfill this leadership role or that they have been effective in the past.

- Review of Board agenda items was confirmed by the members of the Board who were part of the telephonic communication and demonstrate that the Board considers and discusses the priorities of DSU. For example, the March 3, 2015, agenda items indicated the Board would discuss the presidential search at DSU and issues related to the operation of the DSU Foundation. The Board, through its state officials, has taken responsibility for the presidential search; they also caused the Foundation to be placed into receivership. The extent to which a more attentive governing board could have precluded these significant issues remains a question.

- During the meeting with the HLC team the Board members were able to articulate their understanding of DSU's strengths, noting its location in the far western region of the state, its enthusiasm for improving its integrity, and its niche as a small institution with a quality education, able to meet the needs of the North Dakota student. Members were equally able to articulate the challenges facing DSU including finding the right president, restoring the faith of the regional population in the institution, enrollment, and dealing with the "oil boom" economy. While demonstrating familiarity with DSU, board members did not seem to have considered ways to support enrollment or help align programs with workforce needs and business partners.

- In preparation for a search for a new president of DSU, members of the SBHE visited the campus and held open forums with both campus and community members to determine the qualities needed in a new president. These actions suggest a system concerned about the future of this university.

- In April 2014 an Advisory Team from HLC visited the North Dakota SBHE and

North Dakota University System (NDUS) to determine if the governance of North Dakota's public universities and colleges was in compliance with Criterion Two, Core Components 2.A and 2.C. The team concluded in its report issued August 28, 2014 that the SBHE and NDUS had made good progress in promoting transparency of communication with constituents, involvement of campus presidents and chancellor's office staff, and compliance with the state's Open Meeting laws. The SBHE noticed the meeting with the DSU HLC Visiting Team as an open meeting, but few public representatives attended. The North Dakota system is subject to continued examination as it oversees its multiple institutions.

- Considerable tension between the North Dakota Legislature and the SBHE was noted by the HLC Advisory Team in its August 28, 2014 report, although there was no finding of use of undue influence by the legislature. This tension appears to continue as the Chair of the SBHE, who had been viewed by the Advisory Team as effective in correcting perceived issues with SBHE operations, resigned in mid-January 2015, citing legislative controversy regarding her confirmation hearing. The team raises the question of the ability of the system and the legislature to effectively assure high-quality higher education in North Dakota.

- Among the five known members of the SBHE at the time of the visit, one member, whose term expires in 2015, has eight years of experience on a higher education governing board, three members were appointed in 2012, and one was appointed in 2014. Three additional members for the full complement of either were in flux at the time of the visit. The student member of the board serves a term of just one year. The Board has received training and continues its involvement with governance organizations such as Association of Governing Boards (AGB), WICHE, and ACE. It has also received training from the North Dakota Attorney General on open meeting compliance. However, at a time of continuing tension at the state level, with the search for a new chancellor underway, the Board has limited experience in oversight of a complex higher education system.

- As the HLC Advisory Team noted in its August 2014 report, the current interim chancellor and the SBHE Board chair have reversed operating procedures that prevented campus presidents and chancellor's office staff from interacting with the Board members. In the meeting with the State Board, members noted that all campus presidents speak at their meetings and provide input on items being considered. The Board rotates its meetings among campuses so that a broader number of campus and community constituents can attend. This effort to be more transparent and to better understand regional differences should lead to more effective governance.

- Board members were able to clearly articulate the role of DSU in its recently issued strategic plan, "Daring to be Great," noting that it is an anchor for quality, broad-based baccalaureate education in western North Dakota and should serve the needs of the region. While a Board member noted that it [the Board] must "do

everything it can to move the institution forward" there was no indication that the Board was in any way interfering with or directing campus decisions about curriculum. At the same time, there was little or no evidence to suggest that the state was contributing to meeting the challenges and opportunities presented to Dickinson. One example would be the system's determination of which campuses could offer which programs. The team concludes that there may be needs for shorter-term programs with the economic boom in what are typically considered the trades and occupational programs. However, the state approach precludes Dickinson from offering the associate degree and it is not evident, as indicated in conversations with community college representatives, that others are prepared to meet these potential needs. In short, it is possible that Dickinson's mission should be broader in order for it to meet the community's requirements and to be viable.

Core Component 2D: The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                             _ Core Component is met with concerns
                             _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education policies on Academic Freedom (401.1) and Academic Freedom and Tenure (605.1) apply to DSU. SBHE Policy 401.1 guarantees academic freedom to students and guest speakers as well as to faculty. DSU's Faculty Handbook (Section II.B.1) reflects the Board policy in a statement on "Academic Freedom and Community Welfare." Similarly, the Student Handbook reflects the right to academic freedom expressed in Board policy.

- During numerous meetings on campus involving faculty members, no concerns were raised about academic freedom. In response to questions about campus climate, both faculty and staff members noted that they felt free to raise concerns without fear of any negative consequences. One faculty member even noted this as a strength of the university. The team is confident that the faculty possesses academic freedom.

Core Component 2E: The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Subcomponent 1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

Subcomponent 2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

Subcomponent 3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                            _ Core Component is met with concerns
                            _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consists of five members including four faculty from the social and natural sciences and a community member who is a licensed psychologist, with more than 20 years of practice experience. In a meeting with four members of the IRB the group confirmed that they review about 20 – 25 proposals each year, mostly involving students' senior projects; most projects involve low risk research such as surveys.

- Students learn about research ethics in their research methods courses and are required to complete NIH training on Human Subjects research and submit their certificate of completion with their research proposal. They have not had a case of research misconduct reported during the three years the committee has operated but have procedures in place for investigation. The team concludes that adequate systems are in place to assure academic integrity.

- The IRB members reported that they engage in campus activities to assure that faculty and students are aware of their obligations to bring research proposals before the IRB for approval. Examples of these activities include presentations at new faculty orientation, emailed announcements of meeting schedules, and presentations in research method courses. The website is well organized and includes informational sheets as well as checklists and consent forms. There is a direct link to the NIH Human Subjects training. Academic integrity is valued.

- The Student Handbook contains the Student Conduct Code which in Article 3, Sec. 3.1, defines academic misconduct and specifies that academic misconduct matters are handled by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A statement on academic misconduct is made available on the university syllabus template; however, this statement is an optional inclusion and there is no evidence of how often the statement is included in syllabi.

Team Determination on Criterion Two:
          _ Criterion is met
          _X Criterion is met with concerns
          _ Criterion is not met

Summary Statement on Criterion:
While DSU has shown steady and significant progress in addressing issues which have come to light over the past four years related to its academic, financial, personnel, and cultural integrity, there are areas where the campus needs additional time to produce results and to mature in its thinking. It faces serious issues in

enrollment, financial, and leadership stability and only time will tell if it can maintain its current momentum when faced with these stresses. The change in institutional leadership over the past three years demonstrates the critical difference that leadership can make in establishing a climate and culture that nurtures integrity. A search is currently underway for a new president and that choice will be critical to achieving the stability needed for ethical and responsible conduct. Greater stability also needs to be achieved by its governing board and the NDUS office of the chancellor. Consideration must also be given to how the system and the state-wide governing board can provide more appropriate oversight to institutions and enable the latitude to enable institutions to respond to changing community dynamics.

The Compliance Council has the potential to play an important role in further monitoring and maintaining university compliance as it develops a clear sense of purpose and understanding of its role for the campus. While the university is clearly on the right path and interviews with administrators, staff, and faculty indicate a clear commitment to integrity as well as ethical and responsible behavior, risks remain.

Simply, the recent system and procedural improvements have been in place an insufficient time for there to be complete confidence that they are sustainable in a changing context.

CRITERION THREE: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support.
The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Core Component 3A: The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

    Subcomponent 1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

    Subcomponent 2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

    Subcomponent 3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                           ___ Core Component is met with concerns
                           ___ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- DSU's courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded. DSU assesses the relevance and currency of its curricula in a number of ways. For example, the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) requires undergraduate programs to be evaluated every seven years. The primary purposes of the review are to

evaluate and assess program quality and productivity, to guide program improvement, and to affirm and make explicit the relationship of the program to the institutional mission. This systematic review provides evidence of attention to assuring the continued currency of the curriculum.

