Chapter 6: The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes

The general curricular purposes of the University offer specific explanations of terms in the mission statement:

- 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 address the human resource needs of the small and midsize 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 for 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 and provide the baselines for institutional and program assessment.

Academic Programs

The general education program at Valley City State University provides the foundation for intellectual growth for all students. Six divisions provide the organizational structure of the curricula at VCSU. Each division is chaired by a faculty member who sits on the APAC and who reports directly to the VPAA. Each division also has equal representation on the major University planning and governance committees, including Curriculum, IIC, and Faculty Senate. The general education program and the divisional areas of study, responsibilities, and achievements, their faculty, and their students, are described below. In addition, the programs VCSU delivers at off-campus sites, in Jamestown and NDSU, and the athletic program, are described in this section.

General Education

The general education program at Valley City State University is shaped by the recognition that individuals need an anchor of core fundamental knowledge and abilities to manage their lives effectively in a rapidly changing world. This general education program philosophy is presented in the 2000-2002 Bulletin (page 29), along with the framework for assisting students in pursuing these essential studies:
Today’s graduates must be prepared for the rapid pace of change. They need fundamental abilities and a firm anchor in understanding the world around them in the midst of change. To stay viable in the marketplace and to enjoy satisfaction in their personal lives, and to contend with life’s moral and ethical issues, they must develop the ability to learn effectively and an inclination toward lifelong learning. The General Education Requirements, therefore, focus on eight Abilities which will assist the student in achieving these goals.

The Curriculum Committee has been given the responsibility of reviewing the general education (formerly Foundation Studies) program. In 1995 the Curriculum Committee developed an assessment process for courses included in the Foundation Studies which monitors the degree to which courses meet stated objectives. The plan for assessing general education was approved by the Faculty Senate in February 1996. Courses designated as part of general education must: (1) meet several of the general education objectives; and (2) include an explanation in the course syllabus outlining how the designated general education objectives are assessed.

The General Education Program Framework

The name of the Foundation Studies program changed to “general education” in 1997. Currently the program is shaped by eight Abilities, or areas of study, that restate in behavioral terms the specific components of a liberal arts education formerly articulated as general education objectives. The insert “Coming into Focus” between pages 41 and 45 of the 1996 Focused Visit Report illustrates the way faculty working on this project understood the relationship between the earlier general education objectives and the eight Abilities. This shift to behavioral terms was facilitated by a 1995 FIPSE grant focused on academic assessment. Participants (primarily faculty) determined that, in order to measure progress or achievement of the general education objectives, students would have to demonstrate particular behaviors, or abilities. Thus the term Abilities refers not only to a set of personal, social, and civic skills, but also to the content knowledge underlying these skills.

A combination of Bush Foundation and Title III funds have facilitated faculty integration of the Abilities into classroom projects. Faculty Ability Groups have worked on defining each of the eight Abilities and the specific skills related to each. In Spring 2000, each Faculty Ability Group wrote rubrics to identify five levels of performance for each skill. These rubrics and definitions are published in the Abilities, Skills, and Levels document approved by Curriculum and Faculty Senate in April 2000.

While the upper levels of performance levels (3-5) are applicable in various majors, the lower performance levels (1-3) are developed in the general education courses. To assure that all students are exposed to all eight Abilities, the Curriculum Committee used the Abilities as a conceptual framework for the general education program. Earlier documents identified the relationship between courses in the program and the general education objectives—in fact, all general education course syllabi were required to indicate which objectives were met by the course. Using these already identified relationships, the Curriculum Committee aligned courses
with the Abilities that had developed from their related general education objectives. This framework is presented in the 2000-2002 Bulletin (page 30).

Each general education course syllabus is required to list the Ability, related skill, and level met in the course, and provide a project students may use to demonstrate that Ability at the requisite level. Currently faculty in each course provide the specific rubric or other evaluation tool to assess student progress. The Curriculum Committee collected syllabi from all general education courses in Fall 2000 to review the progress of implementation and identify weak points in the program. A map of the projects illustrated several uncovered Abilities and several divisions made the effort to update syllabi or develop new projects to meet these needs. A copy of the most recent map of ability projects in the general education program is available in the resource room.

Students may use the projects completed in their general education program courses for their senior portfolios, if they wish (described more fully on page 123); because these projects demonstrate lower levels, they are usually replaced with more complex, higher level projects by graduation time. Some programs are beginning to review projects completed in the general education program as part of their entry level assessment in the major. In addition to monitoring the implementation of the Abilities into course projects (which is by no means complete—while all 32 general education program courses have submitted syllabi indicating Abilities and related projects, only 12 of the 32 have submitted a project description template which includes a rubric for assessing the project), the Curriculum Committee now faces the task of documenting achievement in each Ability area. One source of this documentation may be the entry level assessment for the major, for the programs that develop this review process. Another source currently being pursued is a digital “best works” portfolio kept by each student, which could be accessed under controlled circumstances by Ability assessment committees to determine cross-campus progress at various levels, or among various student year groups.

The General Education Program Faculty

VCSU has made a strong effort to provide quality educational experiences for students in the general education program. Part of this effort has been a concern for faculty credentials, especially for adjunct faculty teaching several sections of a multiple-section course. During 2000-2001, thirty-one faculty taught the courses included in the general education program. Five of these faculty were part time (adjunct) teaching one or two sections of a multi-section course with a common syllabus (English 110, 120, BVED 180, and HPER 100). In each case, several full time faculty also taught several sections of each of these courses, and provided resources and other assistance as needed.

Faculty appear to be well prepared to teach the courses they offer in the general education program. Fourteen have earned terminal degrees in their fields; twelve have the MA/MS degree. Of the five remaining, two are completing the last requirements for the MA, and all are teaching a limited number of classes under the guidance of full time faculty in their departments.
Division of Business and Information Technology

The Division of Business and Information Technology prepares students for gainful employment in the various areas of business administration, business education, computer information systems, office management, and vocational-technical education.

The Business and Information Technology Division is actively aware and responsive to the developing needs of the business, education, and technology work force. Recent curriculum revision focused on changes in business administration and computer information systems. Also, in an ongoing effort to provide educational opportunities in Jamestown, divisional faculty teach a variety of business courses, by traveling weekly to Jamestown, providing instruction over IVN, or through online course development and delivery. In addition to those commitments, the division collaborates with Mayville State University faculty to offer sufficient courses so that accounting students may qualify to write the certified public accounting (CPA) exam. The division offers degree credit in CIS at a remote site in Fargo that prepares students for the MCSE exam. Further commitments include internship opportunities that faculty directly supervise, including an alliance with MS-Great Plains Business Solutions, and work-force development in the IT area through the Kathryn Center and the Regional Technology Center.

In addition, the division provides a general education course in technology for all students at VCSU that assures basic computer skills and allows students to maximize their use of their notebook computers, regardless of their major.

Faculty

Currently, the Division of Business and Information Technology has eleven full time faculty, one part time faculty, and various adjuncts. These include one full professor, four associate professors, two assistant professors, four instructors and one lecturer. Five faculty members are female and seven are male. One faculty member is from Sri Lanka. The faculty consists of two academic doctorates, one terminal professional degree of juris doctorate, one doctoral candidate, and remaining faculty holding master degrees and numerous professional designations. A number of faculty have been or continue to be engaged in private business, thereby bringing a real-world perspective to the classroom presentation.

The faculty within the division possess the academic preparation and the personal motivation to provide students with an outstanding, as well as current course of study. It is difficult to recruit faculty in the CIS area because of market salary conditions. Persons with capabilities in the information technology area, and those in the business administration area, demand a much higher salary than the University is able to provide, making it difficult to attract applicants from outside the immediate region.
Overall, student enrollment has increased in the Division of Business and Information Technology over the past ten years, from 236 majors and 5 minors in 1992, to 278 majors and 22 minors in 2000. Credit production has increased from 5133 credit hours, or 160 fulltime equivalent students (FTE), in 1992-93 to 7229, or 226 FTE, for the Fall semester and Spring semester of 2000-01 only. Summer 2000 produced 532 credit hours. In 1998-99, the university transferred the CIS program to the division. The program has grown from 215 credit hours, or 7 FTE, at that time to 1253 credit hours, or 39 FTE, for the Fall semester and Spring semester of 2000-01. The above numbers reflect department codes, but students take numerous courses in other areas of the University and division.

