

**Self Study Plan for
Valley City State University, 1999-2001**

Site visit November 2001

Submission Date: October 18, 1999



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Accreditation at VCSU, and the Purposes of Accreditation

The North Central Association (NCA) accredits colleges and universities in our region. Valley City State University first received accreditation from NCA in 1915 and has been continuously accredited ever since. Valley City State University previously conducted a self-study process leading to a ten-year accreditation in 1992 and conducted an interim review for an NCA site visit in 1994.

The Purposes of Accreditation

The accreditation process allows a university to examine its maintenance of standards that qualify its graduates for admission to higher level institutions or for professions in which they have been trained. NCA accreditation assures its constituents that Valley City State University is a recognized, credible institution. Accreditation is vital because:

- It enables students to be eligible for federal and state financial aid,
- It ensures that university credits are transferable to other institutions;
- It supports grant applications; and
- It maintains the institution's credibility with both the state and prospective employers of graduates.

President's Charge for the Self-Study Steering Committee

As President of Valley City State University, I charge the Institutional Improvement Committee to serve as the University's North Central Association accreditation review Self-Study Steering Committee. The objectives for the self-study are:

- To provide evidence that Valley City State University fulfills the Commission's General Institutional requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation;
- To encourage active participation, continuous improvement and institutional integrity; and
- To continue progress toward instructional improvement through assessment of student learning.

The purposes of the Self-Study Steering Committee are:

- To lead and coordinate a process through which everyone in the University participates in a thorough review of the University, including the identification of strengths and areas for improvement;
- To ensure that the views of students and other clients of the University are included in the review, and that all interested constituents may participate in the process;
- To produce a final report and supporting documentation that meet the needs and requirements of the North Central Association accreditation process; and
- To advise and support the Self-Study Coordinators.