- Changes in program requirements undergo a curricular review process that includes approval by department faculty, the chairperson, the Curriculum Council, the Faculty Senate, the Dean, and the Provost/VPAA. The Teacher Education and General Education Councils are also involved in program changes when appropriate. This comprehensive review assures that changes are reflective of the level of education and achievement sought.

- A review of program assessment plans and reports, as well as a review of syllabi, indicated that programs possess student learning outcomes. DSU's Learning Outcomes are both clearly articulated in the Academic Catalog and are listed in course syllabi. Departments also have discipline-specific learning outcomes for each program, which are stated in the Academic Catalog. Departments also include these, as well as course-specific learning outcomes, on class syllabi.

- Regardless of the audience or mode of delivery, classes offered at DSU must meet curricular standards and faculty teaching them must be appropriately qualified. Faculty credential requirements are specified in "Notice of Vacancy" position announcements and reviewed at the department, the Dean, and the VPAA levels prior to hire. In addition, classes taught both face-to-face and online provide equivalent syllabi, textbooks, credit hour standards, learning outcomes, tests and exams, and course calendar timelines.

Core Component 3B: The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

Subcomponent 1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.

Subcomponent 2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

Subcomponent 3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Subcomponent 4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

Subcomponent 5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                          ___ Core Component is met with concerns
                          ___ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree level of the institution. Working within these NDUS parameters, and in keeping with the University's Mission, DSU has designed its General Education program "to help students develop breadth of view and judgment in order to be more intellectually, socially, and culturally responsive as citizens, consumers, and leaders in a global and multicultural society."

- Degree programs at DSU engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Examination of course syllabi indicates that programs and courses appropriately engage students in intellectual inquiry and creative work.

- DSU's program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution, and it is designed to impart broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess. General Education comprises nearly one-third of the DSU bachelor's degree program, which is a somewhat higher percentage than many schools. This emphasis on General Education is not only consistent with the Institution's Learning Outcomes, but appears to be central to its Mission which many describe as focused on a liberal arts education.

- Current conversations among DSU faculty suggest that General Education will need to evolve as the institution continues toward continuous improvement. For example, one issue being examined is whether General Education should be thought of in the context of a two-year foundational program, or a more vertical approach throughout the student's degree program. Thus, general education is very much a work in progress at present.

- NDUS policy guides the inclusion of particular courses into the general education program. However, conversations with the faculty suggested lack of clarity about the philosophy, purposes, and standards for general education. The emphasis and purpose of the General Education groups need to be codified to better inform identification of the groups' criteria that would lead to adequate assessment. General education is not yet adequately understood nor implemented at this point in time and DSU has initiated a comprehensive review of its General Education program.

Core Component 3C: The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

Subcomponent 1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.

Subcomponent 2. All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.

Subcomponent 3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

Subcomponent 4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

Subcomponent 5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

Subcomponent 6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                             __Core Component is met with concerns
                             ___ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty. DSU has almost one hundred regular faculty members who are tenured (or on tenure-track) or have annual appointments, with a comparable number of adjunct faculty. Regular faculty members (tenure, tenure-track and annual appointment) teach classes, serve on committees, and advise students, engaging a full range of teaching, scholarship, and service activities.

- The interest of the faculty (and the oversight of the curriculum) is the responsibility of the Faculty Senate, which includes issues of employment, qualifications, ongoing professional development, and promotion and tenure. Applicants for instructional appointments (whether tenure-track, annual appointment or adjunct) are required to document their qualifications in terms of education and experience by submitting transcripts, curriculum vitae, and portfolio if applicable. An electronic system exists for maintaining updated faculty credentials, which enables the institution to monitor these qualifications.

- In most cases, an advanced degree is a minimal requirement, and a terminal degree is preferred. Of the regular tenured, tenure-track, annual contract, or adjunct faculty, currently forty-eight of the 94 possess a terminal degree and forty-two others hold an advanced degree (four faculty members hold only a bachelor's degree). The team finds the faculty generally well qualified, but as noted above, issues were identified (Criterion 2), including lack of official transcripts and lack of appropriate degrees for some dual-enrollment instructors.

Greater attention will need to be focused on assuring that personnel files are complete, current, and reflect the qualifications established by the institution, regardless of location or modality. The institution should review the recent Faculty Qualifications expectations on the HLC website.

- Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures. Full-time faculty (both probationary and tenured) complete and submit a Faculty Self-Evaluation along with an Annual Tenure Plan (or Post-tenure plan) each year. Probationary faculty, annual contract and adjunct faculty have student evaluations for each course taught each year and tenured faculty have student evaluations of each course taught in alternating semesters.

- Staff members providing student support services are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development. Qualifications are reviewed upon hire, and staff members are encouraged to attend professional development and conferences as appropriate to their responsibilities (and are also encouraged to join professional organizations as support within their field).

Core Component 3D: The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

   Subcomponent 1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

   Subcomponent 2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

   Subcomponent 3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.

   Subcomponent 4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

   Subcomponent 5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                                    ___ Core Component is met with concerns
                                    ___ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The DSU First Year Experience (FYE) Committee was formally established in the fall of 2013 and is comprised of the faculty/staff currently teaching FYE courses, although the group functioned more informally long before 2013. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the committee was charged with reviewing and

reconsidering the Freshman Seminar course (a required course) to improve the overall student experience and ensure alignment between the course and best practice literature. This attention to the freshman experience reflects the commitment to student success and retention.

- DSU provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students. DSU employs a comprehensive co-advising model that requires new freshmen students be advised by their Freshman Seminar instructor and a discipline-specific advisor (which is assigned based on the academic major the student indicated an interest in pursuing on their application for admission) prior to registering for their second semester. After their first year, students are transitioned to their discipline-specific faculty advisor. Advising appears effective for students.

- DSU provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources. Students at DSU are taught research methods and effective information management through a variety of classes and hands-on experiences. All sections of Freshman Seminar receive specific training in the use of the library and its resources. In addition, students are guided through the various databases and search functions over two class periods, and they complete assignments demonstrating their ability to find appropriate resources. Students receive the required support for academic inquiry.

- DSU provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations. Through the Disability Support Services area, students are able to receive reasonable accommodations to pursue their educational goals. These services include testing and exam accommodations, note-taking, sign language interpretation, computer-aided real-time captioning services, and other supports as identified and needed.

Core Component 3E: The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

   Subcomponent 1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

   Subcomponent 2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                              ___Core Component is met with concerns
                              ___ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- Co-curricular programs at DSU are suited to the institution's mission and

contribute to the educational experience of its students. DSU offers a wide range of co-curricular activities and programs to enhance the learning environment for its students. Over fifty student organizations, which are coordinated through DSU's Campus Programming, provide opportunities for students to acquire leadership and organizational skills, to connect with other students and faculty with similar interests, and to build their resumes.

- Co-curricular programming was perceived as additional opportunities for students, but these co-curricular experiences are neither aligned to Institutional outcomes nor assessed. DSU is currently revisiting these distinctions between the curriculum and the co-curriculum and has made strides to look upon these areas as not only interrelated, but also as integral to experiencing a high-quality liberal arts education. Additional enhancements to its general education programs are anticipated in the future and the team acknowledges that many excellent opportunities are available to students.

- Success of students once they are enrolled at DSU is very important. Well established student services such as mentoring, counseling, testing, tutoring and the like are very well run and promote student success. This is indeed a strength to have excellent employees in charge of these student services functions.

Team Determination on Criterion Three:

     _X_ Criterion is met
     ___ Criterion is met with concerns
     ___ Criterion is not met

Summary Statement on Criterion:

DSU is highly dependent on public funding, limited in size, and committed to being responsive to its constituent groups in a rapidly changing community context. Moreover, achieving excellence in this environment requires continual re-affirmation of its commitments. The emerging framework for General Education is not only consistent with the institution's learning outcomes, but appears to be central to its mission.

That being said, current conversations among DSU faculty suggest that General Education will need to continue to advance. An overall approach to defining and documenting the effectiveness of the general education program is still a work in progress. Similarly, the emphasis and purpose of the General Education groups need to be codified to better inform identification of the groups' criteria. This study of general education appears to have impeded the institution's progress on implementing a systemic approach to general education and assessing its effectiveness.

Additionally, faculty qualifications were reported to not always consistent for dual-enrollment instructors and not all personnel files are up to date. Qualifications of the faculty will be important to the University in its ability to assure the integrity of its educational offerings, especially as the HLC has more explicitly defined its faculty qualification expectations and all institutions must comply with these expectations by January 2016.

