Chapter 4: The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education

The mission and purposes of Valley City State University are influenced by two distinct groups: the North Dakota University System mission and mandates (as directed by the State Board of Higher Education) and the educational philosophy of the Valley City State University community (its faculty, staff, administration, and students).

The North Dakota University System Mission and Mandates

The North Dakota University System comprises ten campuses and one branch. Its vision is to serve as “the vital link to a brighter future” for its students and the citizens of North Dakota, and its mission is

To enhance the quality of life for all those we serve and the economic and social vitality of North Dakota through the discovery, sharing, and application of knowledge. (NDUS Policy Manual, 100.4, 2001)

The State Board of Higher Education reviews and approves the mission statement of each campus, to ensure that each campus expresses the general purposes of the system. The Board also mandates an institutional mission for each campus. In February 1990, Valley City State University was given the institutional mandate “for superior small-college preparation of teachers and of small-business personnel for its region” and a statewide mission for leadership in the effective use of instructional technology and service to rural areas (SBHE Minutes, February 1990, pages 21-22).

These mandates and the NDUS mission itself provide a cornerstone for the development of VCSU’s vision statement (1994) and two separate mission statement revisions (1992, 1997).

The Valley City State University Educational Philosophy

The revised mission statement developed immediately after the Board’s mandates (approved in May 1992) reflected both the historical mission of the University and its special mission in instructional technology, innovation, and service to rural schools (see 1992 mission statement and discussion in the NCA Focused Visit Report, April 1996). The rapid changes that ensued from this innovative culture, including, among other initiatives, the decision to provide universal access to computers for the entire campus by Fall 1996, made the need to revisit the mission statement apparent.
The Institutional Improvement Committee (IIC), a group representing faculty, staff, students, executive team, and community members, revised the vision, mission, and goals in 1997-98; the process was facilitated through the Kathryn Center, with representatives focusing on values. The revisions were returned to campus for change and consensus. The IIC disseminated drafts to

- the Faculty Senate, governing body of the Faculty Association
- the Student Senate, governing body of the student body
- the Staff Personnel Advisory Committee (SPAC), an advisory committee comprised of clerical, technical, facilities services, and professional staff.

After the three groups reached consensus through continuous revision, the mission was returned to the IIC for final campus approval in 1998 before submission to the SBHE.

**Vision and Mission at Valley City State University**

The University vision statement indicates the broad educational philosophy and intent to pursue excellence in education:

Valley City State University is a nationally recognized learner-centered caring community committed to continuous improvement.

This vision reiterates the Board mandate for “superior small-college preparation” and the NDUS mission’s objective of providing “high quality, innovative learning opportunities tailored to the needs of students…”

The recently revised mission statement emphasizes the Board’s mandate for leadership in instructional technology, its concern for academic excellence, and the prevailing teaching philosophy of the University:

Valley City State University is a learner-centered community dedicated to continuing improvement in meeting student needs. Preparing individuals to serve in a changing world, the institution provides a quality educational experience in an innovative culture and a technologically enhanced environment.

A leader in the effective use of instructional technologies, Valley City State University is a member of the North Dakota University System and offers baccalaureate degrees in education, business, and the liberal arts.

Approved by the State Board of Higher Education, February 1998

The mission is central to planning and innovation at VCSU. Chapter 2 describes a number of ways the University has changed over the past decade, ways that clearly develop from various applications of the mission statement. In addition, responses to campus climate survey questions in 1996 and 2000 indicate that faculty and staff clearly understand and approve the University’s focus:
The positive responses tabulated in Table 4.1, (based on a five-point scale where 5 is “strongly agree” and 1 is “strongly disagree”), demonstrate the centrality of the ideas in the University mission statement to the work of faculty and staff.

The responses of students from several focus groups on the university mission in Fall 2000 demonstrate that students are aware of the mission and see consistency between the mission and day to day life on campus. The student responses from the focus groups discussions are available in the resource room.

### University Purposes

The University purposes express the general curricular purposes in terms useful for strategic planning:

- VCSU will offer a total curriculum grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and basic intellectual skills.
- VCSU will offer a program for the superior, small-college preparation of teachers for the elementary and secondary schools of North Dakota.
- VCSU will offer programs in business studies to the level of the bachelor’s degree which are addressed to the human resource needs of the small businesses of its region.
- VCSU, through the curricula of its various academic divisions and departments, will offer instruction of a content and quality suitable to qualify the students who successfully complete the requirements to be admitted to graduate studies for which their undergraduate curricula provide appropriate preparation, or to professional schools.
- VCSU will be the leading institution of the North Dakota University System or the instructional application of information media technologies (Policy V100.5)

These purposes inform the specific curricular and resource planning of all academic units of the institution, leading to the specific agenda of goals within the regular planning cycle.

### Partnership Purposes and Strategic Planning

As a result of the developing partnership between MSU and VCSU, and because of the shared administrative offices, both MSU and VCSU found it useful to identify shared purposes relating to the partnership. These four purposes formed the foundation for strategic planning each year from 1994-2000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Climate Survey Question</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the mission of the institution</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the institutional mission is appropriate</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Response to Campus Climate Survey Questions Regarding Mission
Each year the Executive Team confers with the IIC, evaluates the success of the past year’s strategic plan, and develops an annual strategic plan draft to further the purposes of the University. This plan, disseminated through Baselines (an internal, informative pamphlet for faculty and staff), indicates the activities the University pursued each year that relate to each purpose, the VCSU office responsible for overseeing the activity, and the progress completed. Copies of Baselines from each of the past seven years are available in the resource room. The Institutional Improvement Committee (IIC) is charged with reviewing the draft strategic plan at its first meeting in September.