Ellen Earle Chaffee
President

Institutional goals for the self-study process

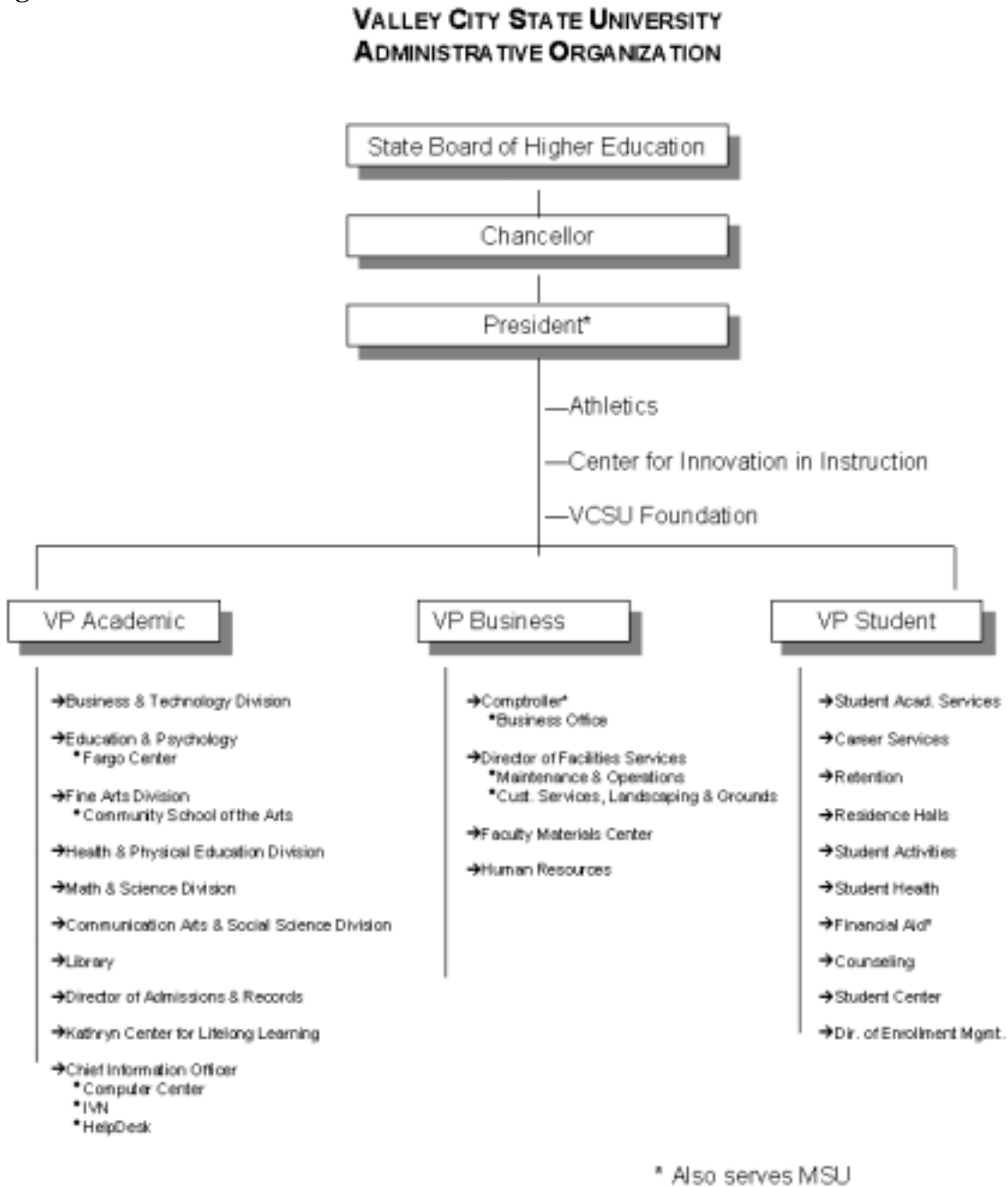
The goals of the self-study are to

- Provide evidence that Valley City State University fulfills the North Central Association's General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation;
- Encourage active participation in the self-study process by as many constituent groups as possible;