The team finds that Criterion 3 is met and continued work in key areas should strengthen the institution's effectiveness.

CRITERION FOUR: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Core Component 4A: The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

Subcomponent 1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

Subcomponent 2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

Subcomponent 3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

Subcomponent 4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

Subcomponent 5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

Subcomponent 6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                               _ Core Component is met with concerns
                               _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- The university maintains specialized accreditation in several program areas. Specialized accreditors include the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN); the North Dakota Board of Nursing (NDBON); the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP); the International Assembly for

Collegiate Business Education; and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). The university states that these reports are maintained at the level of the college and not at the university level, where aggregating findings across disciplines would be possible. The team reviewed the reports provided and concludes that the university maintains acceptable standing with its accreditors, although it has not reported summarily on these to produce a university perspective.

- State-level policy (SBHE 403.1.2) exists that lays out the expectations for program review. Undergraduate programs must be reviewed every 7 years, and there are several stipulations about how these must be conducted. Personnel at Dickinson consistently complete these expectations. While the program reviews are systematic and often extensive, the team does have questions about whether adequate consideration is given to making sense of what the reports mean. That is, reports are produced and data is included, but it would appear that some of the data deserves greater scrutiny, such as in cases where programs graduate very few students over a very long period; when multiple independent studies are required to sustain a program; and other flags that raise questions of program integrity.

- The university's faculty is well qualified and oversees the quality of the curriculum through its curricular review processes. These findings are confirmed by interviews with faculty, the Curriculum Council, and a review of faculty files. The Curriculum Council is comprised of a broad cross-section of faculty and staff from multiple colleges and offices. Their approaches are systematic and are guided by a well developed and documented protocol. The team concludes that the faculty take ownership of the quality of the curriculum and take this role seriously. This oversight extends to the dual-enrollment and online offerings, although as noted earlier, more oversight may be indicated.

- Graduate follow-up would benefit from increased attention. The most recent data available on the website reports on a 2011 distribution of 447 surveys and reports the results for 14 agricultural students. Nine were employed in the state and 11 of the 14 are employed in their major. The team's later review of the institutional research site revealed a report for 2014 that includes many questions but there is no indication of how many surveys were distributed nor what number responded, as all of the reporting is in percentages. The self-study analyses did not discuss how this data, including the employer surveys presented on the website, have been used to inform program improvements. The team is unable to confidently conclude whether the mission component of preparation for employment is sufficiently being met because of limitations with the data, but the 2014 employer survey suggests generally positive endorsement of graduates' capabilities.

Core Component 4B: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

Subcomponent 1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

Subcomponent 2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

Subcomponent 3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Subcomponent 4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Team Determination: _ Core Component is met
                              _X_ Core Component is met with concerns
                              _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- A review of documents provided along with interviews of faculty and the assessment committee resulted in the team's concluding that the institution's attention to systematic approaches to assessment over the years has not been adequate. The University is applauded for its delineation of learning outcomes, continued questioning of what learning is most important and how best to measure this, and the team is encouraged by the commitment of the current leadership of the university-wide assessment committee established in 2011. Nevertheless, the university has made limited use of assessment data to consistently craft improvements and analyze and document the effects of any changes.

- The university provides considerable detail on its deliberations concerning revisions to general education and explains its alignment with the North Dakota General Education Council and the LEAP outcomes. It elaborates upon the opportunities faculty have been provided to learn about writing and measuring outcomes. The assessment is guided by a standard DSU template. Although the processes are now documented and an overall plan was provided, along with several program-level plans, the team was unable to verify that a systematic approach to assessment of general education exists. Current efforts, as evidenced by the assessment plan, are directed toward use of the LEAP rubrics in alternate years in various general education courses. Data for Fall 2014 were reported. Because these results are so recent, the University has had insufficient time to utilize them for curricular improvements and evaluate their success over time. General education assessment is in its earliest stages at DSU, but the plans are encouraging. Results of the rubrics were reported for a total of 205 students on three outcomes, and no analysis of these results accompanied the report. Broad-based engagement of faculty in assessing student learning, especially in general education, is inadequate for this stage in the evolution of assessment expectations.

- The Academic Support Center has identified outcomes, and they are looking at comparative grade-point averages of students who attended or did not attend Academic Support Center (ASC) services and making judgments about suppor service changes. Examples provided are mandatory advising for first-year students and supplementing the early alert system with mid-term grading. Co-curricular offerings have yet to fully engage with an assessment culture as no learning assessment data was provided from the student affairs areas.

- Student surveys over many and varied years for varied programs report that students are satisfied with the quality of their programs and many student suggestions are offered (e.g. Sciences program review for 2003-2008 and Fine and Performing Arts 2010). The great variation in the types of written responses and the small numbers preclude making much sense of the data, particularly when the surveys are conducted so far apart. DSU may wish to conduct more frequent student surveys to determine the efficacy of the programming. When added to the HLC survey of students, it appears that more can be done to assist students to select and complete their programs. One dimension of this may be the excessive number of programs offered, raising questions about the ability to support these, and the excessive number of independent studies required to enable students to complete degrees. The team notes many programs, such as those in fine and performing arts, that enroll only 1-5 students each year.

- Limited documentation was provided that demonstrated how assessment data has impacted curriculum changes or student learning. The first three examples provided in the self-study were from 2008 and 2011, and each resulted in the addition of required courses and no sequel data was provided about whether these extra credits were resulting in the desired improvements. A review of the catalog does not make it easy to determine how many credits are included in each degree program, and adding credits each time a deficiency is observed may not be the best approach, especially if it drives the credits and thus the costs and time up significantly. It is the team's opinion that the engagement of DSU's faculty in assessing student learning is in early stages and especially in the area of general education; progress is not adequate for this stage in assessment expectations, when the HLC has expected assessment since the mid-1980s.

Core Component 4C: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

Subcomponent 1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

Subcomponent 2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

Subcomponent 3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

Subcomponent 4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met

_Core Component is met with concerns

_ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- In 2010, the university developed a retention plan that specified five goals, that included first-to-second-year retention targets; increases in retention of first-year, full-time minority students; retention of sophomores; and increasing persistence of all students by 2%. This document, that is still marked draft, is complemented by a later initiative at the state level to increase retention by 10 percent. The university formed a University Retention Committee in 2012 that meets every two to three months. During the period of 2011-2013, the university was immersed in audits and responses to the HLC On-Notice status, which may have resulted in diminished focus. Campus representatives, however, report that many actions have been taken, including early alert implementation, an advising model, and athletics grade-check procedures. Other community variables such as high employment and high costs of living have negatively impacted retention and recruitment. Consequently, retention rates are lower than when the original targets were established.

- At the time of the writing of the self-study, retention was below 50%. The university is challenged to adequately implement plans to address its retention challenges and it has not sufficiently engaged the larger university community, including the faculty, in this vital endeavor. Additional evidence of this gap is the fact that no minutes of the University Retention Committee exist for the 2013-14 year and the 2014 summary report of the retention team reports that "At this time, the Retention committee, as established in 2012 is in a resting mode, pending the hire and leadership direction of the new VP for Student Affairs (search underway fall/spring 2014-/2015)." The HLC visiting team finds that the search is ongoing. The team concludes that focused attention involving the faculty will be required through attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates and that the current status should be viewed with some urgency.

- Considerable information has been gathered over the past several years to collect data on retention. Examples include the 2010 use of ACT to administer a survey of withdrawing students; in 2013-14, DSU picked up this survey task. The university has findings from each set of data that includes reasons why students leave. The prime example the university uses to illustrate its use of this data is the IMPACT Program that is designed to serve working adults with a part-time

schedule. This program is reported to be well received. However, little additional evidence exists that the data have informed an institutional strategy for retention. More than just a data-gathering exercise, the team posits that retention much reach deep into the organization and become the responsibility of each DSU employee. This ownership of the retention and enrollment challenges was not articulated by key campus groups.

- As an example of challenges in hiring and retaining staff, the individual who was hired as Director of Communications also serves as Executive Director of Enrollment and Communication. In August 2014, upon the return of the interim Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) to the faculty, the Executive Director also assumed the role of interim VPSA, due to failed searches. This individual with multiple responsibilities also has limited higher education background in some of the assigned areas. Given the importance of these key roles (enrollment and retention) at this time in the life of the college that has experienced years of enrollment decline and very low retention rates, the team is concerned about the university's ability to address its enrollment and retention challenges.