A major, ongoing goal of the division is to improve and develop programs to meet the changing business and technology needs of students in Barnes County and the surrounding region. The Career Services Annual Placement report for 1999-2000 shows the following placement statistics; Business Administration: 33 graduates with a 100 percent placement rate, CIS: 13 graduates with a 92 percent placement rate, and Office Administration: two graduates with a 100 percent placement rate. The results show potential employers desire the characteristics and qualifications of our students.

**Division of Communication Arts and Social Sciences**

The focus of study in the Division of Communication Arts and Social Science is humanity in its broadest dimensions, specifically, those highly developed human capabilities of communication and social organization. The division provides major fields of study in English, history, human resources, social science, and Spanish. In addition, the division provides, through a variety of courses, 18 of the 39 general education credit hours required of students in all fields of study across the university.

Divisional faculty teach some general education courses at the Jamestown Center or over the interactive video network (IVN) to Jamestown. In addition, several divisional faculty members are actively pursuing BlackBoard™ Course Info course development. Divisional faculty also share responsibilities for a library media minor and a geography minor with Mayville State University. Courses in these shared minors are taught over IVN. Other responsibilities carried by faculty in the division include all tasks related to dramatic production, advising a student newspaper, and the development of a student news program broadcast over campus webtv.

**Faculty**

The Division of Communication Arts and Social Science has twelve full-time faculty members. Six of these have earned doctorates. Two of the remaining six are enrolled in doctoral programs. Of the 12 full-time faculty members in the division, three of these are one-year replacements, and one has primary responsibilities as a librarian in Allen Memorial Library. Three are male and eight are female. The academic ranks of the divisional faculty consist of one professor, two associate professors, three assistant professors, one instructor, and four visiting instructors.
The Department of Communication Arts has one full-time visiting professor from VCSU’s sister university, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur (UABCS) in La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico. In the Department of Social Science, one full-time faculty member was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Norway for the 2000-2001 academic year. Her one-year replacement held a doctorate in history from the University of North Dakota. Another member of the social science department was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Vietnam for the 2001-2002 academic year. His replacement holds a doctorate in history from the University of North Dakota.

In addition to these full-time faculty members, the division often employs two to four part-time, adjunct faculty members to assist in the staffing needs of college composition, forensics, theatre costuming, and public speaking.

Over the past five years the Division of Communication Arts and Social Science has been engaged in conducting faculty searches that focus on curricular needs, specifically, general education needs. Nearly every faculty member in the division teaches one or more required general education courses; therefore, the division actively seeks faculty members who articulate and demonstrate a strong commitment to general education. In addition to the curricular concerns, the division also makes every effort to recruit and hire quality faculty members. Only under emergency situations are bachelor’s degreed faculty employed to teach a course. All official vacancy notices list the M.A. as the required degree and the Ph.D. as the preferred degree.

Student Enrollment

Overall, student enrollment has remained stable and there are indications of increases in some academic programs in the Division of Communication Arts and Social Science over the past ten years. The division is home to nine programs: English B.S. in Education, English B.A., Spanish B.S in Education, Spanish B.A., History B.S. in Education, History B.A., Social Science B.S. in Education, Social Science B.A., and Human Resources B.S.

Currently the CA/SS Division has approximately 120 majors. Enrollment in the human resources major has been steady in both graduates and majors. The number of declared majors in history education and social science education has increased over the past ten years with a current number at 30. Another major that evidences some enrollment increase is Spanish education. This program experienced a drop in enrollment in 1999 from 15 declared majors to six declared majors; however, as of 2001 the number of declared majors in Spanish is approximately 15. This fluctuation is due in part to changes in faculty members. English education and English (B.A.) have also shown some increases in the numbers of declared majors from 28 in 1991 to 33 in 2000.

One significant goal of the CA/SS Division is to continue to examine and adjust programs to meet the needs of students and employers. One example of this effort can be seen in the program of study for English majors. Changes in the program
reflect changes in the North Dakota state standards as well as comments on employer surveys.

**Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology**

The Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology prepares preservice students to become competent teachers capable of making sound decisions in the areas of elementary education, secondary education, early childhood education, reading, and psychology.

The division develops and monitors all policies concerning admission to teacher education, admission to student teaching, assignment of student teachers, and recommendation of graduates for initial certification. It reviews and makes recommendations to the University Curriculum Committee concerning all proposed curriculum changes affecting teacher education.

Under an agreement with North Dakota State University, approved by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, Valley City State University also teaches all of the courses of the elementary education major on the NDSU campus. The cooperative arrangement began in 1990. Complying with VCSU requirements, students may complete general education courses and a minor from the NDSU curriculum. Graduates receive their diplomas from VCSU, but they may participate in either the NDSU or VCSU commencement exercises. As of Spring 2001, 110 students were enrolled in the shared program.

NDSU has committed to provide the necessary resources, equipment, and classroom space needed to run the program successfully. Historically, NDSU has retained registration fees, and VCSU has counted student enrollment in its FTE numbers. Given recent legislative action in North Dakota, those practices may change. The VCSU teacher education program review at NDSU is similar to that which takes place on the VCSU campus, and NCATE - State continuing accreditation reviews include the VCSU-NDSU cooperative program.

**Faculty**

The Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology has nine full-time faculty members. All but three of them have earned doctorates; two of the remaining three are enrolled in doctoral programs and plan to complete their degrees by the Summer of 2002. One additional division position is vacant, with funding used for part-time instructors to teach courses, and eight other VCSU faculty members teach methods courses pertaining to their subject areas. VCSU has allocated another full-time position to the division, and the search has commenced. Faculty data sheets confirm that faculty members are qualified for their respective responsibilities.

The academic ranks of the divisional faculty consist of four with professor status, one associate professor, two assistant professors, one instructor, and one lecturer. Four full-time faculty members are female and five are male.
CHAPTER 6

CRITERION 3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Student Enrollment

The number of graduates in elementary education has risen slightly over the past ten years from 51-55 in 1992-94 to 67-75 in 1997-2000. The enrollment in the minors offered through the division has remained steady. The consistent numbers reflect both strength and vitality within the unit. The Division continues to build on a long tradition of excellence and has little difficulty attracting students to its programs of study. The 1999-2000 Placement Report documents a 98 percent placement rate of education graduates.

Division of Fine Arts

Comprised of the departments of art and music, the Division of Fine Arts offers teaching and non-teaching majors in art and music, and minors in art, music, and piano pedagogy (the only undergraduate pedagogy program in the state). In addition, the division supports the teacher education program by providing activity courses for elementary education majors to improve the classroom instruction of art and music and the general education core through the delivery of HUM 202 Fine Arts and Aesthetics, an art and music appreciation course required of all students pursuing the bachelor’s degree.

Faculty

The fine arts faculty include seven full-time members, two in art and five in music. Of these, five hold the terminal degree for their field and two have a master’s degree. Of four part-time music faculty, three hold the master’s degree and one has completed all the coursework for the master’s degree. Gender of the faculty is balanced (full-time: two males, five females; part-time: three males, one female). The faculty are qualified by educational and performance background to provide the necessary program instruction.

The music faculty are active regionally and nationally as performers, lecturers, clinicians, adjudicators, and leaders in professional organizations; one faculty member directs VCSU’s Community School of the Arts.

Student Enrollment

Following a dip in student enrollment during 1985-1994, the number of art students has rebounded slightly, from one or no graduates in the early 1990s to four in 2000. The earlier drop may be attributed to the elimination of art from the curricula of smaller North Dakota school districts; however, the stability of the department in the last half dozen years, an increased demand for quality art educators, and a growing interest in graphic arts may be contributing to the increase in majors.
Enrollment in music has remained fairly constant over the past decade. The majority of students major in music education: with a growing shortage of public school music instructors in the state, placement of these graduates has remained a constant 100 percent. Students who have earned the degree Bachelor of Science in Music Education are presently employed in the public schools or as private studio teachers. Bachelor of Arts graduates have applied to graduate programs in performance.