The VCSU Strategic Plan

In September 2000 the SBHE endorsed six cornerstones for higher education identified in “A North Dakota University System Report of the Roundtable for the North Dakota Legislative Council Interim Committee on Higher Education” (May 2000). In order to compare its goals and purposes with the Roundtable cornerstones, the IIC reviewed the University purposes and requested input from all divisions and units during Fall 2000. This review has resulted in the Valley City State University Strategic Plan, submitted to the State Board on June 1, 2000 (copies are available in the resource room).

The mission and purposes of VCSU are shared through many channels. Faculty, staff, the media, and community affiliates receive copies of Baselines at the president’s opening address at the beginning of fall term each year. Other methods of communication with the campus and community have included the president’s weekly column in the local newspaper, a weekly campus newsletter, the Hotline, distributed on campus and mailed to campus affiliates and SBHE members; a monthly Bridging the Community Breakfast (through 1998), where campus and community members share events and concerns of interest; the biennial University catalog; program fact sheets; the VCSU Web Site; and the Alumni Bulletin.

National Recognition and the Pursuit of Excellence

In 1993 VCSU committed itself, through its vision statement, to seek “national recognition.” A number of awards, grants, recognitions, presentations, and visits from many companies and universities during the past decade speak to the University’s focus on the “superior preparation” of students in an innovative, technologically enhanced environment:
Awards

- Blackburn Award For Administrative Leadership (1997)
- 7th Most Wired Campus, *Yahoo Internet Life*, 2000
- *Computerworld* Premier 100 IT Leaders 2001

Accreditations

- NCATE Exemplary rating/Best Practices website (1996)
- NASM Accreditation (1997)
- Community School of the Arts Accreditation (1999)

Major Grants

- FIPSE (1993-96)—focused on campus assessment and the Abilities
- Title III (1995-2000)—$1.7 million, split with Mayville; for creating digital portfolios
- Title III (1998-2003)—$1.7 million, to develop the technology education program and renovate VCSU administrative and support systems
- Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology grant (2000-2003)—$411,387 over three years; to provide opportunities for VCSU elementary education faculty, preservice teachers, and inservice teachers to work together to integrate technology into their courses
- Bush Foundation Grants: (1992-95)—$180,000, faculty development grant; (1996-99)—$180,000, instructional technology; (1999-00)—$20,000 planning grant; (2000-01)—$72,500, assessment; (2001-03)—$100,000 online course development
- Grants from EPA and ND Dept. of Health (2001-03)—$111,333 to evaluate macroinvertebrate populations and water quality
- Medicine Wheel Park grants (1999-2001)—$100,000 from National Recreational Trails, Valley City Convention and Visitors Bureau, Valley City Food and Beverage Tax Fund, and private contributions

A Sampling of Pertinent Presentations at Important Conferences

A complete bibliography of VCSU faculty and staff publications and presentations, 1996-2001, is available in the resource room.


CHAPTER 4

CRITERION 1: MISSION


A Partial Listing of Regional, National, and International Visitors

1996  Turtle Mountain Community College, ND
      American Association of Colleges and Universities

1997  Brandon University, Canada
      Universidad Autonoma de Baja California Sur, LaPaz, Mexico
      Black Hills State University, SD
      Fresno State University, CA
      Arcadia University, Canada
      Northern State University, SD

1998  Brandon University, Canada
      Winona State University, MN
      Westminster College of Salt Lake City, UT
      Northern State University, SD
      Macomb Community College, IL
      Ridgewater College, MN

1999  Greenville College, IL
      SEI-Information Technology, ND
      SOLECTEK, IL
      Eduprise, NC
      Great Britain
      (Secretary of Joint Information Systems Committee, head of Learning and Teaching
       Policy at the Higher Ed. Funding Council for England, Chancellor for Teaching &
       Learning at the University of Kent, and head of international relations at HEFCE)

2000  Colorado Tech University, Sioux Falls, SD
      CISCO Systems, Inc., ND

2001  Turtle Mountain Community College, ND
      College of St. Catherine, MN
      Napoleon, Wishek, and Ashley, ND (K-12 School to Work)
      Sitting Bull College, ND

National Media Recognition

- IBM Thinkpad University (The IBM Global Campus): VCSU is featured in print and video promotions
- U. A publication of Careerlinknorth. Winter Spring 2001. 4:2
- Educause Quarterly, 2000:1
- Computerworld. March 26, 2001. 35:15
- Northwest Dentistry, 2000, 79:5
Strengths

- The mission is central to the work of the University; faculty, students, and staff show evidence that they understand and support the mission of the University.

- The University has developed a strong basis for strategic planning, with sufficient flexibility to respond effectively to NDUS requirements.

- The University has made strong and successful efforts in pursuing excellence and national recognition.

- The strategic direction of the University is strongly aligned with the State Board of Higher Education's Roundtable cornerstones.

Challenges

- While the University mission and vision have been reviewed during the past decade, the IIC must now review the University purposes and consider revisions that align the purposes with the changes the University has experienced.

- The University must encourage faculty research and scholarship while maintaining a primary focus on teaching and learning.