Team Determination on Criterion Four:
     _ Criterion is met
     X Criterion is met with concerns
     _ Criterion is not met

Summary Statement on Criterion:

Retention is a challenge and at the time of the team's visit, leadership was unclear and involvement of the faculty and the retention committee were below expectations. yet the team observes that retention is a substantial issue for the university, along with recruitment/enrollment. Assessment appears to still be in exploratory stages, with a newly appointed assessment committee discovering anew what the term means, what should comprise general education, how to assess it, and more. While external assessments have been used, these do not appear to have informed curricular matters. The team concludes that the criterion is met but with concerns.

The leadership team appears to be doing its best, and it has made progress, but it is thwarted by a lack of broad engagement of the entire campus community, including the faculty leadership; the lack of a leader for student affairs; and the diversion of the foundation issues that threaten the institution's reputation and ability to offer scholarships to attract students. Retention, enrollment, and clear evidence of student achievement must become priorities for all campus constituencies.

CRITERION FIVE: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Core Component 5A: The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

   Subcomponent 1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

   Subcomponent 2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.

   Subcomponent 3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

   Subcomponent 4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

   Subcomponent 5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Team Determination: _ Core Component is met
                                _X_ Core Component is met with concerns
                                _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- DSU has seen a steep decline in revenue over the past couple of years due to enrollment declines. Concomitant with this revenue decline was an extremely tight labor market, making it extraordinarily difficult to recruit new employees. Some 54 positions went unfilled due to the condition of the western North Dakota labor market. Thus, instead of having to layoff or fire employees to balance the budget, savings were sufficient from these unfilled positions to enable a balanced budget, albeit at a much lower level. There is simply not much room left for more of these types of efficiencies and so further revenue declines could have huge implications on the University's ability to operate its programs.

- Shortly after being taken off Notice by the HLC, Dickinson State University faced a new crisis involving the Dickinson State Foundation, which was recently placed into receivership. To date we have seen four monthly reports from the receiver. At issue is the use of monies for certain real estate purposes and legal financial judgements against the foundation. These investments went badly and indeed money that was earmarked for scholarship purposes remains in some jeopardy. Additionally, the University loaned $50,000 to the Foundation to pay for Receiver expenses, and that money has been exhausted. Further, the University is considering whether it will acquire the student housing owned by the Foundation. Remedying the Foundation problems has the potential to significantly influence the financial health of the university.

- Scholarships were intended to be one important purpose for the foundation. At this time, the University has guaranteed to fund such scholarships, if necessary, but the future outlook for scholarships is uncertain. The availability of

scholarships has the potential to either negatively impact university financial resources and/or recruitment. At this point we simply do not know what the final outcome of the receivership will be. The process has been ordered by a judge to end by June 30, 2015, so we will know more by mid-2015. However, this situation needs to be watched carefully, as it could have both lasting intangible and tangible impacts on the reputation and operation of Dickinson State University.

- The area of strategic planning has also seen some bumps along the way that need to be addressed. While DSU has engaged in a planning process, a recent document entitled, **Daring to be Great,** issued by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education has specified five-year goal areas which all 11 higher education institutions in North Dakota are mandated to follow. Thus, DSU will need to engage in a strategic planning process to align their goals with these four state goals. This procedure has recently been initiated and the progress DSU makes on this initiative will be important to watch and evaluate.

Core Component 5B: The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

Subcomponent 1. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.

Subcomponent 2. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

Subcomponent 3. The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                              _ Core Component is met with concerns
                              _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- For the size of its current student body, DSU has an inordinate number of academic programs. While faculty and administrators argue for broad programming to serve the needs of the residents of western North Dakota, the key notion of resource allocation simply must be addressed. Systematic and integrated planning may well lead to the conclusion that small programs with few graduates are a luxury that cannot be afforded given the current environment faced by DSU. Related to this financial concern is a question about academic integrity when in order to enable students to complete programs, many independent studies are required.

- Given that the President announced his intention to retire as soon as the next president is "on board," it will be crucial to attract and hire the next President of DSU. The State Board of Higher Education has quickly taken up this charge and created a committee and appointed a chair to commence this search. The next president will face several big challenges and will need to be up to the task. The HLC will want to watch both the progress and the outcome of this crucial search.

- The university community has been actively engaged with the current administration in establishing policies and procedures to address academic, student service, and related functions. An appropriate internal organizational plan exists, but there are also key unfilled positions that could enable more effective operations, especially in student affairs.

Core Component 5C: The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

Subcomponent 1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.

Subcomponent 2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.

Subcomponent 3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

Subcomponent 4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.

Subcomponent 5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Team Determination: _ Core Component is met
                              _X_ Core Component is met with concerns
                              _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- Enrollment declines at DSU in recent years have been rather precipitous, although the university reports that fall 2014 saw a slight turn-around in this 5-year decline. In order to reverse these trends, DSU has produced recruitment plans, engaged Noel-Levitz in 2010 for the development of a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, and consulted with another firm that trained staff and oversaw implementation of a proactive recruitment plan. Unlike on the success side discussed above with regard to student services, on the access side there are significant problems. Foremost among these problems has been the inability to hire a professional vice president of student affairs. With the exception of the new president, this is probably the highest priority hiring need faced by DSU at this time. Without such a seasoned professional at the helm, enrollment at DSU may be destined to continue to flounder. (Ed. Note: a review of the DSU website in late May 2015 reveals that this hire has been completed.)

- The alumni of DSU are very engaged and interested in the ongoing success of the university. The alumni director is a graduate of DSU and has the perfect combination of energy, enthusiasm and loyalty to be a great fit for this type of work. DSU has good legislative connections – the Senate majority leader lives in Dickinson – and a strong relationship with the North Dakota higher educational system. Indeed, the Interim Chancellor of the system is a DSU alum.

Core Component 5D: The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

> **Subcomponent 1.** The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.

> **Subcomponent 2.** The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Team Determination: _X_ Core Component is met
                              _ Core Component is met with concerns
                              _ Core Component is not met

Evidence:

- Even though resources have been tight, DSU is to be congratulated for avoiding cuts in two areas it views as being highly important. The physical campus is in top shape and very well maintained by appropriately compensated employees. In order to fill positions and retain these employees, wages were recently raised by $3 per hour. Also, DSU has committed to continue to fund faculty development spending, a second area viewed as crucial to their future success. These are both viewed as very positive steps to take, even in a time of financial duress.

- The local business community seems to be highly engaged with DSU. One member of the site visit team toured the Strom Center which works with small businesses and hopeful entrepreneurs in many areas. Training is provided and budding businessmen and women are encouraged to start their own business enterprises. DSU can be very proud of its business connections with the local community and with the progress of the Strom Center.

- Athletics facilities are first rate and many student-athletes attend DSU. After switching conferences and facing long travel for road games, the athletic department seems to have settled well into a new conference with more manageable costs and travel. Student athletes have higher grade point averages and retention rates than the general student body. One avenue to consider for increasing enrollment in the future could revolve around a larger number of competitive sports.

- Dual credit is another area of strength at DSU. Included within its recruitment plan is an objective to concentrate on how to increase the yield rate at DSU for those students in high schools enrolled in dual credit. This is a commendable inclusion and may contribute to desired enrollment improvements.

Team Determination on Criterion Five:
     __ Criterion is met
     X_ Criterion is met with concerns
     __ Criterion is not met

Summary Statement on Criterion:

Criterion 5 is met with concerns. While there are several positive developments as discussed in the evidentiary statements, there are major concerns surrounding 5A and 5C. In particular, the steep decline in enrollment and revenues causes concern as to whether DSU can continue to operate its programs. The receivership situation with the Foundation poses serious reputational risk for DSU which needs to be fully addressed. There may also be financial implications, as DSU has loaned money to the foundation for resolution of its challenges, and that amount is now expended. It is purchasing two apartment complexes from the Foundation with questions in the mind of the team about their sustainability but that certainly will impact the finances of the university. Further, scholarships may be at risk, and these may be vital to successful recruitment. The strategic plan for DSU has to be completed and placed in consort with the Daring to Be Great document written and endorsed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education. Finally, some key leadership positions will need to be filled if DSU is to move forward and have success along all of the above dimensions

V. TEAM RECOMMENDATION

A. Affiliation Status

1. **Recommendation:**

2. **Timing for Next Reaffirmation Evaluation: 2024-25**

3. **Rationale:** The University is expected to be placed on the Standard pathway because of its recent accreditation challenges. In addition, there is a recommendation for a forthcoming visit which, if approved would result in visits every two years for the next four. Thus, although the recommendation is for a long reaffirmation period, it is accompanied by regular monitoring. It is the team's strong opinion that an On Notice recommendation would not be beneficial to the university's progress. The team also notes that the work that continues between now and a possible focused visit must focus on completion of the important work that will move the institution forward – learning assessment, especially in general education; staffing of key

positions; improvements in enrollments; improvement of retention; securing the financial base; and additional engagement of the faculty in meeting the institution's challenges.