### Division of Health and Physical Education

The Division of Health and Physical Education develops the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that come from sports and physical activity throughout one's life. The division prepares students for teaching physical education and coaching, and promotes a lifelong commitment to physical fitness among all VCSU students through the required general education course “Lifetime Fitness and Wellness.”

### Faculty

The Division of Health and Physical Education has eight full-time faculty members and one adjunct. The adjunct member plans to finish his master's degree during the Summer of 2001. All full-time members have a master's degree; one has a doctorate. Four hold associate professor rank, one is an assistant professor, three are instructors, and one is a lecturer. Three full-time faculty members are female and five are male. Six faculty members have coaching responsibilities, one is the intramural director, and one is the division chair.

The divisional faculty are involved in numerous professional activities as successful teachers, coaches, and administrators. With shared duties of teaching and coaching, six of the eight faculty members serve as positive role models for the HPE/Coaching majors and minors as many of the students will also serve in this dual role in the public school system. The minimum requirement of a master's degree is listed on all position openings in the Division of Health and Physical Education. The division chair and each search committee looks favorably upon those candidates with public school teaching as a part of their teaching/coaching career track.

### Student Enrollment

The number of students graduating with a degree in physical education since 1992 has ranged from a low of seven in 1995 to a high of 18 in 1996 (averaging 14). The number of students graduating with a degree in health education since 1992 has ranged from a low of three in 1995 to a high of 11 in 2000 (averaging 4.7). The total numbers of students ministering in PE, health, coaching, and recreation appears to be dropping slightly, ranging from a high of 144 in 1993 to low of 109 in 2000 (averaging 129).

Because North Dakota and several nearby states do not require a major in health for teacher certification, the number of health education majors remains relatively low. However, Minnesota still requires the completion of a major for certification, which causes our students planning to teach in Minnesota to choose health as a major rather than as a minor. Many states, including Minnesota, no longer require...
a coaching minor, with a practicum, for those seeking such a position. Initially, this was a concern for the division. The recent comprehensive program review developed a number of curriculum changes, including some that make attaining the coaching minor more practical. The division also identified a growing number of students enrolled in the HPER program who do not necessarily wish to teach in the public school system. Therefore, in hopes of attracting more students with similar career interests, the division also prepared a draft for a non-teaching HPE major in Spring 2001. The major will most likely include three to four areas of study options, including exercise physiology (graduate school), sport and leisure management, and health promotions.

**Division of Mathematics and Science**

The Division of Mathematics and Science seeks to encourage and develop the ability of those students interested in pursuing a career in the pure and applied sciences, mathematics, and related areas. The division also offers courses in mathematics and introductory laboratory sciences for the general education program at VCSU, and provides pre-professional students with academic counseling, courses, and programs that will prepare them for the professional field and school of their choice. The division provides major fields of study in biology, chemistry, composite science, and mathematics; and minor fields of study in biology, chemistry, computer science, earth and environmental science, mathematics, and physics. In addition the division offers a variety of courses for students to complete the general education requirements of one course in mathematics and two laboratory science courses.

**Faculty**

Four and one-half faculty positions are allocated to the science department. The one-half position is shared with the Department of Social Science, integrating the offerings in Earth and Space Science and Geography. Four of the five faculty members hold doctoral degrees and four hold academic tenure. Three faculty members are male. Two have the academic rank as professor, one is an associate professor, and one is an assistant professor. There are four full-time faculty in the Department of Mathematics. Two faculty members hold the doctoral degree. The other two hold master’s degrees and one of these is completing a Ph.D. at North Dakota State University. Three of the four faculty members are male. Two have the academic rank of associate professor and two are assistant professors.

The half-time earth science professor is also the director of the planetarium, who recently produced an internationally distributed planetarium show. The professors of the biology program have initiated research projects that have involved their students in undergraduate research projects. They have developed partnerships with the North Dakota Department of Health, North Dakota Game and Fish, and other entities to promote their education and research goals. The faculty member who teaches astronomy has developed the Medicine Wheel Park, which includes a reproduction of a Native American medicine wheel (calendar) and a scale model of the solar system (see chapter 2, page 31, for further description of the park). The mathematics faculty has been active beyond the campus, attending and making presentations at professional meetings. One faculty member has been instrumental
in the formation of the International Student Club at VCSU. One former faculty member published four papers in refereed professional journals, and has six more papers submitted, for work he did at VCSU. Another presented a talk on his work at the NDSU Mathematics Colloquium.

**Student Enrollment**

From 1990 to 2000 the division has averaged 22 graduates per year. The number of graduates has declined somewhat mainly due to the realignment of the Technology Department and the CIS major to the Division of Business and Information Technology. The enrollment of majors and minors is generally higher than the degree completion numbers due in part to transfers. With the recent trend of professional schools requiring a bachelor’s degree prior to entrance this situation may reverse itself. The division has a good record of students continuing their education in professional and graduate schools. A final measure of quality is the success of graduates in job placement. For the classes graduating from 1992 to 2000, 30 of 39 mathematics education majors were placed in teaching positions, seven were employed in non-teaching positions, one was not seeking employment, and one was seeking employment; six of the 10 mathematics majors were placed in non-teaching positions and four were continuing their education. During this same 1992 – 2000 time frame, science graduated 96 majors; 59 of these majors earned non-teaching degrees and 37 teaching degrees. Placement for these graduates was very high with the majority being placed in their field or continuing with their education.

**NDSU Elementary Education Program**

VCSU offers an elementary education degree to students enrolled at NDSU. Faculty from the Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology teach all of the methods courses in the specified courses for the elementary major and the professional sequence at NDSU. NDSU students obtain their minor or area of concentration from either NDSU or VCSU. They transfer their coursework to VCSU the final semester before they graduate. All students must meet graduation standards for VCSU.

**Background**

In the late 1980s, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education began urging the higher education institutions to seek ways to share resources and collaborate in program planning in order to bring about improvements and reduce expenditures. One result of this directive was the VCSU/NDSU elementary education program.

NDSU has never offered a major in elementary education, but many of its students were enrolled in the major that could be completed through the Tri College University in Fargo/Moorhead. When the Moorhead State University (MSU) elementary education program enrollment began to reach its maximum level, fewer of the NDSU students were accepted into its professional fourth year program.
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To resolve this problem, the presidents of NDSU and VCSU, with approval of the SBHE, decided upon a cooperative program. Under the agreement, VCSU professors teach all of the courses of the elementary education major on the NDSU campus. Students complete the general studies, with modifications to meet the VCSU education requirements. Registration fees are retained by NDSU, and VCSU count the student enrollments in its FTE numbers. The program started in the Fall of 1990. As of Spring 2001, 110 students are enrolled.

Program Successes and Challenges

The NDSU elementary education program contributes to VCSU in a number of ways:

- Increases overall headcount and FTE
- Increases the summer school program significantly
- Provides opportunities for collaboration with NDSU faculty
- Improves opportunities to work in the Fargo School District and develop partnerships with the schools
- Offers increased opportunities to work with culturally diverse students
- Satisfies a requirement of the ND State Board of Higher Education for collaboration with other state institutions

Currently the Memorandum of Agreement between the two universities is under revision, and renegotiation. Both campuses are committed to continuing the relationship and bringing it into compliance with the NDUS finance model for sharing revenues. Completion is expected in the 2001-02 academic year.

Jamestown Center

Valley City State University introduced classes in Jamestown, North Dakota, at the start of the 1979-80 academic school year. Classes were first taught at Jamestown College and after two or three years in leased space at the Buffalo Mall Shopping Center. For the past several years VCSU has maintained a lease agreement for classroom space with North Dakota State Hospital. The North Dakota State Hospital is located 32 miles west of Valley City, just south of highway I-94. The University utilizes space in the Learning Resource Center (LRC) and has access to two regular classrooms, the Interactive Video Network (IVN) lab, and ten desktop computers located in a separate lab. The North Dakota State Hospital utilizes the same space for its own classes.