- Foster continuous institutional improvement and integrity;
- Identify the progress of program and academic assessment; and
- Assess teaching and learning in a laptop environment.

Existing Evaluation and Planning Processes

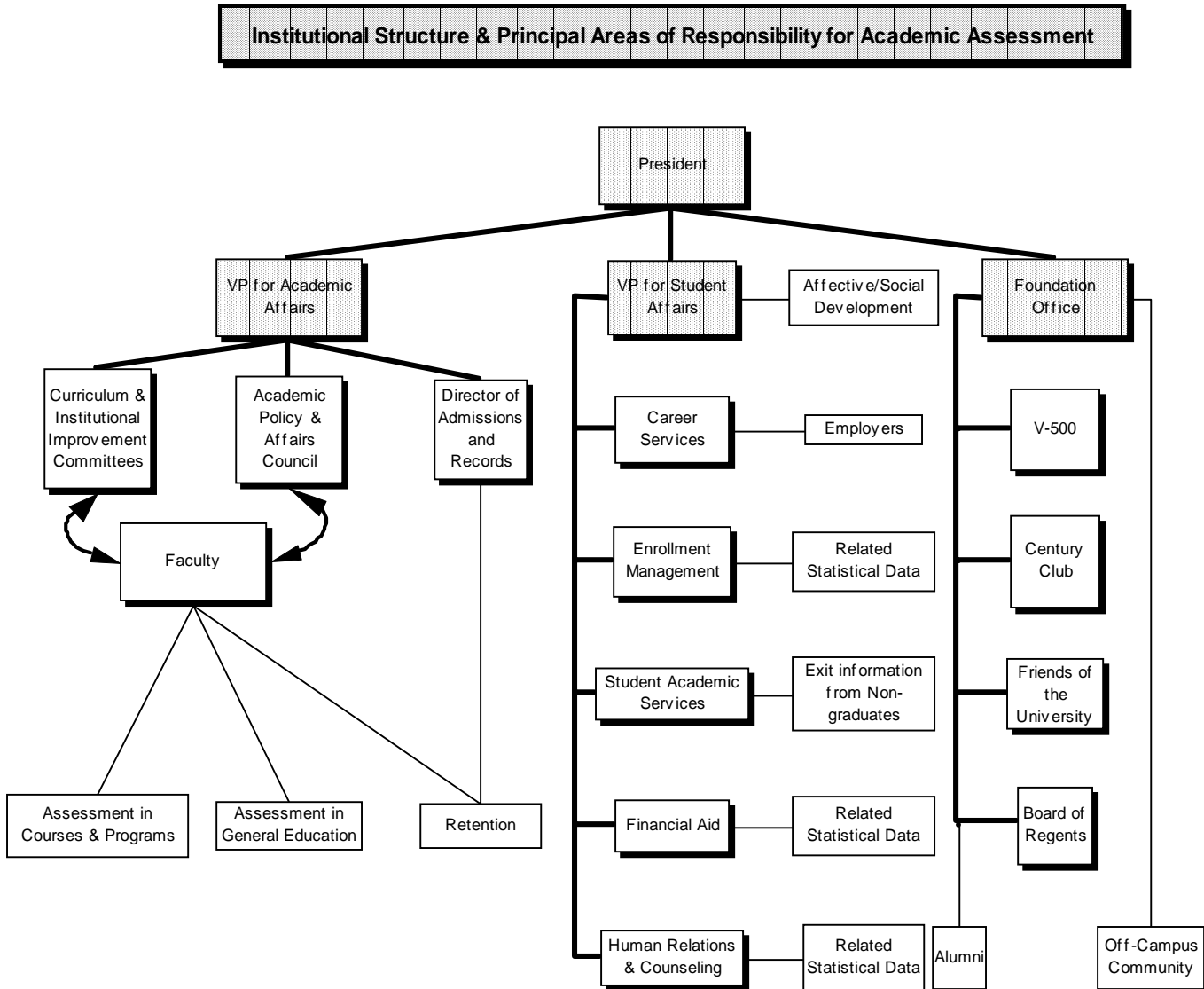
The figure below illustrates the general institutional structure of VCSU.