4. **Criterion-related Monitoring Required (report, focused visit):**

Monitoring: Focus Visit – Fall 2017

Rationale: The previous sections elaborate on concerns in three of the five criteria. Enrollment declines are contributing to significant potential revenue and program offering challenges, coupled with uncertain state funding. The outcome of the foundation's receivership status may have additional negative financial and reputational impact on the university.

There is much work needed in general education assessment, enrollment management, retention, and program integrity (as evidenced by insufficient ability to offer full programs and compensating by offering many independent studies). Leadership changes are forthcoming and key positions remain unfilled. Changes in the community may demand different roles for the university, yet their ability to respond in some areas is limited by state guidance.

At the time of this team's visit, there are too many unknowns to be certain of a successful future and too little time has elapsed since the On Notice report to assure that improved processes will result in the organization's ability to sustain a high-quality university that operates within its stated policies and procedures.

At the time of a focused visit, the university should provide the following evidence:

1. The university should report on the status of its financial ability to award scholarships to students and how this has changed over the period from the time of the discoveries concerning the Foundation. (Criterion 2 and 3)

2. The University should provide detail on the charge and operations of the Compliance Council along with assurances that the system sufficiently meets their needs for maintaining integrity and assuring compliance and enables an appropriate separation of duties, so that vehicles exist for addressing integrity issues effectively to avoid any repetition of prior shortcomings. (Criterion 2)

3. The University should provide an update on staffing changes in the system office and the governing board's activities and actions related to Dickinson State University. (Criterion 2)

4. The University should provide an updated version of its overall assessment plan, along with the evidence of having implemented the plan, which would include data gathered and analyzed in the years 2015-2017, especially in the area of general education. (Criteria 3-4)

5. The University should provide an update on the Foundation receivership situation and how that matter has been resolved along with an analysis of the impact of the Foundation's issues on the operations and reputation of the university. (Criteria 2 and 5)

6. The University should provide an update on its progress on hiring and employment of individuals for crucial leadership positions, including the president and the vice president for student affairs. (Criteria 2, 3, and 5)

7. The University should report results from its recruitment plan and have dealt with the enrollment decline it has gone through and demonstrate how it will manage its resources for the next three years to be able to effectively deliver its academic programs. If unable to remedy the enrollment challenge, the University should identify the actions being taken to adjust to becoming a smaller university (Criteria 3 and 5).

8. The University should share its progress on its strategic plan with goals that are consistent with the document Daring to Be Great. (Criterion 5)

Federal Compliance Monitoring Required (report, focused visit):

Monitoring: NA

Rationale:

B. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

VI. EMBEDDED CHANGES IN AFFILIATION STATUS

Did the team review any of the following types of change in the course of its evaluation? Check Yes or No for each type of change.

( ) Yes   (X) No   Legal Status

( ) Yes   (X) No   Degree Level

( ) Yes   (X) No   Program Change

( ) Yes   (X) No   Distance or Correspondence Education

( ) Yes   (X) No   Contractual or Consortial Arrangements

( ) Yes   (X) No   Mission or Student Body

( ) Yes   (X) No   Clock or Credit Hour

( ) Yes   (X) No   Additional Locations or Campuses

( ) Yes   (X) No   Access to Notification

( ) Yes   (X) No   Access to Expedited Desk Review

( ) Yes   (X) No   Teach-out Arrangement

(   ) Yes   (X) No   Other Change

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

While the team has identified many challenges that require institutional and HLC attention, it also acknowledges that the current leadership team has done extraordinary work in dealing with a number of high-profile and difficult issues.   The current leaders were not responsible for the problems they need to address and they understand what needs to be done.   The situation was simply dire enough that more time is required to restore the university's reputation as a high-performing, high-integrity university and assure key stakeholders that the university has established systems that will preclude similar challenges in the future.

Appendix A
Interactions with Constituencies

- President's Cabinet (13 members)
- HLC Team Leaders (9 members)
- Chancellor/Vice Chancellors – System Office
- Registrar
- Director of Financial Aid; Assistant Director of Financial Aid
- Multicultural Committee
- Staff Session
- Criterion 1 Committee
- Criterion 2 Committee
- Criterion 3 Committee
- Criterion 4 Committee
- Criterion 5 Committee
- President
- Student Session
- State Board of Higher Education video session – multiple members
- Financial Aid Director & Assistant Director
- TREC (Technology Resource & Education Center) Staff
- Provost/VPAA
- Faculty Senate Leadership – Executive Committee
- General Education Committee
- Associate Director, International Programs & Executive Dir. Enrollment Services
- Community Reps/Advisory Committees
- Director, Human Performance Center
- Chair, Department of Teacher Education
- Administrative Assistant, Office of the Deans – WRTC
- IRB
- Assoc. Professor, Psychology
- Asst. Prof. Social Sciences
- Prof. of Geology & Soils
- Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist – Community rep.
- The Receiver appointed by the Judge
- Alumni Session
- Interim Vice President for Student Affairs/Communications Director/Enrollment Manager
- Associate Director of Alumni Relations
- Athletic Director
- Vice President for Finance
- Director of Academic Success
- Management at Strom Center
- Deans
- Faculty – 34 attendees
- Department Chairs
- Facilities/Maintenance Personnel Open session – about 20
- Academic Success Center Director
- Assessment Committee
- Human Resource Director

- Associate Director of International Programs

Appendix B
Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

- Curriculum Change Form
- NDUS Strategic Plan
- HLC Path Forward Planning, Team Report Synthesis
- Online Policy Manual: All DSU Policies
- Adjunct Faculty Handbook updated 8/14/14
- Assessment website:
  www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academic_affairs/assessment/index
- General Education website: www.dickinsonstate.edu.smartcatalogiq.com
- DSU Notice Report for the HLC (2/28/13)
- NDUS Internal Review Report on Enrollment Reporting & Leadership Review dated 8/1/11
- Internal Review Report dated Jan. 30, 2012: Human Resources
- Internal Review Report dated Feb. 10, 2012: International Transfer Agreement review
- Performance Audit Report, DSU, Feb. 28, 2012
- Larson Allen Risk Assessment Summary Report: Dickinson State University Risk Assessment Results dated 10/14/11
- Research & Scholarly Work webpage at:
  www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academic_administration/research-and-scholarly-work/index
- Institutional Review Board webpage at:
  www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academicadministration/research-and-scholarly-work/irb-forms/index
- DSU-Institutional Review Board:
- IRB/Conflict of Interest Guidelines
- IRB/Classroom Research Project Policy
- IRB/Application Process Flow Chart
- IRB Reviewer Checklist
- IRB Application
- IRB Minimal Risk Checklist
- IRB Sec B DSU Students as Subjects
- IRB Sec D Minors under 18
- IRB Sec F Consent Waiver Application
- Academic Affairs Policy Manual
- Academic Catalog
- Campus Organizational Charts at
  www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academicaffairs/oirp/campus-organizational-charts/index (including the revised charts distributed during the visit)
- DSU Harassment Policy No. 603.1.001
- DSU Reporting and Investigating of Theft and Fraud, DSU Policy No. 611.10.001 updated 1/6/14
- HEA Student Consumer Information at
  www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/esc/financial_aid/Resources/Student-Consumer-and-Safety-Information/index
- Credit Hour Assignment Guidelines