The classrooms are equipped with portable VCRs, monitors, and an overhead projector provided by the State Hospital. VCSU provides a portable computer teaching station. The computer lab is networked, providing access to the Internet and the ODIN on-line library catalog system.

The State Hospital and VCSU are committed to an educational program for students from the region. The classroom space is shared, teaching equipment is shared, and the computer lab used by both entities. The computer center staff of the State Hospital provides routine computer maintenance in exchange for using the
computers for their educational purposes. There is savings realized from this arrangement and both the university and state hospital have gained visibility from the partnership.

Courses at Jamestown are taught by full-time VCSU faculty as part of their regular load or on an overload basis. Adjunct faculty are also hired and the division chair and the vice president for academic affairs approve their credentials. There is a course evaluation procedure in place. A yearly survey is completed and used as a basis for deciding which courses to bring to the outreach site. general education classes are taught on a two-year rotation. The bulk of the classes that are taught other than the general educations classes, are for business and human resource majors.

Program Successes and Challenges

The Jamestown Outreach Program contributes to VCSU by serving students within the regional service area. Students are seeking degrees, continuing education for job advancement, or technological training. Many are employed full-or part-time in the Jamestown area and are place bound. Some are enrolled in the PLA program, completing portfolios seeking life experience credits. The Jamestown Outreach Program is an enrollment booster for VCSU and serves a public relations and promotional need.

The Jamestown Outreach Program does not have a budget line item and is supported by the academic budget. Consideration might be given to appointment of an outreach program director to coordinate this program.

Athletics

The athletic program at Valley City State University is a competitive program with intercollegiate opportunities for both women and men. Sports include football, baseball, cross country, basketball and track for men and volleyball, basketball, softball, cross country, and track for women. A year long program of intramural sports is offered under the auspices of the Division of Health and Physical Education. Through a partnership with Red River Valley Sports Medicine Clinic, a full-time trainer is available to all intercollegiate athletes. Coaches hold faculty rank though only two senior faculty-coaches hold tenured positions. All coaches are expected to teach in the health and physical education curricula as well as attend to governance and service assignments expected of faculty. Assistant coaches are often upper division students serving in intern appointments, are community volunteers or paid (football). The athletic director is a half-time employee responsible for the overall management of the varsity program and reports directly to the president of the university. Fund raising to support student athletes and athletic programs is conducted by the Booster Club. Considerable community involvement has led to improvements in the track, football stadium and the field house.

The University seeks to comply with all federal and statutory requirements governing equity between men and women’s sports (Title IX). Compliance reports are submitted under the supervision of the NAIA conference and the Office of Civil
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Rights. Every attempt is being made to provide equal opportunities and resources whenever possible. Compliance with federal and state regulations is monitored. For example, institutional review has shown that the number of female participants in certain sports could be higher and participation should be encouraged. Remodeling of women's facilities in Graichen Gym and the W. E. Osmon field house is now underway with input from the athletic director and women coaches. Sports budgets are solicited and prepared annually with input from coaches. The athletic director works closely with the business manager and the president in monitoring expenditures and incomes. The Title IX officer monitors compliance with federal regulations and is the key point of contact for anyone with Title IX concerns.

Athletic scholarship recipients are identified by the athletic department and official awards are made by the financial aid office. Athletic scholarships become a part of the student athlete's total financial aid award. Athletic reports that depict student participation and financial aid received are filed annually with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and shared with member schools of the conference. The faculty representative to NAIA is a tenured faculty member in the Division of Education, Psychology and Technology.

A Policy and Procedure Manual provided for coaches was revised and updated in March 2000, along with the evaluation process utilized for the annual reviews of the coaching staff.

The eligibility of athletes is based on criteria set forth by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Reports are filed for each individual sport and all of the participants must meet the requirements set forth by the NAIA. Student athletes are recognized for accomplished GPAs through lists released by the University. Also, student athletes who achieve academically are recommended for honors promoted by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and the Dakota Athletic Conference.

A new athletic conference, the DAC-10 Conference, involving ten schools from North and South Dakota, began intercollegiate competition in Fall 2000. A constitution and sport regulations were finalized in April of 2000. The president, the faculty representative, and the athletic director attend regularly scheduled conference meetings.

Academic Assessment at Valley City State University

Over the past decade understandings of academic assessment at Valley City State University have developed from an initially broad, unclear discussion to a specific, focused use of Abilities to shape curriculum and define outcome measures. This section conveys the history of that developing focus on student Abilities, a description of the current assessment model, and plans for further refinement and implementation.
Evolution of the VCSU Assessment Initiative

A clear understanding and a University wide commitment to the nature and purposes of assessment was in its infancy in the early 1990’s. Most academic departments had made efforts to determine learning objectives for students. Written reports indicate that the measurement of those objectives was growing but spotty and inconsistent. The initial VCSU assessment plan was developed during the 1991-92 academic year in preparation for the 1992 NCA comprehensive evaluation. The plan had broad faculty and staff involvement and acceptance and flowed naturally from the institutional purposes (see 1996 VCSU focused visit report).

Significant responsibility for implementation of the 1992 plan resided with the Curriculum Committee for assessment of general education (formerly Foundations Studies) and with the Institutional Improvement Committee (formerly the Program, Planning, and Review Committee) for program assessment. Faculty members representing the academic divisions serve on both committees. The vice president for academic affairs and division chairs serving on the Academic Policy and Affairs Council (APAC) provided leadership and oversight for assessment processes.

By the time of the 1996 focused visit, the significance and importance of campus-wide academic assessment was becoming more evident to the University community and the administration. The technology directive from the State Board of Higher Education and the notebook computer initiative combined to provide faculty and administrators the motivation to explore and experiment with assessment. Administrative funding, a FIPSE grant, and Title III partnership grant provided the necessary funding for faculty training, conference attendance, and the development of assessment projects and processes. In particular, a joint faculty and administration trip to Alverno College, a leader in outcomes assessment, centered significant attention on the need for a comprehensive assessment effort. University assessment efforts were gaining momentum and broad-based campus support.

The contacts with Alverno College and the grants led to the organization of a set of campus forums and encouraged open discussion of teaching and learning, and their outcomes. These discussions, referred to as Learner-Centered Education (LCE) meetings, set in motion processes that took the then known, “Foundation Studies Objectives” and transformed them (though a series of changes) into the currently known and used Abilities. With the development of the Abilities and their related skills, faculty began to embrace the concept of assessment in terms of student learning outcomes.

During this time the most fundamental and pervasive developments related to the University’s commitment to a comprehensive philosophy referred to as Continuous Improvement in Teaching and Learning (CITL). This philosophy evolved from the Total Quality Improvement efforts, which had been endorsed throughout the North Dakota University System since 1989. The faculty at VCSU worked enthusiastically to apply these principles in the classroom.
Among the key concepts of CITL were

- focus on meeting the needs of learners
- continuous improvement in teaching and learning, based on data
- increasing student responsibility for their own learning
- active collaboration between faculty and students for learning improvements
- systematic experimentation and documentation to assess the value of innovations
- frequent, continuous learning assessments throughout a course, throughout the curriculum

As a systematic assessment philosophy, CITL fit well with VCSU’s mission emphasis on providing a learner-centered community, and informed the gradually developing campus-wide assessment model.

Because the institutional assessment plan was in development at the time of the 1992 NCA visit, the NCA evaluation team requested submission of an assessment report in June, 1994. The report was to summarize VCSU’s progress toward documentation of student achievement. The report outlined the evolution of the Total Quality philosophy into Continuous Improvement in Teaching and Learning; a FIPSE grant that built a foundation for system-wide reform of undergraduate education; and various other assessment initiatives undertaken after the comprehensive visit. A copy of this report is available in the resource room. The 1995-96 Assessment Plan generated from the 1994 report and prepared for use by faculty is also available in the resource room, as is the current plan, the 2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan.

In the ensuing years, VCSU continued to build a foundation for vigorous leadership within the North Dakota University System. Faculty, students, and staff broke through traditional barriers by creating a campus climate indicative of risk-taking and innovation. The above mentioned grants and a three year award from the Bush Foundation of Minneapolis, resulted in two campus-wide initiatives: the development of the Abilities-based model of student assessment and the VCSU degree requirement of a digital portfolio to demonstrate learning and to enhance employment prospects. These two initiatives continue to serve the campus well. The Abilities model has been instrumental in securing additional Bush Foundation funds to support this new method of assessing student achievement. The digital portfolio is well along its path of promoting accurate mapping of the Abilities across all majors including the general education program.

**Abilities and the Student Digital Portfolio**

In the 1996 focused visit report, Concern 5, page 33, special note was made of the slow implementation of an assessment plan along with missing outcome measures. Progress since this report has been significant. Grants as well as outcomes arising from the implementation of the notebook initiative have changed the course but not the intent of the 1995-96 Assessment Plan. The deployment of notebook computers and the concomitant upgrading of the campus network added some necessary capacity not known to the campus at the time of the 1996 report.
The expanded capacity of the network has enabled a much richer and diverse commitment to student and faculty digital portfolios. The idea of an employer-based portfolio (predicated on limited network space and dependent on a “capture the best works only” philosophy) was abandoned for a more comprehensive, Ability-based portfolio. Students could archive a larger evidentiary base of material and, rather than using a narrow subset of materials suitable for job interviews, the larger network capacity would allow the student to document a fuller retinue of their learning. The portfolio audience shifted from a prospective employer to one’s academic advisor and divisional home (of the major). The purpose thus became, “how do you [the student] document evidence of your achievement using the Abilities?” This change strategically aligned the portfolio project as the basis for institutional assessment of student achievement and provided the necessary outcome measures to document student learning.

The faculty reached consensus on the Abilities and their related skills during the Spring of 1999, with the completion and approval of the Abilities, Skills and Levels booklet. Table 6.1 indicates the eight Abilities and the agreed-upon skills used to demonstrate these Abilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Related Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Engagement</td>
<td>Receptivity, Visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Positive Interdependence, Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Written, Spoken, Visual, Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Citizenship</td>
<td>Provides Service to Others, Teaches Others, Change Agent Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>Works with Diversity, Understands System, Interrelationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Gathering Information, Problem Recognition, Creative Thinking, Decision Making, Systems Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Selects, Applies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>Self-Management, Self-Worth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. VCSU Abilities and Related Skills

This consensus allowed faculty to map the Abilities throughout the curriculum based upon a single template. This is a major feat in promoting the assessment initiative. The next step is to establish campus-wide assessment of the Abilities at entry, sophomore, and senior levels. Currently, a number of grant requests are pending seeking to produce additional programming time to develop local tracking software based on the Abilities.
The faculty have owned both the development and endorsement of the Abilities model. The process has developed a “concepts and policy model” of assessment, and faculty consensus has shaped the direction and basis of assessing student learning. Strategically, the effort to build consensus and the time committed to create a campus-wide model was far more effective than attempting to gather data to fit a nebulous understanding of assessment. The assessment initiative is faculty-driven and now, as indicated by the 2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan, quite focused.

**Implementation of the Abilities Model**

The implementation of the Abilities model has provided outcome-based measures that may inform reflection and planning in each area, and lead to the implementation of new teaching strategies, course revision, program improvement, and curricular revision. As figure 6.1 indicates, VCSU has identified four areas for Ability assessment: the classroom, the program, general education, and institution-wide Ability assessment.

![Figure 6.1. Ability Assessment at VCSU.](image)

This process acknowledges and strengthens the integral relationships between general education, the major programs, the individual classroom, and the institution, and documents the overall effectiveness of student learning at VCSU.

**The Classroom**

As early as 1997 faculty members began to incorporate the eight Abilities into their specific courses. Along with the Abilities, faculty members began and have now completed the design of Ability-based projects within a course that students use to demonstrate their mastery of the stated Ability. Faculty are encouraged to
develop a rubric and reflective element in their Ability projects, to assist students in understanding and improving their learning.

At first these efforts were hit-and-miss; in other words, not every course in every program identified an Ability or two and included a specific project. However, over the next two years more and more faculty members engaged in the process of incorporating the Abilities projects into their courses. The Bush Foundation faculty development grant and the second Title III grant provided funding incentives for faculty members to engage in these assessment activities. Faculty and students were included on Abilities committees. Students were introduced to the Abilities and the concomitant projects through their course syllabi and projects campus wide during the 2000-2001 academic year.

**The Program**

Each division has identified several of the eight Abilities which provide a framework for examining and understanding student learning in the programs. Within the divisions, departments / programs developed Ability maps which identify (by project and course) how and in which courses their students could demonstrate the attainment of those specific abilities. By 1999 the shared responsibility of the faculty, administration and students for assessment at VCSU exhibited those characteristics associated with level two of the Higher Learning Commission’s *Levels of Implementation*, “Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs.”

**General Education**

Each general education course syllabus is required to list the Ability, the skill which demonstrates this Ability, and level met in the course, and provide a project students may use to demonstrate that Ability at the requisite level. Currently faculty in each course provide the specific rubric or other evaluation tool to assess student progress. The projects for each course are mapped, to assist both students and faculty in understanding the implementation of the Abilities in the general education program.

**Institution-Wide Ability Assessment**

Because Abilities projects can be mapped in both the general education program and the major programs, it is possible to use the Abilities to examine changes in student learning from initial work to final senior projects and facilitate understanding of how students learn and develop in each ability area through their studies at VCSU. The *2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan* proposes the University-wide assessment of entry, sophomore, and senior work for each of the eight Abilities, as a means to assure educational quality, understand and improve student learning, and assist institutional review and curriculum planning. Currently a few faculty are working on an assessment model that could be used for campus wide Ability assessment; the process needs to be reviewed and improved in Fall 2001 so good data can be collected.
Chapter 6

Commitment to the Assessment of Student Learning

The proactive approach taken by faculty is clearly illustrated in the divisional narratives, which describe assessment activities as they related to both the division and the university mission and goals. The activities represent the broad institutionalization of the assessment philosophy described in the 1995-96 Assessment Plan and the updated 2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan; they also indicate the commitment of each division to the Abilities model and the senior portfolio. These narratives may be found in the resource room.

A Commitment to the Portfolio

There is no question that the commitment to the Abilities is serious. All the divisions along with faculty have spent considerable time coming to consensus on the Abilities required of students majoring in their division. The extensive mapping of those abilities in each program is the backbone of the assessment initiative.

The Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology provided the testing ground for the senior portfolio by requiring in the 1996-98 Bulletin that all graduates with an Education degree complete a portfolio that demonstrated mastery of the Abilities. As of this writing 77 students have completed digital portfolios which are available through the Division of Education, Psychology, and Technology. Their faculty have developed courses to assist students in organizing their portfolios and several evaluation tools. Their experiences have helped faculty in the other divisions understand the problems, time commitment, and student needs required by this activity.

Faculty have been diligently forming evaluation procedures in anticipation of portfolios to be submitted next year. Templates to judge the portfolios are in the development stage and have been featured in a number of Monday afternoon workshops sponsored by the Bush Foundation grant. On April 12, 2001, nationally known consultant and leading authority on assessment, Dr. Peter Ewell, of NCHEMS, visited VCSU. His expertise and enthusiasm added considerable support to the initiative. He also identified significant issues to be resolved in the near term. Paramount among them is how the divisions will confront transfer students entering the university with three years of credit at another institution. Institutional data on student achievement will supplement the portfolio analyses. A robust mixture of outcome measures, institutional performance measures, data gathered from exit interviews and future employers will support the growing experience derived from an analyses of the portfolios. While VCSU is not staking its entire assessment on the portfolio, the portfolio lies at the center of assessment of the student experience in the classroom.

Focus on the senior portfolio has also renewed a vital discussion about the importance of reflection as students review their work at VCSU. Reflective self-examination is one of the longest held traditions of the Liberal Arts, and faculty at VCSU have found that examining the quality of one’s experience is a vital part of the portfolio process. While the standards movement in K-12 and the federal mindset on outcomes
based education have eroded the reflective skills of students, the portfolio philosophy helps restore this value within the University’s liberal arts tradition.

**An Updated Assessment of Student Learning Plan**

While the 1995-96 Assessment Plan clearly charts the intended direction of Ability assessment, its understanding of the Abilities and how they inform both general education and the majors now appears simplistic, while its schedule of implementation was far too ambitious. Consensus building and the development of campus community understandings take time, but offer rewardingly deep roots. In addition, the increased capabilities of the notebooks and the network, and opportunities provided by several grants (described above, page 123 of this section) allowed a shift in focus from an employer-based, best works focus to a larger documentation of student learning.

In Spring 2001, a faculty group, with the assistance of an external consultant, began to develop the 2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan. This document, available in the resource room, brings together the diverse assessment activities pursued in the classroom, the program, general education, and the institution; explains how they fit together, and illustrates the feedback loops that inform improvements in teaching, curriculum, and institutional review. One of the strongest findings in the plan is the need for a part time assessment director, to assist faculty, programs, committees, and the VPAA in developing useful assessment activities/techniques, in organizing material, and in collecting and reporting data. As of this writing, discussion of this position is under way. Implementation of the assessment plan, including the development of those assessment measures not already in place and the initial gathering of data for Ability assessment, began in Summer 2001.

**Levels of Implementation**

The Higher Learning Commission has identified levels of implementation to help institutions understand the progress they have made in implementing assessment of student academic achievement. VCSU has made great strides since 1992 in both conceptualizing and implementing the Ability-based assessment program. The discussion below identifies VCSU’s progress in each of the four areas of implementation identified by the Commission:

- **I.a. Institutional culture, collective/shared values**—level 2. The institution demonstrates a shared understanding of Abilities and their integration in the curriculum; all divisions have mapped the Abilities and developed portfolio processes; and some academic programs have well-defined assessment activities, goals, purposes, while others are beginning to develop these. Institution-wide assessment of the Abilities is being developed, while the use of classroom assessment of student learning for program review and curriculum development needs to be implemented.

- **I.b. Institutional culture, mission**—between level 2 and 3. The university mission indicates the high value placed on student learning, but the purposes, while adequate, need stronger focus. Not every academic
program’s published statements directly reflect on assessment and student learning, although every academic program has identified the Abilities it uses to focus its curriculum and assessment processes (see current Bulletin).

- **II.a. Shared Responsibility, faculty**—between levels 1 and 2. In terms of the Abilities, VCSU is definitely at level 2, as all courses have Ability-based projects indicated on the divisional program maps, and students are producing senior portfolios that demonstrate their competencies in the required areas. Faculty are taking responsibility for developing and implementing assessment tools for the Abilities in their classes and for the senior portfolios in their areas.

As noted above, the Ability-based assessment plan has developed through faculty consensus; faculty in most divisions work together to improve their program goals and assessment measures; roundtable discussions several times each semester provide opportunities for faculty to learn from those in other divisions and identify useful ideas, materials, or faculty resources. The Summer Institute in June 2001, attended by faculty from each academic division, allowed faculty to develop further consensus on the portfolio process and Ability assessment.

The use of multiple measures that complement the Ability assessment, however, has developed unevenly. Some programs, such as Music, which recently received NASM accreditation, have a fully developed, working assessment process with multiple measures and appropriate feedback loops, while other programs are only beginning the development process.

- **II.b. Shared Responsibility, administration and board**—level 2. Despite frequent changes in the VPAA’s office over the past decade, the administration has supported the faculty consensus-building process in a number of ways, including assistance with grant-writing, supporting travel to conferences and visits to other institutions, contributions to faculty workshops on assessment, and encouraging and assisting in the development and publication of assessment materials such as the assessment plans of 1995-96 and 2001 and the *Abilities, Skills, and Levels* booklet.

- **II.c. Shared Responsibility, students**—level 2, with some movement toward level 3. Student government members serve on the Curriculum Committee and the Institutional Improvement Committee.

The senior portfolio requirement has provided most students with a strong inducement to learn more about the Abilities and their implementation in specific course projects. Students are encouraged to save their projects, and many faculty are developing reflective activities in the classroom to help students develop their ability to assess thoughtfully. The senior portfolio also requires students to reflect on their work over the course of their academic program.
The Bulletin provides explicit, public statements about the Abilities, and students have divisional maps and course syllabi available to them that provide explanations of the Ability assessment in the course or program of study. At the same time, however, some programs with less developed assessment plans may be less clear with their students about the purposes of assessment.

- **III.a. Resources**—between levels 1 and 2. The need for an assessment director (or the equivalent) is apparent, as indicated in the *2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan*. Bush Foundation funds have supported much of the faculty development in assessment so far; in a decade of limited resources, the institution has not yet designated funds in the operating budget to support the assessment program.

- **III.b. Structures**—between levels 1 and 2. The *2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan* includes a timeline for implementation and clearly pulls together the various student learning assessment activities on campus to help faculty understand the shape of the assessment program. Many of the processes are already fully functional, however; the *2001 Plan* is an overdue articulation of the program being developed. While the structure of the program is clearly defined, the *2001 Plan* recognizes the need for an assessment director to help faculty and staff improve their assessment efforts and to coordinate the communication of data with other units.

- In 2000-01, the curriculum committee required all general education course syllabi to follow the general education syllabus template, which includes identifying the Ability project and describing how learning will be assessed; a similar template has been developed by faculty in the Summer Institute of June 2001 to assist faculty in improving their syllabi in every course, to include Ability projects and assessment processes.

Every program has developed a map of their courses, the Abilities met in each, and the projects used to demonstrate the Ability in each course. Requirements for program reviews (see also, below) have been made explicit in the *2001 Assessment of Student Learning Plan*, and will help programs begin to develop and uses assessment processes successfully.

- **IV. Efficacy of Assessment**—between levels 1 and 2. Implementation of the many significant parts of the assessment plan are in the early stages of development: the campus-wide assessment of Abilities has only begun, and 2002 is the first year virtually all graduating seniors will complete senior portfolios—program faculty are still devising assessment rubrics for these portfolios, and will no doubt be revising them next summer. Many program reviews show an inconsistent use of assessment data, and the relationship to student learning is not always clear.

On the other hand, the assessment program is in good health because of the process used to develop it—faculty have a shared understanding of Ability assessment and the senior portfolio, and there is widespread indi-
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To help programs regain focus, the new VPAA required all majors to be reviewed in 1999-2000. Stand-alone minors will be reviewed in 2001-2002. Additionally, a schedule of program reviews has been published (2000) and will direct program review of majors and minors through the year 2010. The vice president, APAC, and the faculty have agreed that program expansions and terminations will be considered only upon completion of a program review.

The Division of Business and Information Technology and the Division of Health and Physical Education conducted major program reviews that led to significant curriculum redesign and resource allocation. HPE used an outside reviewer to facilitate very difficult discussions regarding the purpose of HPE and the appropriate array of majors and minors and its alignment with faculty-coaches. Business reexamined course offerings and course content in the Computer Information Systems (CIS) major. Their review led to dropping of outdated computer language courses, revision and updating of developing languages and the addition of new languages within the networking area. Students were involved and have responded positively to the new look and new schedule of offerings.

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The potential acquisition of an updated Administrative Information System and data warehouse for the NDUS will facilitate the acquisition and storage of program data and improve program reviews. The current AIS is cumbersome and often does not provide the data categories sought by faculty in programs. Hand counting and the safekeeping of past printed reports is a fragile medium to keep a program’s history. Currently, NDUS policy prevents individual campuses from procuring any computing/data resources distinct from that provided by the Higher Education Computing Network (the official computing, AIS arm of NDUS).
Student Services

The Student Affairs Division provides a full menu of academic and personal support programs to complement the academic mission of the University. The programs are directed by the vice president for student affairs, who reports directly to the president. The section below describes the areas of enrollment services, new student orientation, academic advising, and the registrar.

Enrollment Services

The mission of the Office of Enrollment Services is to ensure optimum enrollments through strategic planning, marketing and recruiting activities. Working with both traditional and non-traditional freshmen and transfer students, enrollment services staff provide students accurate information and guide them through the college search and admission processes.

Students become part of the inquiry pool through a number of resources and events. At the top of what is referred to as the enrollment funnel are the bulk of students, whose names are acquired through a number of resources. Valley City State University has purchased a position on AnyCollege.Net, an internet college search site offered to students and schools at no cost. Each month, a list of students and their information is sent electronically to VCSU. A direct mail piece is sent to students in target market areas and those who respond to that mailing become part of the inquiry pool. Get-Recruited is another web-based provider of names that VCSU worked with in 2000-2001, however, they will not be used in 2001-2002 as the number of students provided was limited. Online requests for information are increasing with increased student access to the web. A new database allows the office to track that more effectively.

Enrollment Services also requests lists of students and their addresses from high schools in the region. They are entered into the database and sent a direct mail piece with those responding becoming part of the inquiry pool.

College fairs and high school visits are also utilized to gather students into the inquiry pool as well as to connect with students who have been in the inquiry pool from previous events or mailings.

Campus visits are an important part of an enrollment services function. Nearly 250 prospective students visited campus through Enrollment Services from September 1, 2000 through July 20, 2001. A student’s visit is customized to her/his needs with activities including: a campus tour conducted by a student (Viking Ambassador); a faculty appointment; an appointment with a fine arts instructor, coach, or other extra-curricular advisor; an appointment with an enrollment services professional; and/or a visit with any other department or office on campus. Included with a thank you letter is a campus visit questionnaire for students to evaluate the visit. Feedback from the evaluations is provided to those with whom the students visited.
Applications are processed through the Office of Admission and Records with the application files housed in Enrollment Services. All students are subject to the same admission criteria as outlined by the North Dakota University System.

Enrollment Services is also responsible for leading the marketing of the institution. The director chairs the marketing committee, which is composed of key players from the university: sports information director, alumni relations, webmaster, a faculty representative, and a student representative. The group guides the direction of the look and feel of promotional materials, along with assisting the director with decisions about advertising and promotion. The marketing committee also played a key role in the development of the new look to the university web site, scheduled to go live this fall.

**New Student Orientation**

Prospective students are introduced to Valley City State University at high school career fairs, school visits by enrollment services staff and campus visits. Direct mail, e-mail, and telephone campaigns are used to provide prospective students and parents with introductory and admissions information.

Each summer an orientation program is provided for new students and parents. Students and families may choose from several dates to participate in a program designed to acquaint them with the university, its faculty, staff, and programs. During the summer program, students meet with academic advisors and register for fall semester classes. Current VCSU students play a large role in the summer program by serving as group leaders and presenters. Parents attend sessions designed specifically to answer their questions and give them the information they need. Each summer both parents and students participating in the program complete evaluation forms from which continual improvements are made.

New students arrive on campus several days before the start of classes to participate in a comprehensive orientation program. The three main features of the program are the “Learning to Live/Living to Learn” class, the adventure learning ropes course, and computer training. A unique feature to all three components of the orientation program is the involvement of currently enrolled students in the preparation, design, and delivery of the programs. Student mentors facilitate the Learning to Live Classes and deliver the instruction in the computer training session. The Learning to Live/Living to Learn class is fully discussed in Chapter 2, page 20. The adventure learning ropes course is also described in Chapter 2, pages 20 and 27.

**Computer Training**

Students come to VCSU with a wide variety of computer skills and experiences. In order to ensure that all students have the basic skills necessary to be successful in the classroom and to provide information on the care and use of a notebook computer, all students participate in several hours of computer training prior to the start of classes. Students learn how to use the campus network, send e-mail, manage files and become familiar with the standard suite of software used by all faculty and
students. The growing base of technology knowledge held by entering students has compelled the involved academic units to consider altering the content of this computer training. Test-out procedures have been implemented with those students demonstrating the course’s required computer skills.

**Academic Advising**

The director of student academic services administers the academic advising program and reports to the vice president for student affairs. The program exists primarily to assist students in planning and pursuing their degree curricula. Almost all faculty members and some administrators serve as advisors. Each term registration forms are distributed to advisors and students are required to meet with their advisor and obtain a signature before registering for classes. On the ACT Student Opinion Survey, students rated VCSU’s academic advising service above the national average, and the student ranking of availability of advisor is one of the highest satisfaction scores for all campus services. Students experiencing academic difficulty or those seeking assistance or information on class schedules, requirements for majors and minors can seek help in the Office of Student Academic Services. Study skill classes and a tutoring program are available to assist students experiencing academic difficulty. The newly implemented (Fall 2000), web-based automated enrollment system (Access Line For Information) has eliminated the advisor signature requirement for registration. However, students and advisors continue to meet prior to registration. The expected increase in add-drops as a result of not seeing advisors did not materialize. The advising process is closely monitored by both vice presidents and remains a topic of faculty discussion.

**Registrar**

The Office of Admission and Records maintains the admission and academic records of each student who enrolls in the University and provides the records to appropriate constituencies. The office is staffed by one professional and one support position. The office administers the admission process, prepares the term class schedule, registers students in classes, maintains and provides grade transcripts, completes statistical reports, and certifies students for graduation.

**Graduation Audit**

Graduation audit, extremely valuable resource, is a computerized student records program provided by the Higher Education Computer Network. Valley City State University was the first institution in the North Dakota University System to install the program for all of its students and was the pilot institution for the project. Graduation audit provides students and their advisers with an up-to-date record of progress matched with the students’ curricular requirements so that all remaining requirements for graduation are identified. Requests for graduation audit are processed by the HECN at night and are available to advisers or students the day following the request.
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Web Access Line for Information

The WEB ALFI system developed by the Higher Education Computer Network (HECN) provides students online access to such information as academic records, financial aid or fee billing. It also features a WEB registration system that allows students a secure environment to register or add/drop classes. Valley City State University was one of two institutions within the North Dakota University System to pilot this project, which provides a convenient alternative for students to register rather than coming to one site and standing in line on pre-determined registration days.

Assessment of Student Services

The Student Affairs Division of Valley City State University is committed to the VCSU vision statement, and believes that the practice of gathering meaningful data and information is a necessary component in the process of continuous improvement.

Individual service units engage in a wide variety of assessment activities. Assessments take the form of standardized national surveys, locally developed surveys, evaluation forms, data collection, comment cards and questionnaires. Assessment activities provide a means for monitoring student success and determining progress toward established accountability measures. In addition, assessment activities play a large role in improving levels of student satisfaction.

In the Spring of 2001, student affairs units developed a comprehensive and responsive student affairs assessment report that organizes and allows the individual units to meaningfully respond to their desire to continuously meet and exceed student needs. Because the NDUS cornerstone goals were new, a matrix of the cornerstones objectives and assessment activities was created to determine where student information was being collected. Each of the student affairs units listed and identified the assessments currently use to gather student data/information. The cornerstone objective was then aligned with the data/information it addresses. Any changes to programs and services due to the data/information was listed as well as impact that may have occurred because of the change. New assessments are now evaluated based on how they fit into the report. The report is also used to allow data from one unit to talk with other units. The complete report is available in the resource room.

Student participation in the student affairs assessment program has been developed with a three part design: pre-enrollment activities, enrollment activities, and post-enrollment activities. The primary assessments in each are listed below.
Pre-Enrollment Assessment Activities

ACT/SAT - All first-time freshmen are required to meet established admission criteria, which include submitting scores on the American College Testing Program Test (ACT). The Office of Student Academic Services uses ACT scores to assist in the advising of first year students. Placement in study skills class, English 100, and pre-algebra is recommended to students based on scoring guidelines determined by academic departments. ACT results become part of the folder prepared for each academic advisor.

Core Course Requirements - In addition to the ACT Test, all first year freshmen are required to meet a set of core course requirements established by the North Dakota University System. Students missing no more than two core course requirements may be admitted by the Admissions Committee based on criteria established by VCSU. The Office of Enrollment Management maintains records and tracks the success of students admitted without the core course requirements. Decisions of the Admissions Committee are influenced by the success and failure rates of admitted students.

Prospective Students/Campus Visitors – Every prospective student who makes a campus visit is mailed a follow-up campus visit questionnaire. Visitors are asked to evaluate the campus visit experience and give suggestions for improvement.

CIRP Survey – Valley City State University participates in the Comprehensive Institutional Research Program Freshman Survey. Every year since the Fall of 1994, VCSU freshmen have been surveyed and compared to national norms. Results of the survey provide the University with a profile of entering students and give valuable information on student needs. Information from the survey is shared with the student affairs staff and the Executive Team.

Enrollment Activities and Student Satisfaction

The American College Testing--Student Opinion Survey

One of the assessment tools used to measure the level of student satisfaction with programs and services is the American College Testing (ACT) Student Opinion Survey. The ACT Student Opinion Survey measures levels of satisfaction with 23 different services and 42 different factors of the college environment. The survey was administered in 1995, 1997 and 2000. The survey is administered at the same time each year to students of all class levels. Local campus results are compared with national norms and scores are tracked over a period of years. The survey allows the institution to develop up to 30 of its own questions. VCSU has opted to use those questions to survey students on issues related to the notebook campus environment. The survey also allows space for students to write comments and suggestions.

The vice president for student affairs administers the ACT Student Opinion Survey. The surveys are hand delivered to students and collected by instructors in selected
classes. Results of the survey are tabulated by an ACT scoring service and delivered to the campus. VCSU results are then compared with national norms and compared to previous administrations of the survey. Results are reported to the campus Executive Team, all student affairs staff, and any program or service evaluated in the survey. The most recent report includes an analysis of trends. The programs and services that show steady increases in student satisfaction levels and those that show decreases are highlighted.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest possible score, class size received the highest ranking from students. A score of 4.41 is .24 above the national average. Other high rankings reflect the small campus size and the ability to provide personal attention. Categories such as availability of advisor (4.18), and attitude of faculty towards students (4.13), were among the highest received. Overall, students rated this college in general at 4.13, which was the fifth highest score in the survey, and .21 above the national average. Generally, the ACT Student Opinion Survey shows a fairly high level of student satisfaction with programs and services. Out of 65 total areas measured in the 2000 survey only eight areas scored lower than the national average. A total of 25 areas have shown a steady increase over the past three administrations of the survey. A complete summary of scores, trends, and a copy of the most recent survey, are available in the resource room.

The lowest student rankings (for services offered by VCSU) were for the areas of parking, residence hall rules and regulations, and purposes for which the student activity fee are used. Of the three areas, only parking was rated low among VCSU students and was also below the national average. The large percentage of commuting students and the limited parking space on campus continues to be a source of frustration for students. Tutoring is another program area that shows up as lower than the national average and on a pattern of declining rankings on the past three administrations of the survey. As a result, the Office of Student Academic Services is now doing assessments of the tutoring program, including surveys of students receiving tutoring services and those delivering the service.

The next administration of the survey is scheduled for Spring 2003.

Other Assessments of Student Services

In addition to the ACT Student Opinion Poll, the various service areas and departments use a variety of assessment techniques to determine the effectiveness of programs and to make continual improvements in services. The following is a listing of those efforts:

**Summer Orientation** – All students and all parents participating in the summer orientation/registration program complete a questionnaire. Participants are asked to rate each presentation and to give feedback on the program format.

**Kathryn Center Ropes Course** – As part of the new student orientation program, all new freshmen take part in an outdoor adventure learning challenge course. Students are asked each year to evaluate the experience
through the use of formal assessments.

Learning to Live/Living to Learn Class – At the conclusion of the course, students are asked to evaluate the learning experience and give recommendations for improvement. Evaluations indicate strong student satisfaction with the course.

Food Service – Food service provider, Sodexho/Marriott, conducts a customer satisfaction survey twice a year and a survey of the university administration one time per year. In addition, they use a comment card/suggestion box system in the cafeteria and in the retail dining area.

Withdrawing Students – Every student who officially withdraws from classes meets with the director of student academic services and completes a written exit interview. Students are asked to indicate reasons for leaving and to provide information on strengths and weakness of the university.

Residence Halls – A comprehensive survey of residence hall programs and services is administered approximately every two to three years. The survey was last administered in 1999. At the current, time housing officers are exploring the use of a standardized survey. Residence hall staff participates in an annual responsibility review. Both head resident and resident assistants are evaluated annually.

Substance Abuse – In 1994 VCSU participated in a statewide survey of college student use of alcohol and drug use. The same survey (Core Alcohol and Drug Survey) was administered again in 1999 to determine progress made with educational and awareness activities.

Alcohol Violators Class – All students found responsible for a violation of a university alcohol policy are required to participate in a 4-hour workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop, students are asked to rate the effectiveness of the workshop and to make recommendations for the campus in area of drug and alcohol prevention.

Tutoring Program – A review of the tutoring program is done by evaluating the tutoring service provided and from the viewpoint of the tutor.

Academic Advising – Student evaluate academic advising through the ACT Student Opinion Survey and a feedback instrument used in the Learning to Live classes.

Comment Card System – Comment cards are placed throughout the campus and in all student service areas. Comment cards encourage students to give praise, indicate a problem, make a suggestion or raise a question. Comment cards may be deposited in any one of three receptacles located on campus. The office of the vice president for student affairs responds to all cards received or forwards them on the appropriate office. A record of all comment cards is kept on file.
Post Enrollment Assessment Activities

Graduates and Employers - The Career Services Office conducts several surveys of graduates and employers. An initial survey is conducted of all graduates within six months of graduation to confirm placement location, type of employment, salary and benefits. At approximately nine months after graduation, a survey is conducted of graduates and employers. Graduates are asked to assess themselves on the VCSU Abilities and employers are asked to rate the level of skill and training of the graduates and also their level of competence on the Abilities. The information being gathered relates to specifics about their current employment and also their involvement in the VCSU campus as an alumnus (have they ever recruited a prospective student; returned to the campus for a visit).

Non-returning Students – The Office of Student Academic Services conducts mail surveys of non-returning students to determine reasons for leaving and to comply with federal reporting requirements.

Strengths

- The offices of academic affairs and student affairs have developed effective assessment tools and processes.

- The integration of the Abilities throughout the curriculum provides continuity for students as they move from general education to major programs. The Abilities also provide a framework for university-wide assessment, with readily accessible entry, midpoint, and endpoint data.

- Considerable national attention has arisen about our student and faculty digital portfolios. They have been featured in state, regional, national and international conferences, trade journals and news media. This interest arises in part from the University's focus on developing consensus across the university on the expected outcomes of the Abilities and Skills, and departmental identification of specific course projects that operationalize the Abilities for each discipline.

- The portfolio component of the assessment program has renewed the emphasis on reflection and helped restore this value within VCSU’s liberal arts traditions.

- The portfolio projects, individually and clustered by major, represent an effective means to evaluate program effectiveness.
Challenges

- An assessment director would greatly enhance VCSU’s ability to maintain an effective, continuous process of assessing student learning by assisting faculty, programs, committees, and the vice presidents in developing useful assessment activities/techniques, in organizing material, in collecting and reporting data, and in communicating relevant assessment material among units.

- The office of business affairs needs to develop a plan for assessing its offices and services.

- The development of rubrics for assessing the Abilities campus-wide, at entry, midpoint, and endpoint, is in beginning stages.

- Portfolio assessment and the links between divisional Abilities and portfolio evidence of student learning will be applied to a full graduating class for the first time in Spring 2002. Monitoring and standardizing of this process is needed.

- Faculty need to develop assessment tools for class projects to improve the pedagogical link between the project activities and the division’s Abilities. Program reviews must reflect appropriate use of these assessment tools.

- The ties between assessment data and strategic planning must be made clear and integrated into VCSU’s culture.