Figure 1:



The figure below illustrates the structure of VCSU areas which are responsible for academic assessment.

Figure 2:



Campus-Wide Assessment of Teaching and Learning at VCSU

The figure on page 8 illustrates the ways teaching and learning are assessed at VCSU.

- Survey data on **Faculty Technology use in Teaching** has been gathered partially under the auspices of our 1995-2000 Title III grant.
- Student-based surveys created by a faculty member provides data on **classroom practice**, keyed to *The Student Inventory* created by the Flashlight Project .

- The **Ability Based Academic Assessment** is based on eight Abilities and their accompanying skills. These were established in 1994 as part of our FIPSE grant, as a logical, assessable statement of the Foundation Study objectives. Skill areas under each ability were approved in 1998; these areas are currently being revised to better reflect program content.

Levels are currently being defined for each skill area. A web-based data base is being developed for students to post best work for each skill/ability, and faculty are developing ways to using these postings to assess teaching and learning at VCSU.

The chart below illustrates the way the Abilities are used for academic assessment at VCSU.

Figure 3: VCSU Assessment Chart

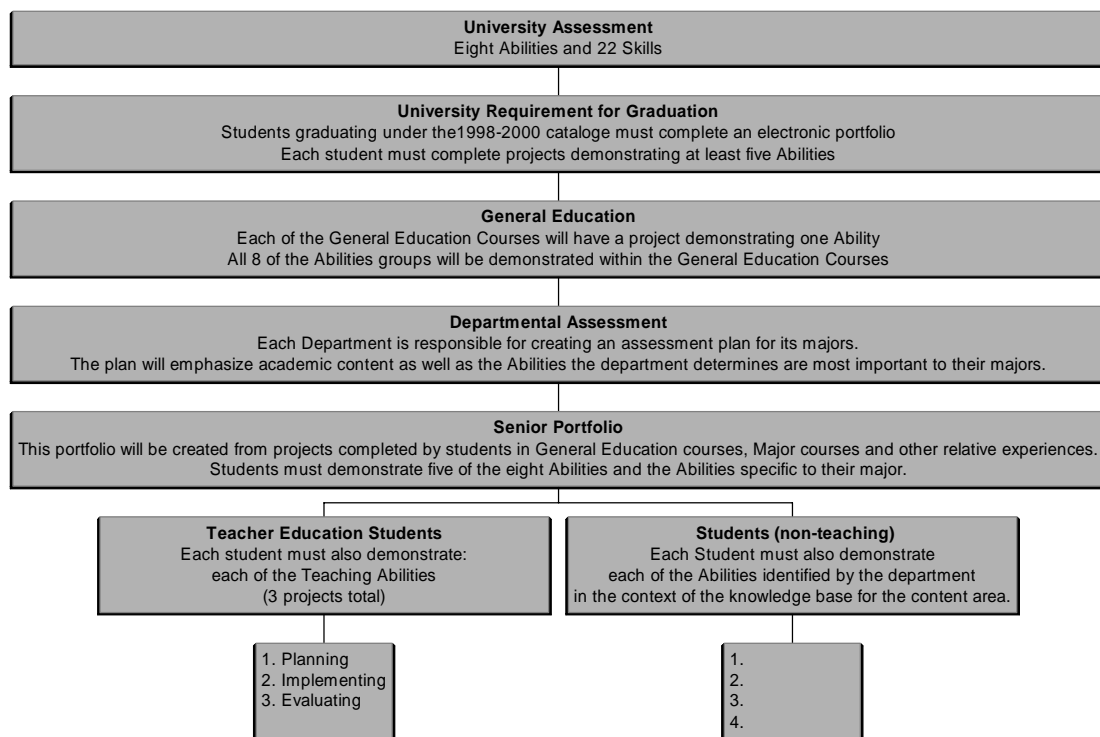
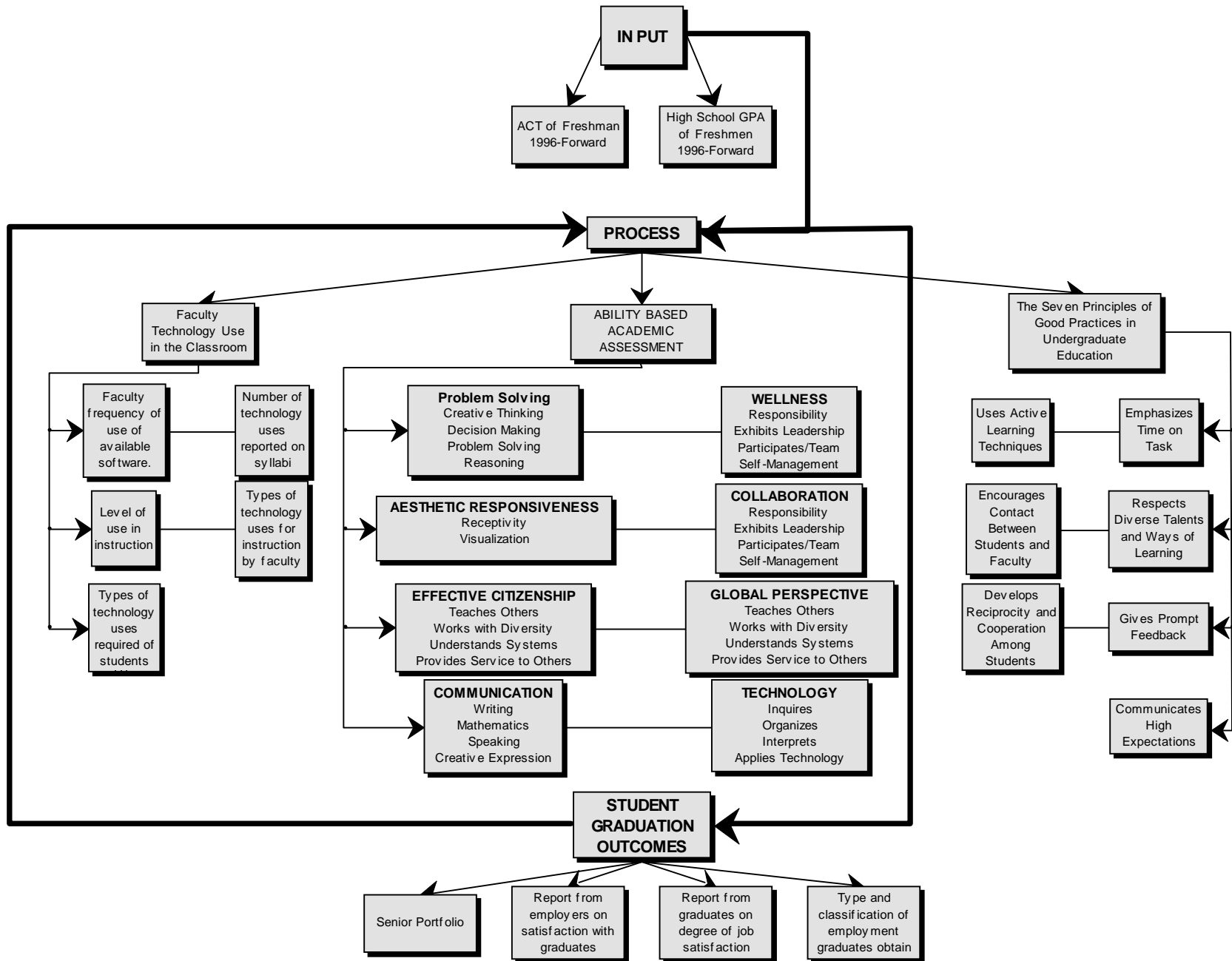