- HLC letter dated Aug. 28, 2014 regarding the findings of an Advisory Team Visit ot the SBHE and NDUS, the governing bodies for Dickinson State University
- Report of an Advisory Visit for the President and the Board of Trustees of the HLC to NDUS
- Evaluation of Transfer Credit Policy at: http://dickinsonstate.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2014-2016/Catalog/Academic-Affairs/Transfer-of-Credits-from-Non-Regionally-Accredited-Institutions
- NDUS Procedures on Articulation and Transfer: 402 and 403
- Joint letter on dual credit from Acting Chancellor NDUS and State Superintendent Department of Public Instruction dated 7/19/13
- DSU Employer Satisfaction Survey
- Program Review and Evaluation Guidelines and Procedures revised January 2014
- DSU Assessment Plan
- General Education Course Alignment, Assessments & Rotation Schedule. Data/Report
- Business Assessment Reports
- Language & Literature Program Assessment Reports
- Co-curricular experiences Data/Report
- DSU Grade Point Averages by Discipline over Three Semesters
- DSU Program Assessment Plan Template & General Education Program Assessment Plan
- DSU Retention Plan, 2010
- Compliance Council Action Log
- Five randomly drawn files of faculty members approved to teach dual credit courses
- Dickinson State University Audited Financials – 6/30/2012, 6/30/2013
- Copy of Statement of Cash Flows 6/30/2013
- News reports regarding DSU Foundation
- Receiver's Reports (DSUF) for Dec. 2014, Jan. 2015, Feb. 2015, March 2015
- Section Status Report for Spring 2015
- Student Comments from HLC Survey
- NCATE Accreditation Report
- NASM Accreditation Report
- Accreditation, Planning, and Reports website: http://www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academic_affairs/Academic-Affairs-Administration/accreditation/index.aspx
- Graduate follow-up information at http://www.dickinsonstate.edu/divisions/academic_affairs/collegeofeducationbusinessandappliedsciences/department_of_agriculture_and_technical_studies/grade-report/index
- Dickinson State University Service Guide
- Admissions and Recruitment Report, 2013
- Minutes of President's Cabinet, September 2013
- Graduate Follow-up Reports – 2011-2014
- IPEDS Reports
- General Education Assessment Plan and Chart

Appendix C
Federal Compliance Worksheet
See Additional Document

Federal Compliance Worksheet for
Review Panels and Evaluation Teams

Effective September 1, 2014 – August 31, 2015

Evaluation of Federal Compliance Components

The panel reviews each item identified in the Federal Compliance Guide and documents its findings in the appropriate spaces below. The panel should expect the institution to address these requirements with brief narrative responses and provide supporting documentation, where necessary. If the panel finds in the course of this review that there are substantive issues with the institution's fulfillment of these requirements, it should document them in the space provided below.

This worksheet outlines the information the panel should review in relation to the federal requirements and provides spaces for the team's conclusions in relation to each requirement. The panel should refer to the Federal Compliance Guide for Institutions and Evaluation Teams in completing this worksheet. The Guide identifies applicable Commission policies and an explanation of each requirement. **The evaluation team will review the areas the panel identified for further review and will consider the panel's work in light of information gained in the on-ground visit.**

Institution under review: Dickinson State University

Panel Members: Sherilyn W. Poole (a Federal Compliance review panel was unavailable to complete the review. A member of the team who was trained in the Federal Compliance review process conducted the review and on-site follow-up).

Panel Recommendations for Further Review

*The panel should identify any areas that appear to require further review from the evaluation team during the on-site visit. **The team should delete this section of the report after it reviews the comments from the panel and follows up on any areas identified.***

1) **Ensure the DOE findings identified in the Program Review have been resolved.**

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Version 01

Team Findings

*The team should identify its findings in following up on the areas identified by the panel. The team should also identify any findings it made related to Federal Compliance over the course of the visit. **The final version of the worksheet should reflect the findings of the team. It should not contain findings from the panel with which the team does not concur.***

1) **The SAP policy has been revised and includes the components recommended in the DOE report.**
2) **The institution's composite score will be impacted if the DSU Foundation's financials are included in the computation.**

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DETAILED REVIEW OF FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

Assignment of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

Address this requirement by completing the "Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours" in the Appendix at the end of this document.

Institutional Records of Student Complaints

The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints since the last comprehensive evaluation.

1. Review the process that the institution uses to manage complaints as well as the history of complaints received and processed with a particular focus in that history on the past three or four years.

2. Determine whether the institution has a process to review and resolve complaints in a timely manner.

3. Verify that the evidence shows that the institution can, and does, follow this process and that it is able to integrate any relevant findings from this process into its review and planning processes.

4. Advise the institution of any improvements that might be appropriate.

5. Consider whether the record of student complaints indicates any pattern of complaints or otherwise raises concerns about the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or Assumed Practices.

6. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

   _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

   Comments: Policies and procedures to address student complaints, concerns, and grievances are published in the 2014-2015 Student Handbook. The Student Code of Conduct includes the procedures for the redress of grievances. There have been 9 written student complaints filed since 2004 which were resolved promptly. The University's Compliance Council reviews the student complaints filed to determine if a pattern exists that require changes in policies or procedures. No patterns have been identified.

   Additional monitoring, if any:

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Publication of Transfer Policies

The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.

1. Review the institution's transfer policies.

2. Review any articulation agreements the institution has in place, including articulation agreements at the institution level and program-specific articulation agreements.

3. Consider where the institution discloses these policies (e.g., in its catalog, on its web site) and how easily current and prospective students can access that information.

Determine whether the disclosed information clearly explains the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions and any articulation arrangements the institution has with other institutions. Note whether the institution appropriately lists its articulation agreements with other institutions on its website or elsewhere. The information the institution provides should include any program-specific articulation agreements in place and should clearly identify program-specific articulation agreements as such. Also, the information the institution provides should include whether the articulation agreement anticipates that the institution under Commission review: 1) accepts credit from the other institution(s) in the articulation agreement; 2) sends credits to the other institution(s) in the articulation agreements that it accepts; or 3) both offers and accepts credits with the other institution(s).

4. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

    _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

    Comments: DSU adheres to the NDUS' policy on transfer which stipulates that "institutions must implement policies to facilitate transfer." The DSU policies and procedures related to transfer students are published in the 2014-2016 Catalog and on the University website. Specific information is included in sections on transfer admission procedures and transfer applicants. Articulation agreements DSU has with other institutions are listed on the DSU Academic Affairs website. A new policy, effective Fall 2014, requires that international transcripts "must be submitted to an approved evaluation service" for review and determination of appropriate/approved credits.

    Additional monitoring, if any:

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Practices for Verification of Student Identity

The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education and appropriately discloses additional fees related to verification to students and to protect their privacy.

1. Determine how the institution verifies that the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams, and earns a final grade. Consider whether the institution's approach respects student privacy.

2. Check that any fees related to verification and not included in tuition are explained to the students prior to enrollment in distance courses (e.g., a proctoring fee paid by students on the day of the proctored exam).

3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

   _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

   Comments: DSU offers distance education courses but no full programs through distance education and no correspondence courses. All DUS students are issued a unique NDUS controlled ID number. Students use this ID number with a password or passcode they create to access online courses and materials. When students take exams in a proctored situation, they must present a photo id showing their birthdate and social security number. Additionally, the university has also added the Respondus Lockdown Browser/Tegrity combination which requires students to use a photo of themselves prior to taking an online exam. The university does not charge a fee to students to take an exam online. If students take an exam at an off-site location, there may be a fee charged. The DSU Distance Education webpage includes information about Moodle (the LMS) and proctored exams.

   Additional monitoring, if any:

Title IV Program Responsibilities

The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program.

This requirement has several components the institution and team must address:

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

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- ***Financial Responsibility Requirements.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion Five if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)*

- ***Default Rates.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its three year default rate. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Note for 2012 and thereafter institutions and teams should be using the three-year default rate based on revised default rate data published by the Department in September 2012; if the institution does not provide the default rate for three years leading up to the comprehensive evaluation visit, the team should contact Commission staff.*

- ***Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*

- ***Student Right to Know.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion One if the team determines that disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)*

- ***Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance.*** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is appropriately applying these policies and practices to students. In most cases, teams should verify that these policies exist and are available to students, typically in the course catalog or student handbook. Note that the Commission does not necessarily require that the institution take attendance but does anticipate that institutional attendance policies will provide information to students about attendance at the institution.*

- ***Contractual Relationships.*** *The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships (If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require Commission approval and has not received Commission approval the team must require that the institution complete and file the change request form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Contractual Change Application on the Commission's web site for more information.)*

- ***Consortial Relationships.*** *The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a consortial relationship that may require Commission approval and has not received Commission approval the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Consortial Change Application on the Commission's web site for more information.)*

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1. Review all of the information that the institution discloses having to do with its Title IV program responsibilities.

2. Determine whether the Department has raised any issues related to the institution's compliance or whether the institution's auditor in the A-133 has raised any issues about the institution's compliance as well as look to see how carefully and effectively the institution handles its Title IV responsibilities.

3. If an institution has been cited or is not handling these responsibilities effectively, indicate that finding within the federal compliance portion of the team report and whether the institution appears to be moving forward with corrective action that the Department has determined to be appropriate.

4. If issues have been raised with the institution's compliance, decide whether these issues relate to the institution's ability to satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, particularly with regard to whether its disclosures to students are candid and complete and demonstrate appropriate integrity (*Core Component 2.A and 2.B*).

5. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

    _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

    Comments: A Department of Education Program Review (2013) resulted in five findings. DSU was required to submit a response to the August 2014 report and is awaiting the DOE's determination. In September 2013, DUS was notified of the DOE's intent to levy a fine due to the university's failure to submit required IPEDS information. DSU implemented corrective action and submitted an appeal of the fine. The DOE acknowledged the implementation of the corrective actions but levied a fine of $32,500 against DUS which was paid from oil well reserve funds. The 2011-2012 audit of DSU conducted by the North Dakota State Auditors' Office identified the need for improvement of the SAP Appeals Process. The SAP policy was revised in the summer of 2013 and is printed in the Student Handbook and the university catalog.

    The composite financial index and the student loan default rates are both within the accepted ranges of the DOE and HLC. The required Annual Safety Report is available in hard copy and online. DSU has a contractual relationship with Global Equine Academy. A December 6, 2012 letter from HLC approved the relationship. DSU has no consortial relationships.

    Additional monitoring, if any:

Required Information for Students and the Public

1. Verify that the institution publishes fair, accurate, and complete information on the following topics: the calendar, grading, admissions, academic program requirements, tuition and fees, and refund policies.

2. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

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_X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: Required information for perspective students, their families, and the public are included in the DSU catalog, the Student Handbook, the Campus Safety Booklet, and on the university website. The published information includes tuition, academic programs and policies and costs. The university's webpage includes a link to a page "Your Right to Know" which includes the information the institution is required to publish.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information

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

1. Review the institution's disclosure about its accreditation status with the Commission to determine whether the information it provides is accurate and complete, appropriately formatted and contains the Commission's web address.

2. Review institutional disclosures about its relationship with other accrediting agencies for accuracy and for appropriate consumer information, particularly regarding the link between specialized/professional accreditation and the licensure necessary for employment in many professional or specialized areas.

3. Review the institution's catalog, brochures, recruiting materials, and information provided by the institution's advisors or counselors to determine whether the institution provides accurate information to current and prospective students about its accreditation, placement or licensure, program requirements, etc.

4. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

_X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

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Comments: The Accreditations and Membership webpage shows DSU's accreditation status with HLC and posts the HLC Hallmark. The page also lists the university's accreditation/membership relationships with specialized program agencies.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Review of Student Outcome Data

1. Review the student outcome data the institution collects to determine whether it is appropriate and sufficient based on the kinds of academic programs it offers and the students it serves.

2. Determine whether the institution uses this information effectively to make decisions about academic programs and requirements and to determine its effectiveness in achieving its educational objectives.

3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

    _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

    ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

    Comments: Student learning outcome data are housed in department offices, by Chairs, Deans, and the VPAA, and in the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Results of licensing exams are collected for programs which require them. DSU conducts an alumni survey to collect data on graduates' activities. An employer survey collects information about graduates' competencies in the workplace. The DSU Assessment website includes plans, reports, program reviews, and resources to help guide assessment activities.

    Additional monitoring, if any:

Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies

The institution has documented that it discloses accurately to the public and the Commission its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

The team has considered any potential implications for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of sanction or loss of status by the institution with any other accrediting agency or loss of authorization in any state.

Important note: If the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is now or has been in the past five years under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, denial, or termination) from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor or a state entity, then the team must explain the sanction or adverse action of the other agency in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report and provide its rationale for

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recommending Commission status in light of this action. In addition, the team must contact the staff liaison immediately if it learns that the institution is at risk of losing its degree authorization or lacks such authorization in any state in which the institution meets state presence requirements.

1. Review the information, particularly any information that indicates the institution is under sanction or show-cause or has had its status with any agency suspended, revoked, or terminated, as well as the reasons for such actions.

2. Determine whether this information provides any indication about the institution's capacity to meet the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. Should the team learn that the institution is at risk of losing, or has lost, its degree or program authorization in any state in which it meets state presence requirements, it should contact the Commission staff liaison immediately.

3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

   _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

   ___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

   Comments: The DSU Accreditation and Memberships webpage identifies its relationship with HLC and with specialized program accreditations agencies.

   Additional monitoring, if any:

Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment

*The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments. **Note that if the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comment relate to the team's review of the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the Assurance Section of the Team Report.***

1. Review information about the public disclosure of the upcoming visit, including sample announcements, to determine whether the institution made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public and seek comments.

2. Evaluate the comments to determine whether the team needs to follow-up on any issues through its interviews and review of documentation during the visit process.

3. Check the appropriate response that reflects the team's conclusions:

   _X__ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

   ___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements but recommends Commission follow-up.

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___ The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution not to meet the Commission's requirements and recommends Commission follow-up.

___ The team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Comments: The request for Public Comment was posted in several places on campus, was mailed to several groups (Dickinson Chamber of Commerce, DSU Alumni and Foundation, DSU faculty, students, and staff), and sent to media outlets (newspapers, radio and television stations). No comments were received by the HLC office.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Panel

Provide a list materials reviewed here:

University Academic Catalog
Student Handbook
University website
Various websites (Admissions, Assessment, Transfers, Distance Education, Academic Success Center, Athletics, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs)
Annual Safety Report
DSU Equity in Athletics 2013 and 2014

Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team

Provide a list materials reviewed here:

- List of venues where requests for Public Comment were published. Requests for Public Comment followed the HLC format.
- Revised SAP policy; SAP Appeal Form (effective Fall 2013)
- Reviewed recruitment and information publications
- Samples of annual assessment reports
- HLC Student Survey Results
- IPEDS Report – Students completing (graduating) by Program
- IVN course and room schedule – Spring 2015
- Fall 2014 SAP results showing comparison to results from the previous 3 fall terms

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Appendix

Team Worksheet for Evaluating an
Institution's Program Length and Tuition,
Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours

Institution under review: Dickinson State University

Part 1: Program Length and Tuition

Instructions

The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).

Review the *"Worksheet for Use by Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and on Clock Hours"* as well as the course catalog and other attachments required for the institutional worksheet.

Worksheet on Program Length and Tuition

A. Answer the Following Questions

Are the institution's degree program requirements within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

__X__ Yes   ____ No

Comments: Undergraduate degrees require students to earn 128 semester hours of credit including 39 hours of General Education requirements. Major programs require students to earn a minimum of 32 credits. A minor program requires 21-24 credits.

Are the institution's tuition costs across programs within the range of good practice in higher education and contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

__X__ Yes   ____ No

Comments: Tuition and mandatory fees are published on the DSU website. Tuition is listed by number of credits and status of students (undergraduates/graduates, residents/non-residents, Distance Education, Graduate, Dual Credit).

B. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate

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Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's program length and tuition practices?

_____ Yes   __X__ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

Part 2: Assignment of Credit Hours

Instructions

In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps:

1. Review the Worksheet completed by the institution, which provides information about an institution's academic calendar and an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats, and the institution's policy and procedures for awarding credit hours. Note that such policies may be at the institution or department level and may be differentiated by such distinctions as undergraduate or graduate, by delivery format, etc.

2. Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level. The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:

   - Associate's degrees = 60 hours

   - Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours

   - Master's or other degrees beyond the Bachelor's = at least 30 hours beyond the Bachelor's degree

   - Note that one quarter hour = .67 semester hour

   - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.

3. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution.

   - At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14-16 weeks (or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The description in the catalog should indicate a course that is appropriately rigorous and has collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.

   - Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)

   - Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode, and types of academic activities.