Figure 4:

Campus Wide Assessment of Teaching and Learning at VCSU



Response to previous North Central concerns

The concerns expressed by the NCA visiting team in 1992 centered on three areas:

- The ambiguities cause by the newly organized North Dakota University System, including the mission statement and interaction between the system office and the university administration, and development of the elementary education major with NDSU;
- Faculty and staff working conditions, compensation, access to technology, and professional development opportunities limit the ability to recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff;
- Outcome measures need to be developed for the University-wide assessment plan.

In addition, the March 1992 Self-Study report identifies 10 concerns which the University took measures to respond to. These concerns are listed on pages 234-236 of the 1992 Self-Study report.

Generally, these concerns reflect the areas identified by the NCA visiting team, including staff and faculty compensation and opportunities; in addition, the study mentions improved communication, faculty and staff evaluation processes, and the development of CII as an independent entity.

Roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees

President and Vice President for Academic Affairs

The President and Vice President for Academic Affairs provide vital accreditation leadership, which is essential to VCSU's educational programs and its students.

Their responsibilities include

- identifying self-study as an institutional priority
- allocating necessary resources, and
- providing vital input to the Self-Study Steering Committee.

Self-Study Co-Coordinator

The Self-Study Co-Coordinator oversees the University's North Central accreditation process and the synthesis of study-committee reports into the self-study report.

Their self-study related responsibilities include

- providing liaison between the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Steering Committee, study committees and subcommittees, and NCA;
- defining roles/responsibilities of all involved in self-study;
- developing the self-study plan and timeline, and submitting this plan to NCA;
- acquainting all personnel with the accreditation criteria and concerns;
- providing the University community with updates on the progress of the self-study;
- organizing incoming data for consistency and coherence; and
- compiling and distributing the first draft of the self-study report.

Their North Central Association visitation-related responsibilities include

- preparing for the visitation team's needs and comfort;
- creating an efficient and effective visitation agenda;

- overseeing the organization of the NCA team's resource room and related website materials; and
- overseeing press releases, etc., regarding the NCA visitation.

Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee, which represents all University constituents, assures that the self-study plan and its execution are sound and complete.

Figure 5: Members of the Steering Committee

Ellen Chaffee	Diana Skroch-FA	Jan Drake
Les Wong	Julee Russell-CA/SS	Bill Ament
Glenn Schmaltz	Jay Hettiarachchy BT	Maggie Clemens—student
Steve Bensen	Dale Hoskisson-ED/PSY	Jill Legge—student
Jim Egeberg-PE	Preston Bush-M/S	Jennifer Feist—community

Their general responsibilities include

- furnishing chairpersons for the study committees;
- advising the Self-Study Co-Coordinator;
- promoting campus-wide involvement in the self-study process; and
- assuring the effective progress of the self study.

Self Study Committees

Six self study committees and subcommittees will be formed, organized, and chaired by members of the steering committee. These committees investigate, document, evaluate, and report on their assigned research areas.

Each committee should represent as many of VCSU's constituencies as possible, including faculty, administration, staff, students, and community.

Each of five self study committees will be assigned a criterion and related GIRs. The sixth committee will focus on VCSU's special entities and partnerships (see part VI of the Self Study Outline, page 18).

Subcommittees will be formed under each of the Criterion Committees according to the patterns of evidence indicated by NCA for that Criterion. The Entities Committee will form subcommittees based on the entities and partnerships studied.

The Study Committees must

- provide a comprehensive overview of VCSU; and
- document and evaluate the patterns of evidence to determine VCSU's strengths and areas of concern.

Committee activities and materials for self study

The six self-study committees will investigate, document, evaluate, and report on their assigned research areas. Each committee will be responsible for these four tasks:

- a. examine and document the General Institutional Requirements related to the committee's assigned criterion.
- b. determine patterns of evidence indicated under the assigned criterion and gather documentation of these patterns.
- c. synthesize evidence to study how VCSU meets the criterion and determine which patterns of evidence make the strongest case.
- d. develop conclusions about VCSU supported by patterns of evidence that satisfy the criterion.

The Committee Reporting Materials listed below have been designed to help each committee investigate, document, evaluate, and report their findings:

Figure 6: Committee Reporting Materials

(samples located in Appendix, page 19; digital copies provided in NCA folder on K drive)

1. **GIR report sheets**, keyed to each Criterion (due Nov 10, 1999)
2. **Committee information sheet** on criterion/patterns of evidence
3. **Strategy sheets** presenting Committee plans for Spring 2000 (due Dec. 3, 1999)
4. **Notable Accomplishment** forms
5. **Red flag Issues**, noting problem areas we need to look at immediately
6. **Subcommittee report** on assigned pattern of evidence (list of data collected and conclusions drawn—due April 2000)
7. **Committee report** on Criterion conclusions drawn and discussion of most significant patterns of evidence (due April 2000)
8. **Committee Minutes** form (complete and submit file copy to Co-Coordinator for each Study Committee meeting).

The General Institutional Requirements

The GIRs define the requirements necessary for an institution seeking accreditation. The 24 requirements are divided into the following areas:

1. Mission
2. Authorization

3. Governance
4. Faculty
5. Educational Programs
6. Finances
7. Public Information

The GIRs are discussed in detail in the *Handbook of Accreditation* (pages 19-27); committees are asked to report their findings for the GIRs related to their study areas on the GIR report sheet.

The Five Criteria

The Commission has organized the issues examined for accreditation into five broad areas, or Criteria for Accreditation, critical to overall institution effectiveness. Meeting all five is required for accreditation:

1. Criterion One: The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.
2. Criterion Two: The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.
3. Criterion Three: The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.
4. Criterion Four: The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.
5. Criterion Five: The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

What are patterns of evidence?

NCA provides "indicators" for each criterion that help identify issues and concerns common throughout American higher education. In addition, an institution may consider issues that arise from its individual history, purposes, and challenges.

The Self Study report must present patterns of evidence that support each criterion. We need to discuss specific indicators that make the strongest case, and also address areas of weakness, both to be honest and to assure credibility.

The "indicators" are a starting point for the self-study; committees are encouraged to identify and pursue other evidence that supports each criterion.

The "indicators" for each criterion are listed on the Committee Information Sheet for each committee. Each committee chair should also review the section on "other types of evidence" appropriate to specific criterion, discussed in your copy of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Principles of the Self-Study Process

North Central Association provides these guidelines to assist those involved in self study.

NCA does not prescribe the details of a specific institution's self-study process. It does, however, expect that each campus guide its self-study by the following principles:

- **Begin with a plan.** A meaningful self-study process serves both internal and external purposes. Thoughtful structuring and implementation of the self-study process allow the institution to study itself with optimum efficiency.
- **Focus on the whole institution.** Individual departments or groups are not accredited by the North Central Association, whose criteria demand that all components of the institution be examined for evaluation.
- **Build naturally on existing self-evaluation.** The Self-Study begins with an examination of existing self-evaluation processes and incorporates new methods of evaluation as needed
- **Evaluate rather than describe the institution.** Study committees as well as the final reporting process not only identify information as it relates to the criteria, but also interpret its significance to the institution. Recommendations are based on this interpretation.
- **Be candid and honest.** The self-study allows the examination of all aspects of the institution.

Timeline

March 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning begins for the Self Study process; self study steering committee appointed; Coordinators selected • Notify Commission of Self-Study coordinator and preferred dates for visit.
April 1999	Coordinators attend NCA workshop in Chicago
Summer 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators develop self study plan and submit to steering committee for approval. • Coordinators prepare NCA kick-off for faculty and staff meetings in August.
September 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee submits self-study plan to Commission for review • Steering Committee selects members for Study Committees and their subcommittees.
Fall 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees examine the GIRs relating to their Criterion or area of study, gather the necessary data, and submit draft reports on the GIRs in their area. (GIR report sheets—due Nov. 10) • Subcommittees determine the materials necessary to establish patterns of evidence for their Criterion or area of study and create the surveys, common interview questions, or strategies to be used in collecting evidence. (Strategy Sheets—due Dec. 3)
Spring 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators draft GIR section of Report and return to subcommittees for additional information as needed. • Subcommittees gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports for their Criterion or study area.
April 2000	Coordinators attend NCA Workshop in Chicago.
Summer 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators organize and write preliminary sections of report draft and determine areas that require further development. • Coordinators meet with available subcommittee members to begin to cover identified gaps.
Fall 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees reconvene to supply additional materials, revise reports, and review pertinent draft sections of report. • Coordinators complete rough draft of Self Study report by Dec.
Jan-Feb 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee circulates and receives reactions to draft report • Send Commission information suggesting team competencies; date of visit should be confirmed 9 months prior.
March 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators compile revised draft of Self Study report • Respond to list of proposed team members to Commission
April 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators attend NCA Workshop in Chicago • Steering committee approves final draft of Self Study report
Summer 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete duplication of Self-study Report, completes BIDs, etc. • Receive notification that team is complete by August 1 • Send set of evaluation materials to each member of Evaluation Team and the Commission (end of August)
Sept. 2001	Prepare for Team Visit
Early Nov. 2001	Evaluation takes place.

Proposed Outline of Self Study

- I. Introduction and History
 - A. VCSU Profile
 - B. Accreditation history
 - C. Purposes and audiences of this report
 - D. Review of the Self-Study Process

- II. Changes at VCSU since the last visit
 - A. Changes in Teaching and Learning at VCSU
 - 1. Laptop initiative
 - 2. Outcome based/ability assessment
 - 3. Learning to Live classes
 - 4. Customized Learning
 - B. Changes in Entities and Partnerships
 - 1. International Programs
 - 2. Great Plains Software
 - 3. Kathryn Center
 - 4. CII
 - 5. Partnership with MaSU
 - 6. Dual Credit

- III. Response to the 1992 NCA Site Team Report and Self-Study Concerns

- IV. The General Institutional Requirements
 - A. Mission
 - B. Authorization
 - C. Governance
 - D. Faculty
 - E. Educational Programs
 - F. Finances
 - G. Public Information

- V. Criteria for Reaccreditation
 - A. Criterion One: The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.
 - B. Criterion Two: The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.
 - C. Criterion Three: The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.
 - D. Criterion Four: The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.
 - E. Criterion Five: The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

VI. Special Entities and Partnerships

- A. Kathryn Center
- B. Center for Innovation and Instruction
- C. Dual Credit
- D. Partnership with MaSU
- E. International Studies—Sister Universities
 - La Paz
 - Oaxaca
 - Brandon
- F. NDSU Elementary Ed. program (Fargo Center)
- G. Jamestown Center
- H. Great Plains Software partnership

VII. Summary

- A. Self Study findings
- B. Request for Accreditation

Appendix A:

Self Study Committee Reporting Materials

1. **GIR report sheets**, keyed to each Criterion (due Nov 10, 1999)
2. **Committee information sheet** on criterion/patterns of evidence; sample for Criterion 1 provided—check NCA folder on the K Drive for your Committee's Research area.
3. **Strategy sheets** presenting Committee plans for Spring 2000 (due Dec. 3, 1999)
4. **Notable Accomplishment** forms
5. **Red flag Issues**, noting problem areas we need to look at immediately
6. **Subcommittee report** on assigned pattern of evidence (list of data collected and conclusions drawn—due April 2000)
7. **Committee report** on Criterion conclusions drawn and discussion of most significant patterns of evidence (due April 2000)
8. **Committee Minutes** form (complete and submit file copy to Co-Coordinator for each Study Committee meeting).

General Institutional Requirements Report Sheet

Criterion: _____ GIR#: _____ GIR Area: _____

1. In paragraph form, please describe the evidence which demonstrates that VCSU meets the GIR:

2. List and attach copies of the supporting documentation for your discussion.

Supporting Documentation
Item <i>a</i>:
Item <i>b</i>:
Item <i>c</i>:
Item <i>d</i>:

Criterion 1 Information Sheet

Criterion One: The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Definitions of the pertinent phrases are provided on pages 32-33 of *the Handbook of Accreditation*

. The Commission suggests a breadth of evaluation far beyond merely restating the mission. The "indicators" or patterns of evidence supporting this criterion are listed in the box below:

- a. long- and short-range institutional and educational goals
- b. processes, involving its constituencies, through which the institution evaluates its purposes
- c. decision-making processes that are appropriate to its stated mission and purposes
- d. understanding of the stated purposes by institutional constituencies
- e. efforts to keep the public informed of its institutional and educational goals through documents such as the catalog and program brochures
- f. support for freedom of inquiry for faculty and students
- g. institutional commitment to excellence in both the teaching provided by faculty and the learning expected of students.

Changes in emphasis, modes of educational delivery, demographics, resources, etc., may provide additional types of evidence to support the institution's claim that it meets Criterion One.

Committee Strategy Sheet

Criterion _____ Chair(s): _____

Committee Members:

Use this sheet to describe the strategies you will use to study your assigned Criterion/area. You may ask each subcommittee to submit a separate page indicating their plans, or you may summarize your committee's strategies more generally. The goal is to have plans made, interview questions written, and surveys designed before the end of Fall semester.

1. Provide a brief narrative of your Committee/subcommittee's plans.
2. If you are planning to use interviews or surveys, please indicate **Who** will be asked (describe group/name individuals) and **What** will be asked (attach copies of survey/questions)
3. If you are planning to collect written documentation/data, please list the materials you plan to collect.
4. Will you be using any other indicators, in addition to the ones suggested by NCA? If so, please describe:

Notable Accomplishments

During your research, you will undoubtedly come across people, data, documents, and activities that show the University at its very best. All too often these notable accomplishments are overlooked or too soon forgotten. To help us identify our strengths and successes, please list and briefly describe the accomplishments you have noted in your research.

Area researched: _____ Date: _____

Person/Committee Reporting: _____

Notable Accomplishments:

Contact person for more information about accomplishment(s):

Red Flag Issues and Concerns

During your research, you will undoubtedly come across red-flag concerns or issues in your area of study. To improve Valley City State University, we need to identify these serious concerns as quickly as possible and begin prioritizing and planning how to address them. Please identify and briefly explain the serious concerns you have discovered.

Area researched: _____ Date: _____

Person/Committee Reporting: _____

Red Flag Concerns and Explanations:

Contact person for more information about concern(s):

Committee Report Sheet

Guidesheet for Preparing the Committee Summary Report

Each study committee will research, organize, and evaluate its findings on the criterion or area assigned. This report should demonstrate patterns of evidence that illustrate how VCSU meets the criterion in question. It need not present all the evidence which has been collected, although the additional evidence should be turned in, so it is available during the campus visit.

This report should summarize the sources and variety of evidence examined, the means and criteria used to evaluate it, and the conclusions drawn from it. Please discuss specific indicators which make the strongest case. Also address areas of weakness.

Remember that we must interpret, evaluate, and discuss, not merely describe!

I. Title Page

- Criterion/Area Studied
- Committee chairs and members
- Date of report

II. Introduction

- Discuss Criterion studied—
 - What does it mean in general?
 - What does it mean at VCSU?
- Provide background regarding your research methods/criteria/sources

III. Body

- Indicate the conclusions you have drawn from your examination of VCSU
- For each conclusion, discuss carefully the evidence which supports your claim, your criteria for assessment, and any other pertinent information.
- Be sure to include both strengths and weaknesses.

IV. Conclusion

- Summarize findings
- Make Recommendations

V. Resources

- List interviews and Surveys (please include notes, instruments used, results)
- Documents consulted (please include copies)

Minutes

Committee Name _____

Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

Members Attending:



Items Discussed

Major Decisions



Next Meeting Date/Time/Location _____