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- Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the above federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. Commission procedure also permits this approach.

4. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course. Pay particular attention to alternatively-structured or other courses with particularly high credit hours for a course completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor.

5. **Sampling.** Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.

   - At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.

   - For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.

   - Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.

   - For the programs the team sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several of the courses in the program, identify the contact hours for each course, and expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.

   - The team should pay particular attention to alternatively-structured and other courses that have high credit hours and less frequently scheduled interaction between the students and the instructor.

   - Provide information on the samples in the appropriate space on the worksheet.

6. Consider the following questions:

   - Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?

   - Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?

   - For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe allotted for the course?

   - Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

   - If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?

7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:

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- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently-detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and evidence of implementation.

- If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or single department or division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.

- If the team identifies systematic non-compliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify Commission staff immediately and work with staff to design appropriate follow-up activities. The Commission shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours

A. **Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team** (see #5 of instructions in completing this section)

Sample Programs Reviewed

BS ACCT; BS FIN (Online)
BS AGRIST
BS ACCT
BS HR Management
AAS Legal
BSED Art Ed
BA Theatre
BA Music
BSED Phys Ed
BA Spanish
BS Comp Sci
BS Math
BSN
AAS Prac Nurs

Sample Syllabi Reviewed

ACCT 301	HPER 100	NURS 415
ACCT 210	HPER 430	PSYC 370
ACCT 331	MATH 305	UNIV 100
AGRI 350	CSI 160	COMM 110
AGRI 394	NURS 121	MATH 103
ART 124	NURS 215	ENG 121H

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B. Answer the Following Questions

1) Institutional Policies on Credit Hours

Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution? (Note that for this question and the questions that follow an institution may have a single comprehensive policy or multiple policies.)

__X__ Yes   ____ No

   Comments: The DSU catalog (pp. 21-25) describes the variety of teaching and learning modalities students may earn academic credits. The different types of courses available are described as well as the alternative credit-earning options available. There is also a description of the additional fees charged for courses that are Directed Study, Independent Study, Synchronous Distance, and Online.

Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution? (Note that an institution's policy must go beyond simply stating that it awards credit solely based on assessment of student learning and should also reference instructional time.)

__X__ Yes   ____ No

   Comments: The Credit Hour Assignment Guidelines make clear the expectations for each type of teaching/learning modality including the hours of instruction and out-of-class activities.

For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the timeframe and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

_X___ Yes   ____ No

   Comments: The Credit Hour Assignment Guidelines include specific requirements for the time students must spend in learning activities for each type of course.

Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

__X__ Yes   ____ No

   Comments:

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2) **Application of Policies**

Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit? (Note that the Commission will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

__X__ Yes   ____ No

    Comments:

Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

__X__ Yes   ____ No

    Comments: The DSU syllabus template requires faculty to identify student learning outcomes in three areas: University student learning outcomes; Program student learning outcomes and Course student learning outcomes. The sample syllabi reviewed included these components.

If the institution offers any alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, were the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

__X__ Yes   ____ No

    Comments:

If the institution offers alternative delivery or compressed format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonably capable of being fulfilled by students in the time allocated to justify the allocation of credit?

X Yes   ____ No

    Comments:

Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

_X___ Yes   ____ No

    Comments:

C. **Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate**

Review the responses provided in this section. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign Commission follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.

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Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

_____ Yes   _X___ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

D. Identify and Explain Any Findings of Systematic Non-Compliance in One or More Educational Programs with Commission Policies Regarding the Credit Hour

Part 3: Clock Hours

Does the institution offer any degree or certificate programs in clock hours?

____ Yes   __X__ No

Does the institution offer any degree or certificate programs that must be reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs?

____ Yes   __X__ No

If the answer to either question is "Yes," complete this part of the form.

Instructions

This worksheet is <u>not</u> intended for teams to evaluate whether an institution has assigned credit hours relative to contact hours in accordance with the Carnegie definition of the credit hour. This worksheet solely addresses those programs reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes.

Complete this worksheet **only if** the institution offers any degree or certificate programs in clock hours OR that must be reported to the U.S. Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs. Non-degree programs subject to clock hour requirements (an institution is required to measure student progress in clock hours for federal or state purposes or for graduates to apply for licensure) are not subject to the credit hour definitions per se but will need to provide conversions to semester or quarter hours for Title IV purposes. Clock-hour programs might include teacher education, nursing, or other programs in licensed fields.

For these programs Federal regulations require that they follow the federal formula listed below. If there are no deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency in the institution's overall policy for awarding semester or quarter credit, accrediting agency may provide permission for the institution to provide less instruction provided that the student's work outside class in addition to direct instruction meets the applicable quantitative clock hour requirements noted below.

Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8)

1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction
1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction

Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour include at least 20 semester hours.

Worksheet on Clock Hours

A. Answer the Following Questions

Does the institution's credit to clock hour formula match the federal formula?

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____ Yes   ____ No

     Comments:

If the credit to clock hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class?

Did the team determine that the institution's credit hour policies are reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that if the team answers "No" to this question, it should recommend follow-up monitoring in section C below.)

____ Yes   ____ No

     Comments:

Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

____ Yes   ____ No

     Comments:

B. Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit to clock hour conversion?

____ Yes   ____ No

(Note that the team may approve a lower conversion rate than the federal rate as noted above provided the team found no issues with the institution's policies or practices related to the credit hour and there is sufficient student work outside of class as noted in the instructions.)

C. Recommend Commission Follow-up, If Appropriate

Is any Commission follow-up required related to the institution's clock hour policies and practices?

____ Yes   ____ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of Commission monitoring required and the due date:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
© Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Filing
Contact: 800.621.7440
Published: August 2013   Page 20
Version 03 – 2013-08

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: Dickinson State University ND

TYPE OF REVIEW*:* Comprehensive Evaluation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:

DATES OF REVIEW: 03/02/2015 - 03/04/2015

☐ No Change in Statement of Affiliation Status

Nature of Organization

CONTROL: Public

RECOMMENDATION: no change

DEGREES AWARDED: Associates, Bachelors, Certificate

RECOMMENDATION: no change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:
Prior Commission approval is required for substantive change as stated in Commission policy.

RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:
Prior Commission approval required.

RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:
Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

RECOMMENDATION: no change

ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES:

Monitoring, Focused Visit: 11/29/2015
A visit on whether the Board and the system office are working to refine and strengthen their work on systematic improvements.
Monitoring, Interim Report on Obligations of Affiliation: 09/02/2015

RECOMMENDATION:

Focused Visit: Fall 2017, on general education assessment, enrollment management, retention, and program integrity.

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2004 - 2005

YEAR FOR NEXT REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2014 - 2015

RECOMMENDATION: 2024-2025

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: 1514 Dickinson State University ND

TYPE OF REVIEW: PEAQ: Comprehensive Evaluation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:

☒   No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs

Programs leading to Undergraduate	Program Distribution
Associates	4
Bachelors	51

Programs leading to Graduate	
Doctors	0
Masters	0
Specialist	0

Certificate programs	
Certificate	2

Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities:
In State - Present Activity
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations:
Bismarck State College - Bismarck, ND
Williston State College - Williston, ND

Recommended Change:

Out Of State - Present Activity
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change:

Out of USA - <u>Present Activity</u>
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change:

Distance Education Programs:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
Bachelor 30.9999 Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other Bachelor of University Studies Internet

Associate 01.0199 Agricultural Business and Management, Other AS Agriculture/Sales and Service Internet

Bachelor 52.0201 Business Administration and Management, General Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Internet

Associate 24.0101 Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies Associate in Arts Internet

Bachelor 52.0101 Business/Commerce, General Bachelor of Applied Science Internet

Bachelor 52.1101 International Business/Trade/Commerce Bachelor of Science in International Business Internet

Certificate 52.1001 Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration, General Certificate of Human Resources Internet

Bachelor 52.0301 Accounting Bachelor of Science in Accounting Internet

Bachelor 52.1001 Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration, General Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Management Internet

Bachelor 52.0801 Finance, General Bachelor of Science in Finance Internet

Recommended Change:

Correspondence Education Programs:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change:

Contractual Relationships:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
Certificate 01.0307 Horse Husbandry/Equine Science and Management Certificate - 01.0307 Horse

Husbandry/Equine Science and Management (Equine Science Minor)

Recommended Change:

Consortial Relationships:
Present Offerings:
None.

Recommended Change: