Assurance Argument

Valley City State University - ND

9/29/2015

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

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

In response to comments from the HLC site visit team regarding VCSU's mission, President Shirley established an ad hoc committee in December 2012 to review and revise the university's mission and vision statements. Neither had been updated since 2003, and the timing (one year prior to a new strategic planning initiative) seemed appropriate.

The Mission and Vision committee's process is documented through a series of email messages; the group used a campus-wide survey to identify campus themes, then established a subcommittee to draft proposed updates. The committee approved a final draft version on March 19, and the President sent out the draft to campus for review and comment at the end of March.

After reviewing campus feedback, the Mission and Vision Committee recommended three versions for Cabinet Review. Cabinet spent time during the summer reviewing and fine-tuning the draft materials, and President Shirley presented a final version to the campus at the start of the Fall 2014 semester for final input. VCSU presented the final version to the State Board of Higher Education at their September 25, 2013 meeting; the updated mission and vision were approved unanimously (see page 4).

The committee included students, faculty, and staff; the survey and comment requests likewise included all three groups. The resulting statements clearly frame the views of campus constituents regarding campus values and direction for the future.

2. The academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with the stated mission.

The VCSU University Purposes list degrees in education, business and the liberal arts and sciences; the mission statement identifies these degrees as baccalaureate and master's level work. Founded as a normal school in 1890, VCSU continues to provide strong academic programs in education, including both the B.S.Ed. and M.S. Ed. VCSU's internal curricular approval process requires faculty requesting new courses and programs to document how the proposed changes line up with the VCSU mission and defining commitments (described in 1.B).

VCSU's enrollment profile (2014 numbers) includes 1,234 undergraduate and 144 graduate students (in education). Of the undergraduate students, 45% are in education programs, and 55% are non-education (20% are math, science, or health majors, 13% are business or information technology majors, and 22% are majoring in arts, humanities, and fine arts related fields). About 31% of the undergraduate student body are taking all face-to-face courses, 34% are taking at least one face-to-face course and 35% are enrolled online.

Student support services are consistent with the needs of the students served. VCSU has a strong partnership with a community college in the North Dakota University System, Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB). DCB provides pre-college coursework for entering students who require support in English and Math (as identified by ACT or Compass scores). In providing this academic support, DCB has offices and faculty on the VCSU campus; their faculty work closely with VCSU personnel to identify student needs and provide a smooth transition into VCSU coursework.

VCSU's Learning Center, currently situated in the library basement, provides academic support for a variety of student populations, including probation students, athletic team study tables, composition lab assistance, tutoring for individuals or groups, and study-skills training. The Learning Center offers online support for distance students who can email with questions, receive assistance with paper development, or access online tutorial services. Other offices that provide student support services, including the Registrar, Financial Aid, Business Office, Student Academic Services, and Career Services, are similarly organized to provide support for both face-to-face and online students.

Average satisfaction scores (between 2002 and 2014) on the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) (average of scores, 2006-2014) indicate satisfaction in the following areas (on a scale of 1-low to 7-high):

- Tutoring services are readily available. (5.63)
- There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career. (5.57)
- Online career services are available. (5.42)
- Tutoring services are readily available for online courses. (5.03)

3. VCSU's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

About 40% of VCSU's expenses are for instruction, and student services is allocated about 17% of the annual budget, according to the Budget by Program, FY 2014-15. Additional details for FY 2015 and FY 2016 are included.

The budget process includes development of a biennial budget and an annual budget. The biennial budget is prepared every two years in accordance with guidelines and requirements established by the State Board of Higher Education and the State Office of Management and Budget. Prior to establishing the guidelines and requirements, the State Board of Higher Education solicits input from the 11 campuses regarding priorities and initiatives to include in the University System biennial

budget request. The State Board also sets the guidelines and approves major capital projects to be included in the system budget submission to the Governor. The biennial budget provides the basis for input into what is included in the Governor's recommended budget for the University System, which is submitted to the North Dakota Legislature.

An annual budget is developed by the university by gathering input from campus constituents, aligning budget requests with university strategic initiatives and following State Board of Higher Education guidelines. The State Board guidelines include consideration of legislative intent as contained in the biennial appropriation bill. Campus input is gathered through a budget-request process which includes completion and submission of budget-request forms to the Vice President for Business Affairs. The form requires the requestor to include justification of the budget item and an indication of how the item relates to the strategic plan. The requestor is encouraged to include metrics to demonstrate the need for the requested budget allocation. The VCSU Cabinet reviews all budget requests and estimated revenue; makes a determination about which budget requests will advance the institution's strategic initiatives; and allocates available funding or reallocates existing funding to specific budget items. The finalized budget is submitted to the NDUS Chancellor for approval.

In Fall 2014, the VCSU faculty and staff began a Program Optimization Process (POP) (based on *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* by Robert Dickeson) that will help inform more strategic decisions about funding. A description of that process (which is still in progress) and additional details about budgeting at VCSU, please see Criterion 5.C.1.

Sources

- 1A MissionVison Process
- 1A MissionVison Process (page number 1)
- 1A MissionVison Process (page number 3)
- 1A MissionVison Process (page number 5)
- 1A MissionVison Process (page number 9)
- 1A MissionVison Process (page number 11)
- 1A SBHE minutes 9.25.13
- 2015-17 Appropriation Summary
- Budget by Program FY 2014-15
- Defining Commitments
- FY 2015 Budget
- FY 2016 Budget
- Operating Budget Request Form
- Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)_Noel-Levitz
- Program Optimization Process
- SBHE 800 Index Financial Affairs
- Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)_ Noel-Levitz
- V403.01 Curriculum Change Procedures
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 17)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 28)
- VCSU-Census-Fall_2014

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1. Valley City State University publicly demonstrates and articulates its mission to the public in a variety of ways. The institution maintains a Defining Commitments document, consisting of the Mission and Vision statements, University Purposes, and Core Values. These combined statements are highly visible on the institution website, within the institution catalog, in the employee directory, and in Baselines, and are displayed in offices and classrooms on campus.

The campus strategic plan is posted online and published in the annual publication, Baselines, which all employees receive at the start of each academic year. The 2014-15 Baselines reported on the completed Success 2015 Strategic Plan. This year an ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee has finalized a new two-year Strategic Plan based upon unit/department strategic plans and survey input from campus stakeholders. This short-term strategic plan will allow VCSU's new president, who began work at VCSU on December 15, 2014, to become acclimated with the university before leading a longer-term planning process beginning in 2016. The new plan, approved in August 2015, was published in the 2015-16 Baselines and is available online on the President's webpage.

2. The institution's Mission and Vision, revised in 2013, explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission; including instruction, scholarship, research, creative works, and service.

The Mission indicates that VCSU's baccalaureate and master's programs prepare educators, leaders, and engaged citizens, a statement which matches VCSU's emphasis on teacher education, meaningful scholarship, service, skilled use of technology, and learner-centered, student engagement.

3. The institution's Mission and Vision identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

The Mission clearly identifies VCSU as "a public, regional university" offering "baccalaureate and master's programs." The Mission also emphasizes the university's priorities, "meaningful scholarship, ethical service, and the skilled use of technology," and the aim of its instruction—to prepare "students to succeed as educators, leaders, and engaged citizens" and to "enrich the quality of life in North Dakota and beyond."

The Vision statement specifies VCSU's aspirations for contributions to U.S. higher education, and the University Purposes further clarify its goals for quality student learning and its emphasis on technology and promotion of a multicultural perspective. The Core Values statement helps establish expectations for the campus community's culture and ethos: aiming high, working together, and embracing diversity and change.

Sources

- Baselines 2014–15
- Baselines 2014–15 (page number 8)
- Baselines 2015-16
- Baselines 2015-16 (page number 6)
- Defining Commitments
- Office of the President
- President Shirley New Mission Email 9.25.2013
- Program Optimization Process
- Strategic Planning Committee Members
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 8)

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

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

Over the past half-decade, VCSU has responded to national trends by becoming more committed to recognizing and adapting to the changing demographic and profile of college students. VCSU's student body is becoming increasingly diverse; the university also recognizes the importance of preparing all students to succeed in a complex and diversity society. One of the VCSU Core Values is Diversity. To help support this commitment to diversity, the university created a half-time position in 2013, Director of Diversity, who is charged with working collaboratively with academic and administrative departments to promote student success through general advocacy and diversity education and programming. The director was allocated institutional funds to support the office and hire a student worker.

Both the VCSU President and the VCSU Director of Diversity currently serve as the liaisons and campus representatives to the North Dakota University System (NDUS) Diversity Council. VCSU also has a Cultural Diversity Committee, which evaluates, strategizes, and promotes programs, policies, and practices that support diversity and offer multicultural opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.

Recognizing that most VCSU students still come from a white, rural home environment, faculty also engage in efforts to infuse diversity in the curriculum, particularly in teacher education. For example, all teacher education students participate in a culturally diverse practicum, which affords the opportunity to shadow teachers in diverse classroom settings either in reservation or inner city schools.

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

Since 2013, the VCSU Diversity Services Office has led efforts on campus to ensure that our services are appropriate and reflective of the constituents we serve. To that end, a mandatory, 90-minute Diversity Awareness workshop for all incoming students is included in Welcome Weekend activities. Diversity training is also provided to a number of student groups including student workers, resident assistants and student ambassadors.

The office has facilitated various trainings with staff, including facility services, and an all-staff professional development diversity training in collaboration with HR in 2013. The attached documents show a summary of attendance and participation in our diversity programs for the 2014-

2015 academic year in addition to some of the [feedback from students](#) regarding these programs.

Sources

- DefiningCommitments-Aug2014
- Diversity at VCSU Facebook Page
- Diversity Awareness- Welcome Weekend Workshop
- Diversity Programs at VCSU
- Diversity Programs at VCSU (page number 3)
- North Dakota University System_Diversity Council
- Student Affairs End Of Year Report-2015
- Student Affairs End Of Year Report-2015 (page number 8)
- V302.04.01 VCSU COMMITTEE STRUCTURE
- VCSU Enrollment by Race
- Welcome Weekend 2015 Booklet

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

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

Argument

1. VCSU's [Mission](#) statement includes the expectation that the University "offers programs and outreach that enrich the quality of life in North Dakota and beyond," thus demonstrating the expectation that VCSU **is committed to the public good**. VCSU provides financial support, faculty expertise, and student service through its Centers, Community School of the Arts, and a variety of student-supported educational programs to support the public good. Each of the examples described below illustrates how VCSU extends its reach to support the educational needs of faculty and students in the public schools and members of the community, demonstrating the institution's commitment to service in the region.

Educational Centers

[The Prairie Waters Education and Research Center](#), located 17 miles south of Valley City, is directed by a full-time faculty member in Biology, and supported in part by state grants. The center serves the state by providing training for water testing, and by conducting aquatic surveys for North Dakota. More importantly, the center provides K-12 education for schools across the state, many of which bring classes of students for day-long field trips. In the past 12 months, the center has had approximately 2,300 student visitors and provided 75 days of field training to the K-12 student population. These services are provided free of charge.

[The Great Plains STEM Education Center](#), located on the VCSU campus and staffed by VCSU faculty, provides professional development training for K-12 in-service teachers. The GPSEC's greatest successes have come from a combination of in-service training and support for classroom implementation, such as the Monsanto project in Jamestown Public Schools, which included inservice training, followed by four classroom visits by VCSU faculty who assisted with implementation in the classroom. Where possible, VCSU partners with the school districts to pursue grant funding to support the costs of the project.

The Don Mugan Career and Technical Education Leadership Center, located on the VCSU campus and staffed by VCSU faculty, partners with the state's Career and Technical Education office to support the licensure needs of in-service teachers and provides pathways for individuals with technical specialties to practice in Career and Technical Education (CTE). Staff review transcripts to determine licensure needs, offer coursework, and work with undergraduate and graduate programs in the region. The center focuses on recruiting, retaining, and providing a succession of teachers and leaders to insure a strong future for technical programs in the region and nation. The center is partially

funded by state CTE grant dollars.

The Community School of the Arts (CSA), founded in 1994, provides access to music lessons, art classes, and a variety of other arts programs for community members, including a Women's Choir, Community Orchestra, and Children's Choir. Full and part-time VCSU faculty, as well as VCSU student musicians who are nominated and supervised by their instructors, provide instruction. The school is partially funded by VCSU appropriated dollars; grants and student tuition make up the remaining budget. Instruction, rehearsals, and classes all take place on the VCSU campus, and the CSA director reports to the chair of the Music Department. Over the past academic year, a total of 338 community members (including children and adults) participated in CSA programs.

Other Educational Programs Examples

VCSU houses two programs that are primarily supported by VCSU student efforts that provide strong community outreach. **The Planetarium** in Rhoades Science Center is used for some college classes in Astronomy and Earth Science, but it primarily serves area schools and community groups with 85-100 shows scheduled per year, including monthly shows open to the general public. Students who enroll in the Planetarium Science class learn how to operate the equipment, present programs, and assist in writing a creating new shows.

Medicine Wheel Park, a 30-acre park adjacent to VCSU, developed as a class project in 1992 and continuously maintained by VCSU faculty and students, features two solar calendars (a horizon calendar (the medicine wheel) and a meridian or noontime calendar), Native American burial mounds, solar system model, the North Country National Scenic Trail and other woodland nature trials, and a 3,000 square-foot perennial flower garden. The park is open to the public, and offers community solstice events and guided tours upon request.

2. VCSU's educational responsibilities are its primary responsibility. As the examples provided in #1, above, show, VCSU's interactions with the region/community focus on providing educational and cultural opportunities. Any income generated is used to support the program offered. As a public institution, VCSU does not generate a profit for investors, support a parent organization, or otherwise support external interests.

3. VCSU engages with external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Each of the centers described above, along with the Community School of the Arts, were developed in response to needs identified in the state or the community. Each center has evolved over time, from an individual faculty managing personal contacts and requests from state and local entities to a more holistic, campus-managed approach. The programs in the CSA have also developed in response to community requests; the community orchestra, for example, developed a few years after the CSA began offering string lessons, which in turn were started at the request of community members who wanted this opportunity for their children.

Other external constituencies include program advisory boards, VCSU Foundation and Alumni boards, and the community's Economic Development Board, all of which interact with the institution and bring forward opportunities for collaboration. One recent example of this is VCSU's partnership with the Valley City Park District in planning the city's new Wellness Center. This building, currently under construction, will house VCSU's Health and Physical Education department, the Valley City Park District's offices, and a variety of exercise areas, a gymnasium, walking track, and pool, all of which will be available to the public. This town-gown synergy allows the university and the park

district to provide a great community facility that will also benefit VCSU students who have access to the workout areas and may also have new practicum and internship opportunities available.

Sources

- Alumni Association Website
- Community School of the Arts
- Defining Commitments
- Foundation Fact Sheet
- GPSEC Homepage
- Medicine Wheel Park
- Planetarium
- Prairie Waters Education and Research Center
- Press_Statement_May_1_2015_VC_Park_District
- Program Advisory Boards
- Valley Development Group Website

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

In response to comments from the HLC team reviewers in 2011, VCSU reviewed and updated its mission and vision statement in 2013, with a resulting document that clearly articulates the academic programs and their scope, the institution's purposes, and the university's responsibility to its students and the region. The mission documents, including the mission, vision, university purposes, and core values, are readily available on the university's website, in published documents, and as a single document, "Defining Commitments," which is posted in offices and classrooms across campus.

The mission documents guide decision-making processes across campus, from curricular planning to budget prioritization and staffing. VCSU understands its important role in developing awareness of diversity in the global society, especially for students from the region who may have little experience with diverse populations. To that end, the institution has invested in staff, activities, and recruitment of diverse students and staff to increase student engagement and exploration of our increasingly diverse society.

VCSU understands its role within the larger community, as a provider of educational outreach and service in the region. Three educational centers that support K-12 student learning and professional development for their instructors provides key examples of this outreach; VCSU actively pursues partnerships with the community that will benefit both VCSU students and the surrounding community. The Wellness Center partnership is one such example.

Sources

- Defining Commitments
- Press_Statement_May_1_2015_VC_Park_District

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

North Dakota has an open meetings/open records law. The open meetings portion of the law applies only to campus entities to which the State Board of Higher Education has specifically delegated decision-making authority. In addition, a limited number of meetings to review personnel grievances are open only if the grievant approves. Generally speaking, minutes of campus groups are posted on a shared computer drive accessible to all faculty and staff.

The open records law provides that virtually all University documents may be viewed upon request and copies provided for a nominal fee. The University's annual budget is placed in the University library each year. The University reports campus crime statistics in accordance with federal law.

Fraud Reporting: The VCSU Policy 308.1 Employee Code of Conduct, adopted in accordance with SBHE Policy 308.1, applies to all Valley City State University employees. The State Board of Higher Education, NDUS and VCSU are committed to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. All VCSU officers and employees must, at all times, comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Activities that achieve results unlawfully or by unethical behavior, including, but not limited to, payments for illegal acts, indirect contributions, rebates, and bribery, are not tolerated and must be reported.

All conduct must meet or exceed minimum standards established by law. The SBHE Policy 600 index details employer and employee personnel responsibilities and activities to ensure that the organization operates legally, responsibly, and with fiscal honesty. Specifically, SBHE Section 611.10 states that each employee, as a basic condition of employment, assumes responsibility for safeguarding and preserving the assets and resources of the state and University system and its institutions. Moreover, the VCSU Policy 611.14 Reporting and Investigating Theft and Fraud provides specific procedures for campus employees who suspect or detect fraudulent activity.

The University has other programs and policies in place which are designed to deter fraud and unethical practices:

- Identity Theft Prevention Program: VCSU follows SBHE Policy 611.10 to detect, prevent, and mitigate identity theft in connection with the opening of a covered account or an existing covered account and to provide for continued administration of the program in compliance with Part 681 of the Code of Federal Regulations implementing Sections 114 and 315 of the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACTA) of 2003.
- Security Incident Responsibility Policy V1901.5: defines responsibility and specifies appropriate actions needed to ensure that information security incidents are handled in a consistent, thorough, and timely manner in order to protect the availability, confidentiality and integrity of VCSU systems, applications, data, or networks.
- Electronic Financial Transactions Policy and Procedures V802.7: the University recognizes that accepting credit cards as payment for goods or services has become a common practice that improves customer service, brings certain efficiencies to VCSU's cash collection process, and may increase the sales volume of some types of transactions. In addition, the use of technology, such as the World Wide Web, provides easy access for many, making the use of credit cards essential when sales are conducted electronically. It is the University's responsibility to protect the privacy of its customers, as well as maintain compliance with the Gramm Leach Bliley (GLB) Act, and Payment Card Industry (PCI) Standards and Red Flag Rules. Policy V802.7 provides expectations and guidelines for protecting customers' credit card information.
- Guidelines for Protecting Sensitive Data V802.7.1: Protecting confidential data is crucial. VCSU is a custodian of personal information belonging to students, staff, faculty, researchers, and those who use its outreach services. As custodian of that information, VCSU is responsible for protecting and securing intellectual property, and personal, student-related, financial, and health information from misuse, theft, compromise, and unauthorized disclosure.
- Use of University Property V802.6:
  - establishes authority for employees to use university property at an off-campus location
  - informs employees of state policies regarding personal use of state property
  - establishes campus policy governing disposal of surplus property

VCSU employees are required to review these policies annually and complete documentation indicating that they have done so at the start of each academic year.

Sources

- Annual Campus Safety and Security Report 2013-14
- Course_ New Employee - NDUS Fraud and Conduct Training - 2015
- eCFR — Code of Federal Regulations Part 681 Identity Theft Rules
- Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003 PLAW-108publ159
- Fraud and Code of Conduct Training Verification 2014
- FY 2016 Budget
- Gramm Leach Bliley Act 1999 PLAW-106publ102
- ND Open Records and Meetings Law
- Official Source of PCI DSS Data Security Standards Documents and Payment Card Compliance Guidelines
- Red Flag Standards and Practices
- SBHE 308.1 Officer and Employee Code of Conduct
- SBHE Policy 1912 Public Records
- SBHE Policy 600 Index
- SBHE Policy 611.10 Employee Responsibility and Activities
- State Board of Higher Education

- V1901.05 Technology Services Security Incident Response Policy
- V308.01 VCSU Employee Code of Conduct
- V611.14 Reporting and Investigating Theft and Fraud
- V802.06 Use of University Property
- V802.07 Electronic Financial Transactions Policy and Procedures
- V802.07.01 Guidelines for Protecting Sensitive Data

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

Argument

VCSU relies on its faculty and staff, its website, and its print publications to present itself to its student and public constituencies. The university is also represented in the print materials and websites of the North Dakota University System (NDUS), of which it is a member.

Enrollment Services staff represent the university at college fairs and high school visits and meet with prospective students and their families when they visit campus. They provide information verbally and in print form. Publications include a fact sheet, "First Look" introduction to the university, view book, and university catalog, along with pieces on scholarships and housing and dining options. These materials are also distributed to high school guidance counselors.

Students are able to use Campus Connection, an NDUS database that maintains student records, to check on their progress toward program completion. The VCSU Registrar's Office completes graduation audits for each student, and those records are available through Campus Connection and the Blackboard shared drive.

The VCSU website presents much information to prospective students, current students, visitors and the public at large.

Academic policies, programs and requirements are presented in the VCSU catalog and on the VCSU website. Academic procedures also appear in the Student Handbook, distributed in print to VCSU students and also available online. Articulation agreements with other schools also appear in the VCSU catalog and are available in complete detail on the VCSU webpage.

Lists of faculty and staff members appear in the VCSU catalog; an online directory of all faculty and staff is also available.

Costs to students are detailed on the website, which also features a cost calculator. Cost information can also be found on the printed VCSU Quick Facts.

Information about the North Dakota University System (NDUS), to which VCSU belongs, can be found on the VCSU website. A description of NDUS and a link to the system website. Information on NDUS and the State Board of Higher Education can also be found in the VCSU Catalog.

Accreditation status and accrediting bodies are detailed at www.vcsu.edu/accreditation/ and can also be found in the VCSU Catalog.

Students may voice concerns via several means. VCSU's Complaint Compliance statement appears in the catalog, and the NDUS policy can be found online. The Student Grievance Policy process is outlined in the Student Handbook.

Student survey evidence supports the claim that VCSU portrays itself accurately and that information

is readily accessible. Students responses to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) rate the importance of and their satisfaction with VCSU on statements relating to this subcomponent (scores are averages of scores between 2002-2006 for SSI and 2006-2014 for PSOL, on a scale of 1-low to 7-high):

- Admissions counselors respond to prospective students' unique needs and requests. (5.63)
- Admissions counselors accurately portray the campus in their recruiting practices. (5.67)
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable. (5.80)
- Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. (5.36)
- Program requirements are clear and reasonable. (5.79)
- Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints. (5.49)
- I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services. (5.84)

The VCSU Catalog is reviewed for accuracy on a biennial basis, and policy and curriculum are updated. Website material is drawn from the catalog and ConnectND database to assure accuracy, as well.

Sources

- 2014 search mailer
- Accreditation
- Articulation Agreements
- North Dakota University System
- Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)_Noel-Levitz
- Residence Life 2014–15
- Student Handbook 2014–15
- Student Handbook 2014–15 (page number 26)
- Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)_ Noel-Levitz
- Valley City State University - Bachelor & Master's degrees; On-Campus & Online
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 8)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 11)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 189)
- VCSU Documents
- VCSU First Look 2014
- VCSU Quick Facts 2014
- VCSU Scholarships 2014-15
- VCSU View Book 2014

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

VCSU is one of eleven institutions of higher education that make up the North Dakota University System (NDUS). The eight-member State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) is the policy-setting body for the North Dakota University System. The board includes seven citizen members appointed by the governor, who serve four-year terms, and one student appointed by the governor for a one-year term. A non-voting faculty advisor and a non-voting staff advisor, selected annually by their state-wide councils, ensure that the issues and concerns of each group have a voice.

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

The SBHE's policies establish a series of board committees and state-wide councils that maintain a strong sense of collaboration and a spirit of shared governance. Each campus has a voice in each of the established councils, while the SBHE committees offer an opportunity for direct communication regarding campus needs and proposals between board members and the campus leaders. SBHE Policy 302.1 establishes the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, which reviews all academic requests and academic and student affairs policy revisions before they are presented at an SBHE meeting. SBHE Policy 302.3 establishes the Budget and Finance Committee, which has similar responsibilities for reviewing individual campus' funding requests and policies.

SBHE policy 302.4 establishes councils, such as Academic Affairs Council (all the VPAAs in the system) or Chancellor's Cabinet (all the presidents in the system), who advise the Chancellor in the development of policy, administration of finances, or oversight of curriculum across the system. In addition, each director-level position--e.g., Registrar, Human Resources, Financial Aid, Library--has its own system-wide group and listserv, where they may check frequently for campus practices across the state and provide support for individuals new to their positions. These groups, in turn, research and recommend policies to the NDUS Councils, who then direct their recommendations to the Chancellor's Cabinet and then to the State Board of Higher Education for approval.

These committees and councils assure each campus the necessary access and voice to keep the SBHE aware of campus issues and priorities.

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

North Dakota's open meeting laws (described in 2.A) facilitate clear and open communication between the SBHE and various constituencies. Agendas for all meetings are posted 24 hours in advance, and board meetings include scheduled periods for public comment, allowing external constituencies an established opportunity to address the board.

The presence of a student member and a staff and faculty advisor at board meetings connects the SBHE with internal constituencies throughout the system. Each campus president attends board meetings and is frequently invited to speak regarding issues that concern his/her campus. The SBHE committees also provide the opportunity for deeper analysis of the needs of each campus and its constituents.

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

Members of the SBHE are appointed by the North Dakota Governor (subject to legislative confirmation) and serve four-year terms; once confirmed, they can be removed from office only through impeachment proceedings. North Dakota Century Code establishes the SBHE as a separate, autonomous entity with sole authority over the 11 public institutions of higher education in the state. No more than two members of the board can be graduates of the same institution.

4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

SBHE policy 305.1 delegates management authority to the president of the institution:

"The Board delegates to the president of each institution full authority and responsibility to administer the affairs of the institution in accordance with Board policies, plans, budgets, and standards, including the management and expenditure of all institutional funds, within budgetary and other limitations imposed by law or by the Board."

By law, the faculty of each campus is expected to oversee management of campus policies, curriculum and other academic matters. Per North Dakota Century Code 15-10-3, "the faculty shall consist of the president, instructor, teachers, and assistants. The faculty shall adopt, subject to such rules and regulations as the state board of higher education may establish, all necessary rules and regulations for the government of the school." The day-to-day management of the campus, therefore, is delegated to the president and the faculty, subject to the policies of the SBHE.

Sources

- ND Open Records and Meetings Law
- NDCC 15-10 The State Board of Higher Education
- North Dakota University System

- SBHE Policy 302.1 Academic and Student Affairs Committee
- SBHE Policy 302.3 Budget and Finance Committee
- SBHE Policy 302.4 Councils
- SBHE Policy 305.1 College and University Presidents Authority and Responsibilities
- State Board of Higher Education

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Policies That Support Academic Freedom and Expression

Valley City State University policies demonstrate a commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The guiding principles that support academic freedom and expression for faculty and students on campuses in the North Dakota University System are identified in SBHE Policy 401.1, which states in part:

"The responsible academic community welcomes those who take an ideological or policy position and jealously guards their right to do so. The academic community must be hospitable even to closed minds and it must welcome the conflict of ideas likely to ensue. Academic responsibility to provide opportunity for expression of diverse points of view generates academic freedom."

This same policy provides for faculty freedom to research, publish, lecture, and conduct demonstrations in their field of expertise, while urging faculty responsibility for accuracy, sound judgment, and respect for the rights of others to express opinions.

Students' rights are also identified in this policy:

- Instruction by unfettered teachers
- Access to all information pertinent to the subject of study
- Freedom to select their curriculum, instructors, and associates
- Intellectual disagreement with instructors and associates without fear of reprisal

SBHE Policy 605.1 identifies tenure as a means to assure academic freedom for faculty, and references the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* (Rev. 1990) that was adopted by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges.

VCSU Policy V530.02 provides further protection of students' freedom of expression:

- "The professor in the classroom and in conference should encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance is to be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on

opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards."

- "Students are free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled."

Students are protected through academic grievance procedures from capricious grading or other retaliatory action. Students are made aware of their rights and grievance options in the Student Handbook.   According to student responses to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), using average satisfaction scores between 2002 and 2014 on a scale of 1-low to 7-high, VCSU students believe that freedom of expression is protected on campus (average score: 5.65).

Sources

- 2.D SBHE Policy 401.1
- 2.D SBHE Policy 605.1
- 2.D VCSU Policy V530.2
- Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)_ Noel-Levitz

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

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

Valley City State University maintains an Institutional Review Board (IRB) (IRB00009062) and Federalwide Assurance (FWA) (FWA# 00019473) for the Protection of Human Subjects filings registered with the Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Human Research Protections. This document represents a commitment on the part of Valley City State University to abide by federal regulations and policies regarding the protection of human subjects when participating in research. These requirements apply to student, staff, and faculty research, regardless of whether the research receives federal government funding. The Institutional Review Board conforms to the guidelines in the Common Rule (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45-Part 46, revised in 2009). The Director of Institutional Research serves as chair of this board and the committee consists of one additional VCSU administrator, VCSU faculty members representing a variety of academic disciplines, and two members from outside of VCSU.

In addition, recognizing a growing interest among faculty in the use of open education resources (OERS) and digital materials widely available online, VCSU has updated its policies regarding copyright and developed informational materials on the library website to help faculty understand responsible use. The director of Faculty Development provided training during opening week, using a video from the Twenty Minute Mentor series, and several additional sessions are being planned to coincide with discussions of OER implementation on campus.

2. The Institution provides guidance to students on the ethical use of information.

The VCSU Student Handbook includes policy V530.01 Academic Integrity, stating in part that "Academic integrity in students is recognized as a fundamental objective of higher education" (p. 37). Processes and sanctions are included.

Students receive both initial and "just in time" training regarding ethical use of information. First-year students are introduced to the concept of academic integrity in a one hour session during their Learning to Live course. The general education faculty have access to a video presentation, RAISE, which includes six segments students must watch and respond to using online quizzes. Faculty are asked to discuss academic integrity as it applies to their class at some point during the first month of the semester, and they are encouraged to use the appropriate segment of the RAISE program as part of this discussion. All students taking Learning to Live are required to complete the entire RAISE program quizzes (completion is part of their final grade in the course)--the program can be completed

independently of a course.

Graduate students also receive refresher training in academic integrity. An Academic Integrity Tutorial was developed collaboratively between the School of Education and Graduate Studies and Library staff for use as a learning module in EDUC 610 Research in Education and other courses. This tutorial is designed to help students learn more about academic honesty in relation to course projects, papers and exams. The information in this tutorial is applicable for all subject and research areas at any level of study. Tutorial topics include:

- **Academic Integrity** - Definitions and discussion
- **Academic Dishonesty** - Definitions and discussion
- **Plagiarism** - Definition, examples and importance of documenting sources
- **Citing Sources** - How to get credit for your own work
- **Introduction to APA Style** - Brief introduction to the most important components of APA style
- **Apply Your Skills** - Recognizing plagiarism & acknowledging sources

Students can work through the tutorial step-by-step by following the navigational tabs at the top of the page, or follow their own sequence by using the table of contents on each page. Students are directed to complete a self-test on Blackboard if they are using the tutorial to fulfill course requirements.

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

VCSU policy conforms to by North Dakota University System Procedure 1901.2 Computer and Network Usage, number 3 stating in part: "Each member of the campus community enjoys certain privileges and is responsible for the member's actions. The interplay of these privileges and responsibilities engenders the trust and intellectual freedom that form the heart of this community." Topics include respecting the rights of others, responsible use of resources, information integrity, use of personally managed systems, access to computing and networking resources, attempts to circumvent security, academic dishonesty, and personal business. Item 3.7 Academic dishonesty states "Use of NDUS computing facilities to commit acts of academic dishonesty will be handled through existing campus procedures which address allegations of academic dishonesty."

In addition, VCSU has V530.01 Academic Integrity, recently updated to provide a clearer explanation of sanctions and student appeal processes. Faculty are encouraged to report incidents, and the Academic Affairs office tracks all reported incidents and communicates directly with students regarding sanctions and penalties.

Faculty have several mechanisms to help prevent cheating. First, faculty can utilize the SafeAssign building block within the Blackboard Learning Management System that compares a student's work against online resources as well as paper's submitted to SafeAssign by other students. The SafeAssign program highlights portions of papers that could be considered plagiarized. Faculty can require students to submit the papers through this system in the drafting stages so that they can then see where their issues are and revise accordingly.

Faculty can also use the Respondus lock-down browser as part of the Blackboard Learning Management System. When required to use this tool by faculty, students are prevented from having any windows open during a test other than the test itself.

Technology Services staff, when requested, can investigate whether electronic communications occurred between students with regard to academic dishonesty. Any relevant findings are reported as part of the investigation. While these investigations are rare, the work of Technology Services staff demonstrates a resolve to enforce academic honesty and integrity policies.

Sources

- 20-Minute Mentor _ Magna Publications
- Federalwide Assurance-VCSU-Office for Human Research Protections Database
- HHS Code of Federal Regulations Protection of Human Subjects
- Introduction - Academic Integrity - Research Guides at Valley City State University
- IORG Renewal Confirmation 3 21 2014
- NDUS Procedures 1901.2 Computer and Network Usage
- RaiseStandards
- RLDB-QSG-Bb-CourseSites-Instructor
- Use SafeAssign in Assignments - Blackboard Help
- V1901.02 Computer and Network Usage
- V480.05 Copyright Guidelines
- V530.01 Academic Integrity
- V530.04 University Hearings and Appeals Board
- V611.08 Establishment and Structure of an Institutional Review Board

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

As a public university and member of the North Dakota University System, VCSU's actions are shaped by the North Dakota State Constitution, North Dakota Century Code, and the State Board of Higher Education's policies. VCSU understands its responsibilities under law and policy, and conducts itself with integrity.

VCSU has established policies and programs to guide ethical behavior of its employees; its policies establish principles of ethical use, integrity of research, academic freedom, and appropriate conduct. Students are likewise supported in understanding their responsibilities in appropriate use of information and electronic resources.

Recognizing the increasing use of digital materials by faculty and students, VCSU has recently updated its copyright policy and academic integrity policy, and strengthened internal training programs for both students and faculty in understanding how these policies may apply in specific situations.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

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

All VCSU programs adhere to standards for excellence within their disciplines. As the three examples below illustrate, periodic program review (required every seven years by SBHE Policy 403.1.2) and external validation by accreditors provide assurance that course and programs are current and appropriately rigorous.

School of Education and Graduate Studies

The VCSU School of Education and Graduate Studies is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the North Dakota Educational Standards and Practices Board (ESPB), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). In 2008, NCATE granted accreditation to VCSU on two levels. All undergraduate and graduate programs within the School of Education and Graduate Studies are organized in alignment with the PIER Conceptual Framework (Plan, Implement, Evaluate, and Reflect). The undergraduate teacher education programs were accredited at the initial preparation level, applying to programs that prepare students for their first teacher licensure. The Master of Education program was accredited at the advanced level, which includes post-baccalaureate programs for teachers who have completed initial preparation.

The School of Education and Graduate Studies undergraduate (initial) teacher education program met the state standards aligned with InTASC and the graduate (advanced) program met the state standards aligned with the NBPTS core propositions without an area of weakness.

Schools receiving NCATE accreditation must meet rigorous professional and public standards. Teacher candidates must possess in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and the skills necessary to convey that knowledge to students. The college or university must carefully assess student knowledge and have partnerships with P-12 schools to help students learn. Candidates must understand and work

with diverse student populations. Faculty must model effective teaching practices and the school must have access to the resources, including information technology resources, necessary to prepare candidates for meeting new standards. The NCATE standards are being revised into the Council for Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards, incorporating best practices and research to ensure the standards reflect a consensus about what is important in teacher education.

The NCATE Board of Examiners identified several strengths within VCSU's education programs. The report recognized VCSU's faculty for its high quality as evidenced by faculty credentials and evaluation by students and colleagues. The field experience program was recognized as giving students opportunities to learn by participating in live classroom settings. The report noted VCSU's centralized assessment system that helps students develop and model professional dispositions, as well as recent improvements to that system developed by faculty and the Technology Service Center staff. The technology-rich environment, including a laptop initiative in which every full-time student is issued a laptop computer, was deemed a strength.

The Master of Education program, established in 2005, is built upon the foundation laid by the undergraduate programs in Education. The program's curriculum and assessments were designed to align with state and national standards, as well as the graduate program's Core Values. This program is a practitioner-oriented degree, designed for practicing educators. The program requires four core courses that provide students with the foundation for educational research and graduate study in education, and a choice of concentrations that connect the student with advanced coursework in the selected field of study. Each concentration has been carefully developed to meet standards within the field. For example:

- The Library and Information Technologies concentration curriculum meets both the AASL/NCATE (American Association of School Librarians/National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) School Library Media Specialist preparation standards and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction standards for the preparation of library media specialists at the highest credential level-LMO1. This is the only graduate-level library science program in North Dakota.
- The Technology Education concentration is the only program in North Dakota that provides teacher licensure through a combination of undergraduate and graduate courses. Course curricula is consistent with the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association's Standards for Technological Literacy.
- The Teaching & Technology concentration curriculum focuses on the effective integration of technologies to enrich teaching and learning and is based upon the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) established by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

Computer Information Systems / Software Engineering

The Software Engineering baccalaureate program established in 2013 conforms to Software Engineering 2004: Curriculum Guidelines *for Undergraduate Degree Programs in Software Engineering* developed by the Joint Task Force on Computing Curricula of the IEEE Computer Society and the Association for Computing Machinery with funding from the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0003232. Software Engineering program outcomes align with the SE 2004 Student Outcomes (pp. 14-16) and conform to the Principles guiding the SE 2004 design (pp. 13-14).

The Computer Information Systems baccalaureate program conforms to IS 2010: Curriculum Guidelines for Undergraduate Degree Programs in Information Systems developed by the Association

for Computing Machinery and the Association for Information Systems. Computer Information Systems program outcomes align with the IS 2010 Student Outcomes (pp. 15-17) and conform to the Guiding Principles (pp. 5-6).

Psychology

The Psychology baccalaureate program outcomes align with the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major Version 2.0* developed in 2013 by the American Psychological Association (pp. 15-17). The course sequence has been revised in accordance with the guideline suggestions that students be encouraged to apply their learning in subsequent courses by making courses build upon each other. In this vein,

- PSYC 111 Introduction to Psychology is a prerequisite to PSYC 330 Understanding Statistics
- PSYC 330 is a prerequisite to PSYC 340 Research Methods
- PSYC 340 is a prerequisite to PSYC 350 Social Psychology

Additionally, the main project in PSYC 350 will be a research project requiring skills such as data collection and analysis to apply skills learned in 330/340.

2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs. The institution does not have post-baccalaureate and post-graduate programs.

Learning goals are identified by each program and articulated to students via course syllabus and course projects. Every syllabus is required to specify learning outcomes that connect to the program's overall learning outcomes and a project that is used to document achievement of this learning outcome. Projects/courses are mapped to the program's learning outcomes, and the program's assessment plan describes how these projects are reviewed as part of the program assessment process.

Undergraduate Program Learning Outcomes

Since 2000, VCSU programs have used a campus-wide set of "abilities" for their program assessment process, and previous self studies (2001, 2011) have discussed this framework and process in detail. Campus discussion about assessment which followed the 2011 HLC team visit, however, resulted in a review of this framework and an agreement that this framework did not adequately address the program content.

In order to make program assessment activities more meaningful--so they could be used to inform decisions about curricular and general program improvement--academic departments were encouraged to develop learning outcomes for each program and begin the shift from "abilities" assessment to program learning outcomes. Two programs led the way in this process, and their efforts are described in detail in Criterion 4 (where we embed our follow-up report on assessment). All other programs were required, by Fall 2013, to submit initial attempts at program learning outcomes and assessment plans. We are still refining these, program by program, as the work is uneven. Data is currently collected via annual program updates which are filed each September in Academic Affairs. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment is working with each department to help improve outcomes and articulate a specific, data-producing assessment plan. All department chairs have reviewed material from Walvoord's *Assessment Clear and Simple* 2nd Edition (2010) to help inform their understanding of program learning outcomes and assessment.

Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

From its inception the Graduate program has built a systematic assessment process using six Core Values and a final portfolio defense to document achievement. The six Core Values include

- Effective use of instructional technologies
- Expertise in research, particularly action research
- Expertise in assessment
- Supervisor/leader/coach
- Expertise in Curriculum/Instruction
- Diversity/Global awareness

These Core Values and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) lay the broad foundation for the overall program design. At the course level, the required projects and activities provide a rich and diverse collection of assessment opportunities for the instructor. The Core Values and NBPTS are mapped to the core courses and to courses in each concentration.

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

All courses and programs must maintain consistent expectations, regardless of delivery method or location. VCSU students may take courses online, face to face, at our NDSU location, or via early entry. Faculty credentials, course syllabi, learning outcomes, and performance expectations are consistent regardless of delivery type or location.

Online and Face-to-Face Delivery

Online courses are scheduled, taught, and assessed by the same faculty and program that offers the face to face versions of these course. The two are as similar as delivery mode allows, with the same syllabus outcomes and projects, the same textbooks, and the same course outline to assure consistent academic quality across the program. This allows for direct comparison by faculty on a course-by-course basis, to make certain students receive similar experiences and access to information.

Multiple Locations and Delivery

VCSU's elementary education program is delivered at NDSU and VCSU (face to face) and online (online includes Trinity Bible College students, who are disaggregated in the data for comparison purposes within the program). Given the size of this program (about 300 students) and the number of faculty participating, the School of Education and Graduate Studies keeps careful records of student and instructor data regarding program learning outcomes, candidate attitudes and competencies, and performance during student teaching. Two data items are provided to demonstrate how the program compares across delivery modes and locations:

- The 2014 Student Teaching Evaluation Program Breakdown provides examples of aggregated and disaggregated student teacher data. Disaggregated data for all programs begins on page 14; data is available both for online and distance students and also by location (for the Elementary education program).
- The Praxis II Passing Percentages document includes aggregated and disaggregated Praxis II

data for each location and mode of delivery. The unit monitors Praxis II success rates of candidates to determine if any academic areas are experiencing difficulties with state required academic content tests. The overall passing rates of over 93% provide evidence of test results above the NCATE requied 80% passing rates. The disaggregated data indicate candidate content-knowledge competency at each site and through each mode of course content delivery.

<u>Early Entry Courses</u>

Valley City State University maintains Early Entry (dual credit) programs with Valley City High School in ACCT 200, ENGL 110, 220, PHYS 161, and MATH 103. We also have a dual credit program with Barnes County North in ENGL 110 and 220.

All Early Entry (dual credit) instructors must have a master's degree. Their syllabi must follow the syllabi we have in corresponding courses. Required course projects are similar. The faculty are evaluated by students and VCSU department chairs. Early Entry instructors meet with their corresponding campus faculty twice a year and assess the projects from the high school students. VCSU has agreements with the high schools that follow SBHE Procedure 402.3.2. All faculty submit syllabi to the academic affairs office and provide information on seat time, text used, other tools used, and assessments used, to assure consistent, high-quality instruction.

Sources

- 2014 ST Eval Program Breakdowns for 3Apdf
- Blackboard Exemplary Course Program
- Conceptual Framework
- Graduate Student Handbook 2014-16
- Graduate Student Handbook 2014-16 (page number 3)
- InTASC Progressions At a Glance
- IS 2010 ACM final
- IS 2010 ACM final (page number 14)
- IS 2010 ACM final (page number 24)
- Library & Information Technologies (LIT)
- Master of Education Program
- NBPTS what_teachers_should_know
- Praxis II Passing Percentages for 3A
- psymajor-guidelines
- SBHE 402.3.2 Delivery of Dual-Credit College Courses
- SBHE 403.1.2 Institutional Instructional Program Evaluation
- SE2004Volume
- SE2004Volume (page number 19)
- SE2004Volume (page number 20)
- Teaching & Technology
- Technology Education
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 61)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 169)

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

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

The content of the General Education program must meet SBHE policy 403.7, which establishes minimum required lower division semester hours. Please see the attached chart for a comparison of SBHE and VCSU mandated credit hour distribution for General Education. The General Education program is outlined in the Course Catalog on pages 36-38.

In selecting content areas for the institutional specific area (in SBHE policy), VCSU faculty (originally the Curriculum Committee, now the General Education Council) have identified technology as an area of institutional emphasis and therefore require a three-credit course in Computer Information Systems or Computer Science as part of the student's breadth of knowledge. More recently, a concern that prescriptive program plans were preventing students from exploring the arts, humanities, and social science areas led to the decision to require two credits that could be taken from any of these areas, allowing students to pursue band, choir, art lessons, or additional coursework that broadens their knowledge of diverse, cultural studies. This decision results in an even distribution of credits between Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (14 credits) and Math, Science, and Technology (14 credits).

VCSU also requires a wellness course in the general education program. VCSU has a long history of supporting the inclusion of physical education in the general education program. In the institution's earliest years as a Normal School, a course of calisthenics was part of the required curriculum, to both support student health and provide materials for the student to use in his/her own classroom. Valley City Normal was the first school in the state to establish a Health and Physical Education department. The history of the campus, the continued general recognition of the importance of physical activity for good health, and the continued emphasis on teacher preparation at VCSU all support the inclusion of

a wellness course, although this is not required by SBHE policy.

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

The course catalog describes the mission, purpose, intellectual framework/outcomes, and specific requirements of the general education program on pages 36-38. In addition, every syllabus for a general education course identifies a course project that connects the course to one of the general education learning outcomes, providing the student with a concrete example of how the course fits into the general education program.

The general education program is overseen by the General Education Council, which includes one representative from every department that offers at least one general education course. The council developed the current program mission in 2011; in Summer 2014, the council reviewed the mission against the updated VCSU Mission and determined that the general education mission continues to articulate and support the VCSU mission statement.

Faculty in North Dakota have been actively involved in the AACU's LEAP initiative since 2009 (North Dakota became the sixth LEAP state in 2010). While VCSU's "abilities" structure (as articulated on page 36 of the catalog) appears to align with the LEAP outcomes, several years of assessment activities (outlined in Criteria 4) have resulted in a realization that we need to state general education learning outcomes more specifically to improve communication with new faculty, students, and external audiences. Therefore, as a result of two summer retreats and a year of campus discussion, the Council has adopted a revised set of General Education learning outcomes that correspond to the LEAP initiative, while still maintaining VCSU's emphasis on wellness and technology literacy. These new outcomes, which articulate both specific intellectual skills and the attitudes we believe students should possess, will be published in the 2016-17 catalog; faculty will be asked to begin switching to the new outcomes this fall, with an expected 100% compliance by Fall 2016. Corresponding changes to the General Education programs assessment plan are detailed in Criteria 4.

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

For the past 15 years, the VCSU Abilities have formed the central framework for general education and program learning outcomes. While the general education program has required completion of each of the eight abilities at a basic, introductory level, every degree program has identified a set of four abilities that its students will demonstrate at an advanced level at graduation, as documented in a required, digital student portfolio. The VCSU Abilities encompass the areas of research, communication, creative and critical thinking, global awareness, and collaboration, along with effective citizenship, aesthetic engagement, technology and wellness. Student portfolios attest to student engagement in these areas, and data gathered from assessment of student portfolios demonstrates overall achievement in these areas.

As we engaged in discussions about our assessment system and practices after the HLC Team visit in 2011, it became clear, however, that faculty wanted to address the gap between the Abilities framework and the content assessment of their specific programs. Programs were encouraged to refine program learning outcomes to develop clear, measurable outcomes that could eventually replace the Abilities; revised learning outcomes were collected as part of the annual program update and were reviewed by the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, who then provided feedback for improvement. The process used to develop the new Assessment Framework at VCSU is discussed in Criteria 4.

While the old framework (the VCSU Abilities and senior portfolio) is still in place, programs are now engaged in making the switch to program-defined learning outcomes that map to a set of institutional learning outcomes. The six Institutional Learning Outcomes (which are drawn from the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile, with the addition of Technology Literacy) include expectations for research and communication competence, critical and creative thinking, and engagement in the world outside the classroom, along with specialized knowledge (program content), ensuring both curricular quality and guidance for developing program and course improvements.

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

The VCSU mission documents acknowledge the "increasingly complex and diverse society" in which we live; one of the university purposes is to "promote the appreciation of diversity, a multicultural perspective, and global awareness." This appreciation of diversity and the ways it enriches thought, discussion, and learning is apparent in the co-curricular programming provided by the Office of Diversity (described in detail in Criterion 1.C).

VCSU's learning outcomes also emphasize the importance of diversity; the General Education outcomes include both Diversity and Civic Engagement as Learning goals, and a number of courses are mapped to provide projects related to these two areas, including Biology, Communication, English, Humanities, Geography History, and Sociology.

The School of Education and Graduate Studies (SEGS) and the Business Department have additionally developed coursework specifically around issues of human and cultural diversity, recognizing the importance this study has on student success in their future career.

- SEGS requires both a course (Understanding Cultural Diversity in Education) and a practicum experience (Culturally Diverse Practicum) of all education majors.
- Graduate students are likewise required to complete a course in "Exceptionality, Diversity, and Differences" as part of the required core courses for the M.Ed. degree.
- Business Administration programs include a course in international business (and, starting next year, a course in Diversity in the Workplace) as part of the core requirement, regardless of concentration.

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

The inclusion of "meaningful scholarship" in VCSU's updated mission statement (described in more

detail in Criteria 1A) has resulted in an increased awareness of scholarship on campus. From graduate-level action research projects to general student recitals, students are encouraged to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge. Some notable examples include

- Faculty Symposium (of the scholarship of teaching, annually in December)
- Student Symposium (student scholarship in courses, annually in May; described in detail in Criterion 3E)
- SOAR (Endergraduate research structuring faculty-student mentoring; described in detail in Criterion 3E)
- The Forge (student literary magazine, published annually)
- The Art Gallery (frequently includes student work and several solo student exhibits annually)
- Collaborative student work with faculty for the INBRE grant
- Student presentations at regional History, Biology, and Fisheries and Wildlife, STEM, and other conferences

To celebrate the many scholarly and creative activities of our faculty and students, we are in the process of organizing an annual publication. A partial list of the material that will be included in this document is housed in a database available online through the SOAR website.

Sources

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- About LEAP _ Association of American Colleges & Universities
- Biology Student Research Presentations
- College Lerning for the New Global Century
- College Lerning for the New Global Century (page number 13)
- Comparisong Chart SBHE VCSU Gen Ed
- Cornerstones pages 38-39
- Defining Commitments
- Faculty Symposium
- Fisheries and Wildlife Student Research Presentations
- History Student Research Presentations
- Inventory List _ SOAR
- McCarthy Gallery
- North Dakota INBRE _ IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence
- SBHE 403.7 Gen Ed
- Scholar Symposium2015
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- STEAM-Poster_Hagen-Brown-Clifton-DeMuth
- The Forge 2014
- The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015 (page number 3)
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015 (page number 17)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 38)

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

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

The number of full-time faculty with terminal degrees has increased over the past decade. Retention of faculty is also fairly strong: 25 full-time, tenured faculty members (37%) have served VCSU for 10 years or more. VCSU's student to faculty ratio is 11:1; of the 115 faculty, 73 are full-time, tenured or tenure track, 5 are full or part-time special appointment, and 37 are adjunct faculty (teaching 7 or fewer credits per semester)

While small classes are a hallmark of VCSU, this also results in inequities of workload as some programs must be subsidized by larger programs and General Education courses. In addition, faculty may choose to offer independent studies to assist students toward timely graduation, which further add to their workloads. Efforts have been made across campus to develop curricular options that reduce the need for these independent studies, although not necessarily reducing workload.

Recognizing the strain overload places on both the faculty member and the colleagues who must pick up the University service duties, Academic Policy and Affairs Council has agreed to restrict faculty overload to 1/5 of a full-time contract whenever possible. This restriction helps the Academic Affairs office more readily identify programs needing additional faculty support.

The typical faculty workload is 80% teaching, defined as 12 credits per semester of teaching or assigned responsibility, which might include department chair responsibilities, online program advising or other administrative activity in lieu of some teaching duties. The remaining 20% of the faculty contract should be spent in scholarly/creative activity, advising, and participation in campus

governance responsibilities. In response to HLC Team concerns, Faculty Senate spent two years reviewing the campus committee structure and developed a plan to reduce committees either by elimination or combination. This year Faculty Senate is following up that effort with a faculty workload study. We anticipate recommendations regarding advising assignments and number of committee appointments per faculty member to result from this review.

VCSU has added three new majors since the last HLC Assurance review: Athletic Training, Environmental Science, and Software Engineering. Each of these new programs grew out of existing curricula; as each program has gained enrollment, however, new faculty lines have been added to support the increase in curriculum and student numbers.

With the enrollment growth VCSU has experienced over the past few years and the support of grant dollars in Education (Bush Foundation) and STEM areas, VCSU has also seen a recent increase in special, non-tenure track appointments. As the University adjusts to growth, the use of these appointments is deliberate: one-year appointments allow the department to gauge the continued growth of a program and to fund the position from more flexible, local accounts. In this way, enrollment revenues directly support instruction. Full-time (even though temporary) appointments benefit students more than a series of adjunct appointments, since faculty have more interaction with the department and institution, and stronger commitment to its programs and purposes, all of which strengthens continuity of instruction.

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

Faculty members at VCSU possess the necessary professional competencies to provide effective instruction and carry out their related responsibilities. The table summarizes the distribution of degrees and tenure across across all twelve academic departments. The percentage of full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty with doctoral or terminal master's degrees has increased steadily from 42% (2001), 63% (2010), to 65% in 2014.

Faculty Appointments

Faculty quality is documented by credential files, by self-evaluation, and by student and peer assessment. Policy 605.01 outlines the expectations for faculty credentials, to include a terminal degree for tenured faculty, except in cases where the academic discipline area recognizes the appropriateness of other, professional qualifications. For example, a faculty member in Teacher Education may have completed 15 years of public school teaching experience, or a faculty member in Business may have an industry-recognized certification that qualifies him/her to provide the desired depth of knowledge and experience necessary for students new to that professional field.

The decision to require a terminal degree as a condition of tenure has engaged faculty in doctoral studies requiring research and writing, with faculty bringing these experiences into the classroom in order to provide current content information and increasing course rigor. Three drawbacks, however, brought the Academic Policy and Affairs Council (APAC) to reconsider this decision and led to development of the "professionally qualified" provision in V605.01. First, the requirement places other faculty in a program under significant strain, as they must carry the committee work and other business of the University. Second, the new faculty member is faced with a burdensome load and conflicting responsibilities--to become part of the VCSU community, it is vital to participate in university activities and tenure requires service to the university, while at the same time, the faculty

member is a student with a contractual obligation to complete the doctoral program in a designated time frame. Third, a series of challenging searches with small applicant pools and rejected offers have demonstrated the difficulty of hiring doctorally-qualified faculty in some areas.

The "professionally qualified" provision was first used for hiring and contract revision in Spring 2011, so its impact on faculty credentials and effective classroom instruction remains open for review. However, the faculty remain committed to seeking doctorally-qualified candidates as their first choice. Of the 5 full-time new faculty hired for the 2015-16 academic year, in national searches, 4 have completed doctorates and 1 has a master's degree plus 7 years of public-school teaching experience in her field. If this hiring trend continues, the "professionally qualified" provision may strengthen VCSU's academic programs by providing some industry-related experience while generally supporting the desire for doctoral qualifications.

Graduate Faculty

Full Graduate faculty are full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty who hold terminal degrees and have backgrounds in education. Adjunct faculty who meet these requirements, and qualified non-tenured faculty, may be granted Associate Graduate faculty status, which must be reviewed and renewed yearly by the Graduate Council. Currently, VCSU has 21 Graduate faculty members and 11 Associate Graduate faculty (9 of which are adjunct faculty).

Graduate faculty status recognizes a faculty member's teaching and research qualifications that enable them to conduct graduate level instruction and to supervise and direct graduate student research and scholarship. The Graduate faculty are expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, the practice of teaching, and service to the institution and discipline.

Adjunct Faculty

Because consistency and quality of instruction provide the best learning environment, VCSU has a long tradition of minimizing the use of adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty must meet the same minimum hiring expectations as full-time faculty; that is, they must have a master's degree in their teaching area. This requirement has historically limited the number of adjuncts available, as part-time faculty are rarely interested in driving from Fargo to Valley City, and the pool of master-degreed residents in Valley City remains low. Adjunct faculty are subject to student evaluations each term and complete an annual faculty-evaluation process with the supervising department chair (Policy V605.01.02). Student comments, syllabi, and peer reviews are scrutinized carefully, to assure consistency and effective instruction. The Academic Affairs office maintains files for adjunct faculty.

During the 2014-15 academic year, the adjunct budget of $346,546 represented 7.56% of the total dollars allocated to faculty salaries. Of this amount, $167,851 was paid to true part-time instruction and $178,695 (52%) to full-time faculty accepting overload assignments. Four years ago, 10% of the salary dollars went to the adjunct budget, and three-fifths of the adjunct budget was paid to full-time faculty. This trend toward less funding for adjuncts and a reduced percentage going to faculty overload demonstrates both the success of APAC to reduce faculty overloads and the increased number of full-time faculty lines added over the last five years.

Since the current increase in enrollment, especially in Education, has required the addition of some adjunct-led coursework and significant overload for faculty, the administration has responded promptly in recent years to approve several full-time positions to alleviate faculty overloads and

maintain program strengths. Some of these are one-year, special appointments, and some are tenure-track, depending on the program, salary resources, and actual on-campus growth. Given the difficulty in attracting qualified adjunct faculty, managing growth has been problematic, with the use of one-year, special appointments seen as the best solution at this point in many cases.

Early Entry

Faculty at the two high schools where VCSU offers early entry courses are required to meet the same minimum credentials as adjunct faculty on the VCSU campus. We have several early entry faculty with M.Ed. degrees rather than graduate coursework in their field of teaching expertise. These individuals typically have several years of teaching experience in their field, along with professional development coursework (non-credit) and training in teaching advanced placement in their field, all of which provide depth of expertise. We are currently considering how to evaluate these types of "tested experience" in light of HLC's expectations for faculty qualifications, because it is clear from reviewing student work that our students in these courses are receiving a quality education.

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

The institution uses course evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessment processes to evaluate instruction, assuring continuous improvement and teaching excellence.

Student Course Evaluation

The campus has long required student evaluation of one course per year for tenure-track and non-tenure track employees. Department chairs use these evaluations for faculty growth, evaluation for promotion and tenure, and student satisfaction. Some departments require evaluation of all courses every semester. In Spring 2010, the Academic Policy and Affairs Council adopted CoursEval and a set of faculty-developed course evaluation questions. A successful Summer 2010 pilot led to implementation for all courses beginning in Fall 2010. Faculty receive summary reports of evaluations within their courses along with campus mean scores for each question. Faculty can use this information to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. This reflection is included within the self-assessment portion of peer evaluation.

Tenure-Track Faculty Evaluation

Tenure-track faculty are evaluated annually by their peers, using the rubric and process described in V605.01.02 (Evaluation) and V605.01 (Tenure--for use during the tenure year). First-year faculty are evaluated in the spring. Faculty in their second through fifth years are evaluated in the Fall. Department chairs oversee the process and establish a peer review committee. Evaluations include classroom observations, student evaluations, reflective statements, and evaluation by the peer review committee members. The reflective statements include discussion of the faculty member's teaching philosophy, scholarship, and service to the organization and community. Faculty and committee members discuss the evaluation and make recommendations for improvement and continued employment. The department chair reviews and comments on the evaluation, making a recommendations for improvement and continued employment. The faculty member can submit material or responses to the formal evaluation. Evaluations are forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and then to the University President.

During their third year, probationary faculty undergo third year review, which simply replaces the review by the VPAA with a more formal review by the University Tenure and Promotion Committee. This group reviews the files and makes recommendations and suggestions to assist faculty as they move toward the tenure year.

In their sixth year, faculty members eligible for tenure follow the same peer review process, while also creating an electronic portfolio to be assessed first by the departmental tenure committee and then by the University Tenure and Promotion Committee. The Committee's recommendation is submitted to the President, who makes recommendations to the State Board of Higher Education, the final-decision making body regarding tenure.

Post-Tenure Evaluations

In accordance with NDUS policy 605.1 (section 6), all faculty members must undergo annual evaluation. Tenured faculty members complete a reflective self-evaluation that discusses their course, scholarly, and service accomplishments for the year and sets up goals for the upcoming year (V605.01.02). A composite summary of CoursEval student evaluations must be included. This evaluation is reviewed by the department chair and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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

Professional Development and Pedagogical Support

The institution is known for innovative educational uses for technology. Since 1997, all faculty members and students have been issued laptop computers, with the campus becoming wireless in 2004. Each classroom is equipped with an overhead projection system to project the computer screen. Most rooms include VCR/DVD capability, with DVD support also available for the laptop computers. Laptops are equipped with web cameras. Students may access camcorders, scanners, printers, digital cameras, and other equipment. Faculty, staff, and students have access to the Blackboard LMS.

Beginning in 2009, faculty could choose between PCs and MacBook Pros, and in Fall 2011, students in targeted majors (Music, Spanish, Library Science, and Art) started receiving MacBooks. Currently, each major is designated as either a PC or MacBook major, and computers are distributed according to major. This allows faculty to use the computer more frequently aligned to their field of study and provide students with technology experiences that mirror those in the career field.

Faculty have access to support for technology-enhanced teaching via the Instructional Design Team, an interdisciplinary group of faculty experts who are available for peer-to-peer training.

The Distance Learning and Faculty Development office provides information, training, and guidance for instruction both on campus and via distance delivery. The staff consists of a full-time director and the Instructional Design Team**.**

 VCSU provides numerous faculty development and support opportunities, including:

- New faculty orientation activities
- Mentors for new faculty
- Grants for professional conference and workshop travel
- Mini-grants for up to $1,500 to enhance student learning with technology

- Weekly brown bag seminars sponsored by the Instructional Design Team
- Training opportunities sponsored by the Technology Service Center or Director of Distance Learning and Faculty Development
- Library training for information literacy tools
- Department brown bag lunches or lectures
- Welcome week workshops
- Summer institutes and workshops on assessment, technology, and/or pedagogical issues

New faculty are paired with mentors, who provide support in adjusting the the University culture and expectations of faculty members. Mentors also assist in managing classroom equipment, Blackboard course development, and classroom projects for learning outcomes assessment.

To assist in promoting a learner-focused campus culture, the VPAA runs a series of reading groups each year:

- New faculty reading group (first 8 weeks, for all faculty new to VCSU, using a text that introduces issues in beginning as a college instructor)
- 3rd year faculty (5 weeks at the start of Spring semester, using a text on learner-centered instruction or use of technology in the classroom)
- Department chair reading group (to provide training support for new chairs and to enhance the communication and administrative skills of the "middle" leadership)
- Variable group, usually second 8 weeks of first semester, based on faculty needs, interests This year, the group will be second year faculty, reading McKeachie's *Teaching Tips*.

Professional Affiliations

Faculty members are actively involved in state, regional, national, and international professional organizations, as documented in their annual self-evaluations. Faculty members have held offices, peer-reviewed papers for conferences, and edited or been on editorial boards for scholarly publications. In addition, faculty present research, attend panels of others' research, and participate in short courses or pre-conferences on topics of teaching and research at professional organization conferences. Faculty may apply to the Faculty Development Committee for travel money to support these activities.

Several faculty are also involved with NCATE-related accreditation review boards in their discipline areas, bringing this expertise and knowledge of best practices back to VCSU's programs for improved curricular development.

5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

Several institution policies address faculty accessibility for student inquiry. Policy V605.13 requires faculty availability in "reasonable and consistent ways" for "consultation with students outside of class hours." Faculty teaching online or evening classes should "adjust their schedules to balance the time spent in the performance of those duties outside of normal business hours with the need for a campus presence." Course syllabi must outline "expectations regarding faculty availability, preferred modes of communication, appropriate etiquette (if so desired), and response times," noting that email is the official VCSU means of communication. Faculty also are encouraged to maintain an online gradebook within the Blackboard LMS and make timely reports concerning student progress and grades (via Starfish™).

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

All management staff in student support services areas possess at least a baccalaureate degree, with several holding a master's and some with doctoral degrees. The annual summer professional development seminars focus upon higher education-related topics including office technologies, effective communication, leadership, customer service, and collaborative activities. Staff members are encouraged and supported in professional development within their areas of responsibility.

Sources

- Average Faculty Compensation Rate
- End of Course Evaluation Questions
- Faculty Degrees by Department
- SBHE 605.1 Academic Freedom and Tenure-Academic Appointments
- Staff by Broadband Number
- Summer 2015 Professional Development Seminar Flyer
- Tenure_Promotion_Evaluation_Rubric
- V605.01 VCSU Tenure Procedures
- V605.01.02 Faculty Evaluation
- V605.09 Faculty Responsibilities
- V605.09.01 Expectations of Faculty Teaching Online Courses
- V605.13 Office Hours and Faculty Presence
- V605.16 Faculty Responsibility - Reporting Grades and Academic Progress

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

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

Student support services include Enrollment Services, a freshman experience program, academic advising, counseling and health services, campus life, intercultural experiences, and career services.

Enrollment Services

The Office of Enrollment Services identifies students with interests and talents that match the University's offerings and opportunities, and implements the strategies necessary to attract, inform, and enroll talented students through college fairs, direct mail, high school visits, and campus visits.

Enrollment Services also utilize students as ambassadors. These VCSU Viking Ambassadors are key in new student recruitment, describing what they love about the school while also providing details about the campus, staff, and student body. Prospective students can get a campus tour with a Viking Ambassador, make an appointment with a faculty member in their academic interest area, visit with an Enrollment Services Admissions Counselor, and visit other offices or classroom areas as desired.

Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office supports recruitment, retention and academic success by helping remove financial barriers that may prevent students from achieving their educational goals. Beginning in Fall 2014, the Financial Aid office, in collaboration with the Business Office, delivered presentations for Learning to Live students. Students were informed about how to access their financial aid and billing information through Campus Connection. Surveys indicated that students found the sessions to be very helpful. The collaborative session is now in its second year.

Learning to Live Program

The Learning to Live program provides transition support for first year students and helps address the

needs of increasing numbers of first-generation students. At the beginning of the Freshman year, every student participates in the one credit Learning to Live (L2L) Program. The purposes of this program are to:

- orient students to the University
- help students examine their educational goals and objectives
- develop team skills
- develop conflict-resolution skills
- involve students in community projects and service learning

The program supports student retention by helping students be successful and feel part of the campus community. A faculty or staff member serves as the instructor for each group and is assisted by upper-level students who serve as mentors for the new students. One recent change to the program based upon student survey feedback and feedback from a faculty input session is pairing groups of approximately 15 students with a faculty member in their major interest area.

Academic Advising

Academic advising is coordinated through the Office of Student Academic Services. Each student is assigned an advisor from within their academic program area and encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per semester for assistance in course scheduling. The advisor helps students interpret academic requirements and regulations, establish educational goals, and determine course schedules. Students hold primary responsibility for meeting all appropriate academic requirements.

Counseling Services

Mental health counseling services are available for VCSU students, faculty, and staff. Services are provided by a mental health professional who holds a Ph.D. in Human Development, Masters of Education in Community Counseling, and is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and a National Certified Counselor. The professional is a .5 FTE counselor who serves as a faculty member and is highly visible to and available for students to schedule appointments. Over the past several years, VCSU has received graduate student interns from North Dakota State University, University of Mary, and Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Counseling services are designed to assist clients in resolving any personal concerns, with topics including relationships, unpleasant feelings, life decisions, values clarification, study problems, depression, eating disorders, sexual identity issues, substance abuse, or general confusion. This helps address an important need for students in our region, noting the elevated incidents of mental illness and suicide. All services are provided free of charge to VCSU community members, and all information is confidential. During the 2014-15 academic year, 497 appointments were held with students, faculty, and staff.

This office also provides alcohol education, an important topic in North Dakota due to the high rates of alcohol use among young adults. The institution is a member of the North Dakota Higher Education Consortium for Substance Abuse Prevention, made up of representatives from each of the 11 North Dakota University System campuses, the tribal colleges, the University of Jamestown, and the University of Mary. The consortium provides resources, knowledge, and networks to address student misuse of alcohol and other substances. The consortium also advocates for stronger prevention policies, collaborates in campus-community partnerships, and helps campuses develop evidence-based prevention programs.

Health Services

The campus employs a .5 FTE registered nurse with services available free of charge for all students. One factor in the .5 FTE staff dedicated to the office is the lower demonstrated physical need due to about 1/3 of students enrolling in courses online or at distance locations. Services include health assessment and/or M.D. referral, blood-pressure checks, pregnancy testing, strep testing, and tuberculosis testing for international students and for students in the Athletic Training and Nursing programs. Students may also receive first aid supplies, condoms, and over-the-counter medications.

Monthly satellite clinics from the Central Valley Health Unit in Jamestown are offered on campus, with approximately 15 students attending each clinic. These clinics provide physical exams, sexually transmitted disease testing, HIV testing, birth control, pap smears, breast exams, and health education. The nurse is actively engaged in educational programming and serves as the campus wellness coordinator, regularly providing programs in the residence halls, classrooms, and for student groups. During the 2014-15 academic year, 1,027 student appointments were made with Health Services, with 56 referrals made to medical providers. Students use the services regularly and give high marks to the staff.

Residential Life

The primary purpose of the residence halls is to provide a living environment conducive to academic achievement and personal growth of residents. The institution operates five residence halls and requires all students to live on campus during their first year at VCSU. A staff of head residents and resident assistants provide educational and social programming within the residence halls and students are represented by an Inter-Residence Hall Council made up of residents from each floor. Residence hall counts and occupancy rates have increased steadily over the past several years. Students rate their residence hall experience quite favorably.

Students respond to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) on an even-year cycle, rating the importance of and their satisfaction with VCSU on statements relating to this residence life.

SSI statements and average satisfaction scores between 2002 and 2014 on a scale of 1-low to 7-high follow:

- Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable (adequate space, lighting, heat, air, etc.). (5.29)
- Residence hall regulations are reasonable. (5.37)
- Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual. (5.33)

The Student Center and Student Activities

The Student Center provides a well-rounded program of social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities. The Student Center serves as a meeting place for students, faculty, alumni, and the community. The center provides conference rooms, a complete food service, a bookstore with mail service, a game room, a swimming pool, and a number of lounge areas. The Center strives to create and administer programs which serve the best interests of students. Programs and activities are planned and administered by student groups, the Student Senate, Viking Campus Activities Board (VCAB), and the Director of Student Activities.

The VCAB governs student-related activities: e.g., dances, coffeehouse singers, movies, game nights,

comedians, bands, weekend activities, and informative speakers. The board, advised by the Director of the Student Center and supported by student-fee revenue allocated by the Student Senate Finance Commission, is responsible for formulating and carrying out a broad range of social, recreational, and cultural programs. During the 2014-15 academic year, 88 activities programs were held with typical attendance ranging from 125 to 220.

Diversity Services

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, created in 2013, "engages in initiatives to provide resources and support to students, faculty, and staff of diverse backgrounds as well as all persons interested in issues related to diversity. The office facilitates intentional interaction and engagement by serving as an advocate as well as promoting awareness, education and understanding of various dimensions of diversity and multiculturalism on campus and in the community." The office provides activities such as diversity training and education sessions, advocacy and support, diversity resources, student mentorship, themed events, and contests. Student survey response examples are linked here.

Study Abroad Opportunities

Valley City State University has signed agreements with the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California Sur in La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico, with successful student exchanges among the campuses. Students have spent semesters studying culture and practicing language fluency in Honduras, Peru, and Spain. Faculty have sponsored student trips to Mexico, Costa Rica, the Netherlands, and England. The most recent agreement is with the Zhejiang Economic and Trade Polytechnic (ZJETP) in Hangzhou, China. Presidents and faculty members from both universities have visited each other's campus, with faculty from VCSU teaching for eight weeks and working with ELL students for four. Students from VCSU spent three weeks in China and students from China have taken courses from VCSU. The campus continues to explore international opportunities for students and faculty.

The institution maintains formal affiliation agreements with two international study abroad organizations, Cultural Experiences Abroad (CEA) and International Studies Abroad (ISA), offering opportunities to experience a semester, summer term, or partial term of study abroad. These partnerships, agreements, and affiliations have facilitated students studying abroad.

Career Services

Career Services at VCSU serves as a clearinghouse for job opportunities and a resource for students deciding on a major or career. The office coordinates placement activities whether they are on/off campus, permanent/temporary, or professional-level employment. Job vacancies are listed for schools, businesses, and industries in North Dakota and surrounding states.

The office provides, free of charge, job search and support to all students and alumni. Support includes assistance with resumes, cover letters, interviewing, and navigating the internet. Graduate and Professional School information is also available, including catalogs, tests, and other admission criteria. In the past year, 153 resumes were reviewed and critiqued by the Director of Career Services. In most cases, this assistance included face-to-face meetings with students.

Student Learning Outcome surveys are conducted for every class and event sponsored by Career Services. Students have consistently responded that the class/event met their expectations and the information provided was relevant and helpful to them. Students have also indicated that they would recommend the event/class to others.

The Career Services Office also coordinates internship opportunities. Students must have at least sophomore status and maintain a 2.5 GPA to be eligible and may work full- or part-time in positions with local, regional, national, or international entities related to their major, minor, or career interest. Evaluations completed by the student interns and employers assist the institution with skills focus and curricular revision pertaining to specific job markets.

Student Success

The Office of Student Success, created in 2013, facilitates student centered support to increase persistence and completion through proactive efforts to connect students to resources that can enhance success and collaboration with other campus units to develop and support student success initiatives. The office manages the retention software, Starfish™, and follows up with flags raised within that system to coordinate support efforts for students needing academic, financial, or other assistance.

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

Learning Support

The Learning Center began as the Writing Center in Fall 2005 in response to a State Board of Higher Education requirement that campuses provide instructional support for students receiving an ACT Writing score less than 16, and/or struggle in ENGL 100 and ENGL 110. Its original purpose was to help students write more effectively. In Fall 2009, tutoring was provided for students in MATH 102 and MATH 103. The center, renamed the Learning Center, currently supports student learning needs through an average of 45 available hours of writing tutoring and 20 available hours of math tutoring per week, with writing and math tutors also available during scheduled team study tables for each athletic program.

Learning support requests from faculty and athletic coaches include support for research and writing needs of face-to-face and online students, and workshops to support research writing, study skills, and test taking. Praxis I test preparation learning intervention support for targeted athletes, and tracking of weekly independent study table time completed by athletes. Learning support requests from administration include delivery of ENGL 100 Composition Lab as a co-requisite for ENGL 110 student with an ACT score between 14 and 17 and learning intervention support for students on academic probation.

Course Placement

Course placement cutoff scores are established through NDUS Procedure 402.1.2. VCSU uses peer tutoring (VCSU ASC 88 Composition Lab) as the developmental English co-enroll with ENGL 110 for ACT English 14-17 or equivalent (as allowed by NDUS Procedure 402.1.2, section 4). Students are allowed to retest on campus using the Compass test prior to registration, to assure accurate placement.

Preparatory Instruction

Students who do not place into Math 103 or English 110 are required to take preparatory math or English coursework, per NDUS Procedure 402.1.2. At VCSU, these students enroll in courses

offered by [Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB)](#). These courses are taught on the VCSU campus by DCB faculty. These courses are transcripted as pre-college transfer coursework and do not count for college credit. They do, however, provide a smooth transition into college-level coursework since they are taught on the VCSU campus and outwardly appear to be part of the college experience.

Students who do not meet VCSU's entrance requirements are encouraged to apply to the DCB [Bridges Program](#). The program is a collaborative partnership between VCSU and Dakota College at Bottineau which allows students who do not qualify for VCSU admission to pursue undergraduate coursework through DCB but remain within the Valley City area. Bridges program students become acclimated to the VCSU campus through familiarity with faculty, staff, fellow students, and offices. Bridges students are engaged in the VCSU community through:

- Participation in Learning to Live classes
- Living in one of VCSU's residence halls
- Enjoying VCSU's dining services
- Attending VCSU campus activities
- Participating in VCSU's many clubs, intramural activities, and organizations
- Receiving a campus-issued laptop

Upon successfully completing 24 credits of 100-level or above coursework with a 2.0 GPA, students can transfer their credits to VCSU and continue their academic career.

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

Academic advising is coordinated through the Office of Student Academic Services. Each student is assigned an advisor from within their academic program area and encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per semester for assistance in course scheduling. The advisor helps students interpret academic requirements and regulations, establish educational goals, and determine course schedules. Students hold primary responsibility for meeting all appropriate academic requirements.

Faculty advisors receive an advisement folder for each student with general information, advising worksheets, their ACT profile, their College Student Inventory (CSI) summary, and any other pertinent information. Faculty also are connected to their advisees through Starfish™ and ConnectND. The Office of Student Academic Services processes requests for changing advisors that may be made by students at any time. Students who require additional advising support have ready access to the Director of Student Academic Services, as well.

Degree Audit

Students may view their progress toward degree completion through their Campus Connection student information system portal. Advisors may view degree progress for their advisees through availability of real-time information through this system, as well

Starfish™Advising Support

In January 2013, VCSU launched Starfish™ with the goals of improving the communication between faculty and student academic services, providing tracking of our interactions with students, and heightening student awareness through early alerts. Faculty and appropriate staff receive training in student support processes. Students receive training upon enrolling in courses. Partly as a result of these efforts, the IPEDS first to second year retention rate changed from 64% (2012 cohort) and

69.8% (2013 cohort) to 70.83% (2014 cohort). Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 usage statistics are here. In every semester since implementation, faculty response rates to second week and midterm surveys have ranged from 94-99%, a response rate that has been recognized by Starfish™ as an impressive demonstration of faculty adoption. Starfish™ is in the process of expanding its advising support features, and VCSU looks forward to implementing these.

[Bachelor of University Studies](#)

The Bachelor of University Studies degree allows students to design a course of study which fits with their interests and life goals. Degree plans must meet the generally accepted goals of a baccalaureate degree and be approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The proposed degree plan must meet with the generally accepted goals of a bachelor's degree. Degree plans must include:

- Completion of the General Education Requirements
- A statement of the interests and goals the student expects to meet by choosing the Bachelor of University Studies degree.
- A program of study consisting of a minimum of 120 semester hours with at least 50 semester hours of upper-level credit, and an area of concentration of 32 semester hours. The courses may cross departmental lines, but the areas must be related and justified by the student's goals. The candidate for the Bachelor of University Studies degree must meet all other general requirements and obligations for graduation.
- The student's Senior Portfolio should demonstrate the Abilities required by the divisions reflected in the concentration. Projects for the Senior Portfolio should be selected from upper-level course work.

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

[Allen Memorial Library](#)

Allen Memorial Library's primary mission is "to support and enhance the academic programs of Valley City State University by providing the customized learning and teaching resources needed by students, faculty, administration, and staff. Allen Memorial Library provides learning resources in all formats, including access to online databases. The library's staff helps users to develop information literacy, to recognize when information is needed, and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the information they find."

The gate count for the library has remained steady over the last 10 years. A planned focus on user services combined with recent minor renovations have successfully increased usage statistics. Students increasingly see the library as a destination for study and research while seeking information-finding assistance.

Technology Service Center

The Technology Service Center mission is "to provide an innovative technology environment and superior customer satisfaction". Services include technical support and training, help desk services, information technology resources, and laptop initiative support. Services include Help Desk Technical

Support, a Personal Web Portal, Online Learning Management System, IP Telephone and Unified Messaging, Web Conferencing, Class Recordings, Software Licensing and Distribution, Campus Connections to Administrative Computing, Interactive Video Services, Notebook Computers, On-Campus Technology Services, Smart Classrooms, Network Connections, and Equipment Checkout.

5. The institution provides faculty and student guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Instruction in information literacy and assistance in developing strong documentation habits are available through the library, the Learning Center, and are emphasized throughout the General Education curriculum, academic, and co-curricular opportunities.

General Education

Information literacy is a significant aspect of learning that is formally assessed within several courses, workshops, and seminars hosted by professional library staff members. All first-year courses, including ENGL 110 College Composition I, ENGL 120 College Composition II, and ENGL 125 Introduction to Professional Writing feature specific lessons on information literacy and responsible knowledge use. Professional library staff members conduct presentations and workshops within sections of each course upon how to conduct research, evaluate sources, correctly cite sources, and incorporate sources within classroom research activities.

Presentations emphasize the use of library databases, internet searches and the evaluation of all sources found through these information searches. Students, faculty, and staff understand that all sources are not equal in reliability or quality. Professional library staff provide tools and information necessary for evaluation of research sources.

Faculty and Staff

Professional library staff deliver professional development seminars and workshops to faculty and staff members regarding effectively searching for and using quality information. Presentation forums include workshops, brown bag sessions, summer institutes, and other training opportunities. Presentation topics include:

- EasyBib: citation tool
- ARTstor: images and tools for presentations
- Films on Demand: sharing and using this library
- JSTOR: archival databases covering many topics
- Learning Express: online practice for Praxis and other tests
- LibGuides: users can adapt available guides or make their own
- Copyright policies

Learning Center Support for Research and Writing

The Learning Center supports the research and writing needs of VCSU students, including campus undergraduate students, online students, and graduate students. Learning Center tutors are available to offer in-class workshops explaining APA and MLA rules for citing sources in addition to providing individual assistance for any student requesting helps with source citations.

Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR)

The SOAR program encourages faculty-mentored research, artistry, and creative projects for undergraduates students at VCSU. In this High-Impact Practice (HIP), students work with a faculty or staff mentor to produce a short proposal communicating the essence and scope of the intended work. Members of the SOAR Advisory Group rank proposals with a rubric. The program especially seeks to encourage interdisciplinary research and discovery outside of regular course projects. Research involving human subjects must be approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Action Research and the Graduate Program

Students in the Master of Education program must complete an action research project, which they present as a part of their final portfolio defense. Since action research requires the use of field research, students are introduced early to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) purposes and policy. Students must receive IRB approval prior to beginning their research. Several courses (TECH 675 Research and Assessment in Tech Ed, EDUC 685 Action Research in Education and LMIS 660 Applied Research in Current School Library Issues) contain units on action research and ethical research practices to assist students as they prepare their research proposals. Students receive individual support from their advisor to address any questions or concerns when preparing the proposal and IRB form. Through this process, faculty help model responsible and ethical research methods.

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- Viking Ambassadors

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

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

A number of co-curricular activities at VCSU contribute to the development of a full and well-rounded educational experience. VCSU's Mission focuses on preparing students as educators, leaders, and engaged citizens; many of the co-curricular opportunities available mesh effectively within this framework.

All campus organizations are asked to include a service component in their annual schedule of activities; this expectation helps students look outside themselves and identify ways they can support the community in which they live and understand their role as engaged citizens. These same student-run organizations help build leadership abilities, as students move from membership to organizational roles as president, secretary, etc. Each organization must have an advisor to help facilitate learning and organization success.

The range of activities is broad, from academic to social, to community-based programs. A sample of this range is provided below:

- Student-led media production
- Theatre season--several productions, one of which is student-produced annually
- Art gallery exhibitions, many of which present student work
- Musical performances--individual recitals, general student recitals, and band and choral concerts
- Participation in Community Orchestra
- Publication of The Forge, the student literary magazine
- Leadership opportunities in student government, including senate and activities boards
- Freshman mentors--serve as group leaders in the freshman seminar Learning to Live
- Viking Ambassadors--assist the enrollment services office and work with prospective students
- Resident Assistants--serve as a resource and provide programming for residence hall students
- Intercollegiate and intramural athletics

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

The VCSU Mission makes the following claims: meaningful scholarship, ethical service, skilled use of technology, to prepare educators, leaders, and engaged citizens. While many examples abound in academic coursework, co-curricular activities also play an important role in enhancing the educational experience.

Ethical Service

While all student organizations are encouraged to complete a service project, the university also participates in service and civic engagement more broadly across campus. Examples include a semi-annual highway clean-up project, completed jointly by the Student, Staff, and Faculty Senates each semester, and the "Day of Service"--identified as January 19, 2015 (last year) and September 24, 2015 (this fall, to coincide with President Mason's inauguration celebrations). In addition, the Learning to Live program, designed for first-year freshman students, annually features student participation in a squash harvest that supports the local food bank and another specific group service project. These projects embrace the "ethical service" and "engaged citizens" portions of the VCSU Mission.

Meaningful Scholarship

Academic programs include a variety of scholarship activities, including capstone activities and, for the graduate program, an action research paper. There are two co-curricular activities, however, that stand out in presenting meaningful opportunities for students to engage in scholarly activities.

1. Since 2005, the Student Scholar Symposium has been a prominent research activity on campus with the goal of offering students opportunities to engage in public discussion of their course projects with the campus community. Each spring students participate in a well-attended poster session. Presentations are reviewed by a judging panel, and student winners receive cash prizes for their work.

2. Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR), designed to promote student research with faculty and staff mentors as a High-Impact Practice identified by Association of American Colleges and Universities and the National Survey of Student Engagement, is in its second year of implementation. Student submissions are evaluated by the SOAR Advisory Council with a scoring rubric prior to approval and examples of accepted submissions are linked. Assessment information is being compiled for the established SOAR learning outcomes after the first year of implementation.

Skilled Use of Technology

All full-time students and faculty, as well as, most staff are issued either a MacBook Pro, or a Microsoft Windows based laptop. Full-time VCSU students, selected other collaborative students, and full-time faculty receive the latest model computer. Part-time students have a choice of either a current model laptop (depending on availability) or a previous model laptop at a lower cost. Access to the computer 24/7, and to high-quality, industry standard software, gives every student, regardless of financial means, the same technology advantage.

Students receive either a Mac or a PC based on the major(s) declared; each academic program has identified the platform best suited to its profession, and students in that program are provided with the software and experiences necessary to be successful in their chosen field upon graduation. Education students, for example, all receive the MacBook Pro because the majority of K-12 schools in the region use Apple products in their classrooms; students in Communications and Art likewise learn to use the software used by professionals in their respective fields on the MacBook Pro. Business and science majors, on the other hand, are better prepared with the Windows-based laptop.

Faculty and staff in every field make a careful effort to provide a technology-rich environment that helps student learn to make effective use of their laptops and other technologies.

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- VCSU Theatre 2014-2015
- Viking Ambassadors

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

VCSU offers quality programs that meet program expectations set by external accreditors and established discipline-specific standards. Courses and programs articulate learning goals appropriate to the appropriate level (graduate or undergraduate). Program quality and learning outcomes are consistent across all delivery modes and locations, including face to face, online, at NDSU, and via Early Entry delivery. Consistency is established using common syllabi and outcomes, employing the same faculty in both delivery modes and locations, and regularly comparing outcome data to assure consistency.

VCSU's General Education program meets SBHE program requirements; its learning outcomes are in large part aligned with the AACU LEAP initiative. The Institutional Learning Outcomes, both past and present, form a central framework that values research, communication, critical and creative thinking, and engagement in the world outside the classroom. VCSU faculty and students are actively engaged in creative and scholarly pursuits.

VCSU is attentive to faculty qualifications as part of its hiring process and has policies in place to help guide faculty appointments for all instructors, whether adjunct, special, or tenure-track. All faculty are evaluated annually, according to established VCSU policies. The university provides appropriate faculty development activities to assure quality online and face-to-face instruction, and encourages faculty to pursue professional development through professional affiliations and conference participation.

Student services support student learning, as well, including learning services, library and technology resources, counseling and health services, appropriate facilities, and instruction in information literacy. In addition, co-curricular programs provide opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Students have multiple opportunities for research, leadership, and service learning.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

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

Faculty complete two complementary program review activities. The first, the Annual Program Update, provides documentation of short-term goals, annual assessment data, and annual budget/curricular decisions. These are due in September of each year. The second, the formal program review, completed approximately every six years, provides a comprehensive review of the program, shapes long-term goals and assesses program viability. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment reviews results of both activities through processes outlined below. A summary of program reviews is submitted annually to the North Dakota University System office.

The Annual Program Update

Faculty identify short-term goals for their programs. In the fall of each academic year, programs are asked to report on the achievement of these plans, provide assessment data for their Learning Outcome measures and portfolio review, and plans for the future. Information contained within the

annual program update must accompany budget or curricular requests. These Annual Program Updates are submitted to the VPAA office and reviewed by the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Formal Program Review

Formal program review generally occurs on a six-year cycle established by the VPAA, although some programs are reviewed more frequently because of the rapidly changing nature of the field or the demands of accreditation.   State Board of Higher Education Policy 403.1.2 mandates regular, formal program review for each transcripted program that is submitted to the Chancellor. The attached document shows the rotation from 2013 forward; this document was revised in 2012 when the System Office revised their program review schedule; VCSU has completed formal program reviews under SBHE policy since at least 1984, when the current policy was drafted.

After the program review is submitted to the VPAA office, a number of individuals review the document. These individuals and their purposes are outlined in the table below:

	Who Reviews	What	When	Purpose
1.	Program Faculty, Director of IR and Assessment, VPAA	Entire Program Review	No later than Sept 30 following completion	- Budget information - Quality review - Program planning - Strategic planning
2.	Executive Team, Cabinet, and APAC	Summary	October	- Awareness - Inform decisions for budget and planning
3.	Assessment Committee	Summary	October	Process assurance
4.	Curriculum committee	Summary	October	Close curricular loop; plan may inform upcoming curricular change requests
5.	NDUS Chancellor	Summary	December after review is completed	- Process assurance - Quality overview

The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment reviews the formal program review submissions each year and writes an executive summary before meeting with the VPAA and program leaders to discuss the program review and recommendations. The executive summary of the program review and recommendations is shared with the Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, APAC, Executive Team, Cabinet, and is forwarded to the NDUS Chancellor, in accordance with

SBHE policy 403.1.2.

2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

A. Transfer Credit

The institution accepts transfer credits from regionally accredited institutions of postsecondary education. Transfer credit from nationally accredited institutions may be reviewed and accepted on a course by course basis.

Faculty are responsible for the application of transfer credit to program requirements. Students who are dissatisfied with course equivalency determinations may consult with the appropriate department chair in an attempt to more precisely define the equivalencies.

Total hours earned from all transfer institutions are entered on the VCSU transcript. If necessary, credits will be converted to semester hours. Grades from transfer courses are used in calculating the cumulative grade point average.

B. Credit by Examination

Course credit may be granted by national or departmental examination, with placement scores determined by NDUS Policy 403.7.4. Exam options include the Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dantes Subject Standardized Tests.

C. Prior Learning Assessment

The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program is facilitated by the Career and Technical Education director and administered through the Academic Affairs Office. Prior Learning Assessment provides the adult learner with the opportunity to earn university credit for prior collegiate level knowledge/learning obtained through independent reading, volunteer services, workshops, conferences, in-service training, work, and other activities. Documentation of prior learning is assembled into a written presentation, which is evaluated by departmental faculty to determine credit awards. The amount of credit awarded depends on the kinds and quality of learning outcomes presented and validated. The PLA credits may come from previous military and employment experience, CLEP, correspondence study, online courses, workshops, and/or other special topics. Over the past 10 years, 55 students have completed prior learning portfolios and 40 have graduated.

D. Military Experience

All military service experience submitted for credit will be evaluated by the Registrar using the Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services or by contacting the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences. Students desiring this credit must submit official copies of their discharge papers and military transcript of courses (VCSU 2014-16 Catalog, p. 32).

E. Foreign Language Placement

A student may receive up to 12 credit hours in a foreign language upon satisfactory completion of an

advanced language course with a "C" or better.

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

As a campus within the North Dakota University System (NDUS), Valley City State University is obligated to follow State Board of Higher Education policies, including the transfer of general education credit between NDUS campuses through the General Education Requirements Transfer Agreement (GERTA). These policies are described on the NDUS Articulation and Transfer website and are governed by SBHE Policy 403.7.

The transfer policy is detailed in the 2014-2016 Catalog (pages 12-13). Transfer students must have a 2.0 minimum GPA on a 4.0 scale and be in good academic standing at their most recent institution. In addition, SBHE policy 402.4 (C and D) restricts transfer credit to that earned at regionally accredited colleges and universities, and allows for course-by-course evaluation of institutions with national accreditation (as recognized by CHEA or the Department of Education).

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

The Academic Affairs Council (Academic Affairs officers from each campus) has established guidelines for dual credit coursework and has developed a common template for articulation agreements. Most of the Early Entry activities in the state are delivered by two-year campuses. Recognizing the training and assessment efforts necessary to deploy a large Early Entry program effectively, VCSU has chosen to minimize its Early Entry activities except for its relationships with several local school districts, in programs where faculty already have collegial relationships and understand each other's academic expectations.

VCSU follows NDUS Procedure 402.3.2 in managing these relationships, with appropriate course alignment agreements and documentation of assessment processes. The high school faculty teaching the courses are hired as VCSU adjunct faculty and must meet the academic qualifications of adjunct faculty. Department chairs meet with these adjunct faculty and review syllabi annually to assure course quality. In addition, VCSU runs a one-day assessment workshop each June for its early entry faculty and their campus counterparts, where student work from on-campus and off-campus courses are directly compared and assessment expectations are aligned.

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

The Music program at VCSU is fully accredited by the National Association of the Schools of Music (NASM). The most recent visit was completed in the fall of the 2007-2008 academic year and the next site visit will be in 2017. In June 2010, the NASM Commission voted to grant plan approval for the online music program, with the following commendation:

The Commission commends the institution for thoughtfully and systematically considering critical issues in traditional and online music and pedagogy in order to advance opportunities for students to experience quality music learning experiences delivered via distance learning.

The teacher education program at VCSU is fully accredited through NCATE, now known as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The most recent team report noted:

The visions for the institution and unit align with the conceptual framework. Conceptual framework foundational pillars (plan, implement, evaluate, and reflect) are informed by eight university abilities that guide all faculty and candidates. Since the last visit the conceptual framework has been modified to include the new graduate program.

The knowledge base consists of research, standards, and best practices. The research base is built on studies of the learning process, cognitive development, characteristics of learners, effective teaching, and best practices in the uses of technology. Standards for the knowledge base come from the North Dakota state standards, which are organized around InTASC standards and NBPTS standards. Best practices for this knowledge base emerge from the framework referenced to current national reports on what makes an effective teacher.

A commitment to technology is evident by the fact that all candidates receive laptop computers, there are smart classrooms, technological support for faculty candidates is outstanding, and the development and implementation of an effective unit data gathering system for assessment. The unit assessment system is well summarized and aligned with the conceptual framework, state and national standards (2008 NCATE Board of Examiners Report, page 3).

The next site visit for NCATE/CAEP will be October 2015. Both accrediting bodies commend VCSU and the programs reviewed for careful attention to effective teaching and learning, concern for meaningful assessment, and best practices in the use of technology.

The online Master of Education concentration in Library and Information Technologies is designed to prepare students for school library leadership and meets the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialists Preparation that have also been approved by the National Center for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The program allows graduates with undergraduate degrees in Education and specific administrative coursework to obtain Library Media Specialist certification in North Dakota at the LM01 or LM02 level. Every course incorporates the AASL standards and assesses their mastery. While completing the coursework, each student develops a portfolio of artifacts demonstrating mastery of all the Professional Standards.

The new Athletic Training program is in the process of seeking initial accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). An accreditation based upon these identified curricular standards for academic content and hands-on clinical experiences is required for students wishing to complete the Board of Certification (BOC, Inc.) examination within the field. The initial site visit for accreditation is scheduled for February 2016.

6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree

programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

The Career Services Office annually reports the results of its first destination survey, which provides all programs with information regarding employment rates by program and employer satisfaction. Program faculty utilize this information in preparing their annual program updates and program reviews.

In addition, the School of Education and Graduate Studies maintains an advisory board and first year mentoring program to make certain students are successful in their first year of teaching. These connections provide useful feedback and help the faculty identify valuable curricular changes, including increased practicum experience and a course in classroom management to help students better prepare for their career.

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- SBHE 403.7 Common General Education Requirement and Transfer of General Education Credits
- SBHE 403.7.4 Common Credit-By-Exam Guidelines
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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

Introduction

The 2011 HLC Team Report recommended a monitoring report on Assessment and Institutional research, due in three years (November 1, 2014), demonstrating that student learning outcome data is used to make program changes to improve quality. Examples must include one face-to-face, non-education program, one non-education on-line program, and the general education program. Later, when the Commission placed VCSU in the open pathway, we were directed to embed the monitoring report in the assurance review due in September 2015.

To meet this requirement, we are incorporating the information that would have been included in that report in this section (Criterion 4.B). In responding to each of the Core Components for this section, we have divided each section into four parts: General Education, Business Administration (a face to face, non-education major), Professional Communication (an online, non-education program), and the campus as a whole.

In this introduction, we provide an overview of academic assessment and our overall progress since the 2011 team visit.

1. The team report directed VCSU to document that we had brought professional expertise in assessment and institutional research into the assessment process. In the months following the team visit, Cabinet determined that VCSU should create a staff position in Institutional Research and Assessment, to bring together a number of activities on campus (surveys, academic assessment, campus assessment, and support for budgeting and strategic planning) into a single office. This position was hired in Spring 2012, and the new Director of Institutional Research and Assessment began work in May 2012.

The impact of this decision on continuity of assessment is significant: under the director's guidance, annual program updates, program review processes, and revision of learning outcomes have progressed systematically; general education outcome review and the necessary communication of information among various faculty groups has been managed efficiently; implementation of an updated portfolio system and systematic coordination with the School of Education and Graduate Studies' assessment system has been managed effectively.

2. The team report also directed VCSU to provide professional development for key individuals. This has been managed in four ways:

- Three faculty and the VPAA attended an HLC Assessment workshop in February 2012 and developed a viable General Education assessment plan that assured the direct use of data and good communication among constituent groups. This plan was adopted by the General Education Council in Fall 2012 and implemented immediately.

- Academic Affairs provided copies of Walvoord's *Assessment Clear and Simple* to members of the General Education Council, Assessment Committee, and Department Chairs. This text provided the conceptual framework for both the General Education assessment plan, and later, for the Program and Institutional learning outcome assessment plans.

- The General Education Council, Assessment Committee, and Department Chairs have each completed annual summer retreats that focus on assessment in the varying areas (General education, program, and institution). During each retreat we review the principles in Walvoord's text (allowing the group to maintain a common understanding, despite some change in membership), discuss the current status of assessment under the group's purview, and set goals for the upcoming year.

  These retreats are co-led by the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment and the VPAA. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment has also provided several workshops for Student Affairs Directors as they begin to implement learning outcomes in co-curricular programs.

- The departments established assessment days each fall (beginning September 2013) as a time for departments to work together on outcome assessment, complete their program updates, and set annual goals. Activities and outcomes for these workdays are developed each summer at the Department Chair Retreat, so each department chair can extend the professional development training to departmental faculty, as well.

3. The team report further required that we document the use of student learning outcome data to make program changes to improve quality. That documentation is reported in the response to the core components below.

Unanticipated Results for VCSU's Learning Outcome Framework

Since 2000, VCSU has used a framework of eight "Abilities" to articulate the institution's learning outcomes. These eight outcomes have shaped the general education program and the senior portfolio, providing an apparent continuity as students progress through their degree program. The process of providing professional development described above, which involved a number of faculty from across campus and intense discussion, made it clear that the "Abilities" were not effectively shaping learning outcome assessment in many disciplines—they were too general and difficult to match with content standards for many areas.

We started with the idea that assessment should be valuable and provide meaning, and many faculty believed that the "abilities" did not meet this standard. The Summer 2012 department chair retreat, therefore, resulted in a decision to begin a process of developing program learning outcomes that were measurable and could replace the use of the "abilities" at the program level. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment has been invaluable in working with departments to refine their learning outcomes and strengthen assessment planning.

After two years of working with program learning outcomes outside of the "abilities" framework, faculty on the Assessment Committee and General Education Council were ready to consider whether the "abilities" framework was effective for institutional and general education learning outcomes. Walvoord's text provided excellent guidance through this discussion, while the Lumina "Degree Qualifications Profile" (DQP), and the AACU LEAP initiative (and materials) supported the thorough and lengthy conversations as we worked through this process.

At this point VCSU is emerging with newly articulated institutional learning outcomes (based heavily on the DQP) and general education learning outcomes (based on the LEAP initiative outcomes), but tailored for the VCSU campus and our particular emphasis and focus. We have continued using the old assessment framework and processes during this period, as we report below. But we are also refining that process and shifting it to focus more directly on program content for both the general education and academic programs, while maintaining a higher-level, broader understanding of outcomes at the institutional level.

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

Campus

VCSU's institutional learning outcomes are published in the catalog and in the student planner (which students may purchase at the Bookstore; first-year students receive one free). Information about the VCSU learning outcomes is presented by the VPAA to small group sessions of the first year student "Learning to Live" course. The Assessment Plan booklet outlines the goals for student learning and the processes for mapping and communicating results.

The updated VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book identifies the six institutional outcomes and the areas of campus responsible for providing data to inform campus about student success in each area. In the past, using the "Abilities" framework, student assessment data was reported for general education projects and the senior portfolio. The new process, which will begin Fall 2016, assessment data will be reported for general education learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, and student affairs learning outcomes to assess overall learning quality at VCSU.

The Assessment Committee met on July 11, 2014 to finalize their revisions to University learning outcomes. The discussion (and the final result) have been heavily influenced by Lumina's DQP. VCSU added a sixth point, Technological Skills, given the campus's SBHE-directed focus to provide leadership in instructional technology. The Institutional Learning Goals and Institutional Learning Outcomes were approved by Faculty Senate in December 2014 for Fall 2015 implementation.

Institutional Learning Goals and Outcomes are as follows:

Learning Goal: *Skills*

- **Intellectual Skills:** Students will demonstrate competence in solving problems, communicating effectively, and showing respect for diverse perspectives
- **Technological Skills:** Students will utilize technology to enhance learning, performance, and productivity.

Learning Goal: *Knowledge*

- **Broad Knowledge**: Students will demonstrate knowledge from a variety of academic fields.
- **Specialized Knowledge**: Students will demonstrate proficiency in the terminology, theories, methods, tools, literature, complex problems, and application in a specific field of study.

Learning Goal: *Application*

- **Civic Engagement**: Students will develop civic insight and informed responses that contribute to ethical service.
- **Applied Learning**: Students will synthesize [integrate] skills and knowledge to demonstrate proficiency through practice and experience.

All academic programs were required to submit Assessment Plans in September 2013, including measurable program learning outcomes. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment reviewed these submissions with a rubric developed by the Assessment Committee. Feedback was distributed to programs, with an updated Assessment Plan from each program due in September 2014. The updated plans were submitted and reviewed by the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment with feedback returned to programs. At this point most programs have usable learning outcomes and are currently developing clear plans for formative and summative assessment, processes that will replace the current senior portfolio assessment process in Fall 2016.

General Education

The General Education learning outcomes are published in the catalog; the mapped General Education outcome is also identified on every general education course syllabus and a project documenting the outcome is required for the course. These projects can be collected and reviewed, and the syllabi are also reviewed annually to verify accurate outcome mapping.

The General Education assessment process (developed at the HLC Assessment Workshop in February 2012) is as follows:

1. Fall, annually: Council members review syllabi to verify the General Education outcomes map.

2. Spring, annually: Using projects collected in General Education courses, each department meets to review sample projects from the courses taught by the department, and discuss any concerns, changes, etc., that need to be pursued to improve student learning in the program.

3. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment attends each of these meetings and acts as secretary, creating a set of minutes for each department to review as it implements changes. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment also develops a summary of all the department meetings, a document that is provided to the General Education Council in April each spring and to the Curriculum Committee. The General Education Council may make recommendations for change based on this document or use the summary to inform Council decisions when reviewing ensuing curricular requests brought forward by the various departments.

Business Administration

The Business Administration program has developed learning outcomes for each of the available concentrations, which may be found in the VCSU 2014-16 Catalog. The Business Administration major has six concentrations; each has its own (but very similar) assessment plan. Each concentration listed below is linked to its learning outcomes and assessment plan document:

- Business Administration--Accounting
- Business Administration--Agribusiness
- Business Administration--Finance
- Business Administration--Human Resources
- Business Administration--Management
- Business Administration--Marketing

Professional Communication

The Professional Communication program has developed learning outcomes which may be found in the VCSU 2014-16 Catalog. The program's assessment plan includes a set of direct and indirect measures which are evaluated annually at a Fall Assessment Day retreat; results and analysis are reported annually in the program's annual program update. Assessment measures include

- Annual (group) evaluation of sample projects from all courses in the major each fall
- Alumni survey--sent every three years to assess skills required in the workforce against program curriculum; on an informal basis, information is gathered through annual email and facebook contact each fall
- General education assessment each spring of student work and syllabi, to assure consistency and quality across of courses and sections offered in the communication courses included in the general education program.
- Internship assessments: Students complete an extensive internship process that asks students to utilize the skills and knowledge they have collected during their studies for their internship experience. During their time in the internship, students complete 4 major assignments related to their internship which may include strategic plans, communication audits, and/ or SWOT analyses. This change with the internship was made to allow our students to be more competitive and was based on feedback from alumni.
- Senior Portfolio/ Capstone: Students are asked to complete a student portfolio that showcases their best work. Students are required to give a public presentation of their portfolio work, which includes a resume that is applicable to their field, reflection on their studies, and analysis on the skills they have acquired during their time at VCSU.

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

Campus

Pursuant to recommendations within the Fall 2011 Higher Learning Commission team report, a Director of Institutional Research and Assessment was hired in May 2012 and *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education* (Walvoord, 2010) was implemented as campus assessment text. In Fall 2013, myeFolio was implemented in response to the 2011 Higher Learning Commission report reference to development of an "enterprise-level University data management and analysis system" after a campus-wide study of options including a two-year pilot of the myeFolio portfolio system (p. 22). This system enables collection and evaluation of individual course projects and student senior portfolio submissions. During the pilot period, faculty directed students to upload one project (per student) in each course which demonstrated student progress in the learning outcome mapped to that course. Projects were then available for annual review by faculty in each program (or for departmental review during General Education reviews each spring), and the resulting discussion and program improvements/goals documented in

annual program updates.

Unfortunately, the enterprise system has proved awkward to use (on the administrative side), and the second review of projects is time-consuming. The Assessment Committee is therefore exploring other options; meanwhile, programs are having faculty record assessment scores at the same time that they grade the projects and collect these scores on a secondary roster. This will enable departments to spend less time looking at projects and more time reviewing scores and analyzing overall student performance. The pilot effort has at least solidified the project-assessment process for programs, so most programs/faculty understand the cycle of assessment and how project assessment impacts curricular and other program changes.

Student Affairs reports program information in its annual report each summer. For student affairs directors, however, learning outcome assessment is still a very new activity, and this year the development process was disrupted by a personnel change in leadership. The directors have met several times with the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment for training in how to write learning outcomes, and each program has at least one learning outcome articulated. Collection and reporting of this data is still in beginning stages. The Assessment Committee, however, has identified the significance of co-curricular learning outcomes in the institutional learning outcomes, and has decided to add an additional member to the committee from Student Affairs, to increase communication and provide a liaison for data reporting. This change will take place later during the current semester.

General Education

During the Spring 2013 semester, the General Education Council completed its first annual review of General Education courses and projects, following the process described above of having departments review projects in their General Education courses and discuss/plan improvements. This process highlighted the need for each department to clarify expected course outcomes and a variety of needed improvements in mapping courses to the General Education outcomes. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment gathered course projects and kept minutes of meetings with each program, and compiled a summary with recommendations for consideration as appropriate in the Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, and General Education Council.

The goals of the second and third annual General Education program meetings (Spring 2014 and 2015) were to

- Explain connections between course offerings and the General Education outcomes
- Identify strengths, and areas of concern within the project submissions
- Determine appropriate action steps to address concerns
- Identify concerns that should be addressed at the institutional level

The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment gathered projects, kept meeting minutes, and compiled summaries (Spring 2014 summary; Spring 2015 summary) with recommendations for consideration as appropriate in the Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, and General Education Council. Each summary includes specific, departmental and course level improvements and recommendations for overall improvement of the General Education program (described below, in 4.B.3).

Business Administration

Assessment Plans for each of the Business Administration program Concentrations contain direct and

indirect measures of student learning and program effectiveness. These measures include:

- Advisory Board (meets twice a year/ October and April): Members provide updates about current industry standards and necessary knowledge and skills to incorporate into the curriculum.
- Employer Survey Results (one- and five-year results): Review of employers perceptions of student preparedness from a workplace focus
- ETS Exam: Content Exam to verify the overall program quality (BUSI 249, BUSI 491)
- Focus Groups: Student focus groups and SWOT analysis to identify coursework changes needed for reinforcement of program learning outcomes.
- Graduate Survey Results (one and five year results): Review employment locations and skills necessary for their work. Graduate success is an indicator of program effectiveness in meeting learning outcomes.
- Job Placement Data: Links graduates with direct results of their learning outcomes leading to the start of their career path, which upholds the program learning outcomes. The data explores job-placement trends and employment data for new jobs, allowing for appropriate changes to coursework and experiential learning options.
- Course projects: Student performance on projects is indicative of learning outcome success.
- Senior Portfolio: Students demonstrate learning outcome achievement through selected course projects. Presentations and reflections are evaluated and program changes are made accordingly.
- Student Surveys (Advising, New Student, and Upper-Class): Student perceptions of the program and curriculum provide a measure of validity for program learning outcomes and is used with other data to help make program decisions.
- Experiential Learning: Experiential learning reflections are reviewed for growth in the program learning outcomes.

Each semester, faculty review the ETS outcome data, APU report, employer survey, and responses from the portfolio defense from the previous semester, and develop a summary and action plan in response to the data analysis. This information is then presented at the Advisory Board meeting, where the student outcome assessment data is reviewed and the program's action plan is reviewed, revised, and ratified. Documentation of this process (meeting minutes) is placed in the Annual Program update each year.

Professional Communication

The Professional Communication faculty, using *Backwards Design* (McTighe & Wiggins, 1998), determined outcomes that all professional communication students should have mastered by the time they leave VCSU. From these outcomes and skills, they created four specific competencies students should have at the end of their undergraduate academic career at VCSU; each course in the major is mapped to one of these competencies:

- Practices professional and ethical communication strategically
- Researches, evaluates, and synthesizes information effectively
- Engages in and appreciates diverse thoughts and ideas
- Competently works well with others in interpersonal and group settings

Instructors assess at least 25% or 5 total of the projects (whichever was greater) for each class in the major each semester to assess their abilities, skills, competency, and outcomes using a 3-point rubric of Unacceptable, Acceptable, and Target (see results for 2013 and 2015).

The department faculty meet annually each fall to discuss assessment findings and decide on changes needed to improve program quality and student learning.

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

Campus

About 40% of the students at VCSU are in teacher education programs, so the leadership of faculty in the School of Education and Graduate Studies (SEGS) in developing a comprehensive assessment system that regularly assesses and monitors candidate performance has had a significate impact on faculty in almost every department since they have had to think more systematically about assessment, data collection, and the uses of that information.

The SEGS assessment system provides regular information on applicants' qualifications and candidate performance at key transition points at both the initial and advanced levels. The data are drawn from multiple assessments from both internal (rubrics and surveys developed by the unit) and external (PPST, Praxis) sources. Assessments are completed by many stakeholders including: cooperating teachers, employers, graduates, faculty, candidates and supervisors.

In the past five years, VCSU has worked consistently across campus to strengthen an understanding and use of academic assessment at all levels--classroom, program and institution. The development of an Assessment Committee in 2010 composed of faculty from every division; hiring a Director of Institutional Research and Assessment; the requirement that each program submit an annual program update (APU) with annual data, goals, and reflection; annual General Education assessment conducted by each program area and the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment; and expectations for program assessment of student projects all attest to this concern.

A number of examples (drawn from program reviews) document the increasing use of student learning outcome assessment to curricular and program changes:

- SEGS used information from its stakeholders to make a data-driven decision to lengthen the time of student teaching from 10 to 12 weeks. Feedback from teacher candidates, unit faculty, the Teacher Education Committee (TEC), local cooperating teachers and administrators led to the final decision. Follow-up research supported the benefit to teacher candidates.
- SEGS studied the relationship between teacher candidate grade point averages (GPA) and cooperating teacher final evaluations of student teachers in making a decision to raise the minimum GPA criteria for program admission from 2.50 to 2.75. An ad hoc group formed by the TEC studied the data and discussed the pros and cons thoroughly before making a final decision. Teacher candidates with a GPA between 2.50 and 2.74 have an opportunity to appeal.
- Classroom management data gathered from multiple assessments indicated the Teacher Education program could do more to help prepare candidates in this area. The unit added EDUC 351 Secondary Practicum and Classroom Management for secondary majors and improved EDUC 350 Elementary Practicum and Classroom Management for elementary majors so both courses provide additional opportunities to learn and practice classroom management strategies.
- The Math Department made several changes over the past few years based on results from the Praxis II test. First and foremost is the addition of Math 390, which increased student exposure to the types of math taught in the secondary school program, along with improving student competency on the Praxis II (0061) Math Content exam. In addition, all math courses now

require at least one project, which is aligned to one of the university abilities. These projects give our students more opportunities to demonstrate their abilities to problem-solve and reason mathematically; communicate and represent mathematical connections; and demonstrate teaching and learning through the appropriate use of technology and concrete materials.

- The Health Science and Fisheries and Wildlife programs both identified student scores on the "research" portion of the portfolio evaluation, along with advice from an alumni survey and review of the First Destination Report from Career Services, as rationale for adding BIOL 440, Biostatistics and Experimental Design. Approximately 60% of our Health Science graduates are accepted into graduate or professional schools, and our Fisheries and Wildlife alumni indicate that they also need more background in field research and experimental design to be successful in their work.
- The Mathematics department has made several changes over the past few years based on data. First and foremost is the adding of Math 390 (PCK for secondary school math). This course was added for two reasons: 1) to increase our students' exposure to the teaching and learning of school-level math (i.e. the math they will be teaching at the junior high or high school level), and 2) To provide our students with greater competency concerning the Praxis II (0061) Math Content exam.
- The History program decided to dedicate the HIST 470 Topics in Non-western History to East Asian history and created the ECON/HIST 314 course for the ECON cognate, based on student performance on Praxis II tests.

General Education

Examples of departmental changes to course policies, curriculum, instruction, and technology may be seen in the General Education minutes and in the Executive Summaries of the February 2014 and Spring 2015 VCSU General Education Meetings. A few highlights include

- Changes to CIS 170, from 2 credits to 3, to broaden course content to include technology and society and emerging technologies
- Revised learning outcome project instructions and requirements (10 courses in 2014, 5 in 2015)
- Course revisions (7 courses in 2014, 4 in 2015)
- Implementation of a presentation on writing mechanics in history/geography courses
- Revised assignment documents
- Refined rubrics for course project

Overall recommendations from the departments to the General Education Council included the need to explore an interdisciplinary General Education online ethics course, to implement a continuous process for justifying new and approving continuing General Education courses at not less than five-year intervals, and to strengthen General Education as a core program. The council has undertaken the task of developing a process to justify new and continuing General Education courses on a regular review cycle, with the intent to have this in place by Fall 2016. The ethics course is under continued discussion.

Business Administration

The semi-annual review process followed by the Business Department (described above, in core component 2) results in a number of program and course corrections. Three of the most significant are described here:

- Faculty noted a persistent drop in outcome scores for the "global awareness" outcome, as documented by portfolio outcome data and faculty observation during students' portfolio presentations. The Advisory Board noted a concern, as well, that students seemed unready for the workplace diversity they will experience after graduation. The Department developed a course to address this problem, MGMT 335, Diversity in the Workplace. Beginning in Fall 2016, this course will be part of the core requirements for all Business Administration majors, regardless of concentration.
- The Advisory Board noted that students needed more practice in soft skills and more frequent, early contact with the workplace. The department also noticed that first-year students in business lacked a strong identification with the major, and this resulted in some retention concerns. As a result, the department developed a required entry course, BUSI 249, which provides incoming freshmen with job-shadowing opportunities and helps them understand the workplace and the skills they will need to be successful in business. This course was first implemented in Fall 2014.
- The results of the ETS survey clearly indicated that students were missing core content, and a review of the program indicated that some of this could be attributed to completing courses out of sequence. The department identified the proper course lineup to optimize scaffolded learning for students in the major. This required setting up a series of prerequisites and reorganizing the course rotation; the result is an orderly approach to learning that allows students to build on concepts as they advance through the courses in the major.

Professional Communication

The department meets annually in the Fall semester to review projects in the major and each spring to review general education projects. A number of changes to courses, projects, and curriculum have resulted from this pattern of project review and departmental analysis:

- Comm 200 and 216 projects were revised to more clearly connect to the competency identified for the course.
- The research methods course was removed from the required core for the major upon the advice of surveyed alumni and an analysis of students' first destinations following graduation. Not many students are pursuing graduate work, and those who do may elect this course as part of the directed electives in the major. Instead, the department added a more relevant, workplace-specific course, Communication and Interviewing, to the required core, again following the advice of alumni. The department also noted the importance of developing an advisory board of employers, to help the faculty better understand workplace issues and curricular responsiveness.
- Comm 110 course projects and syllabi showed inconsistency across sections; department developed a common syllabus with a common description of the course project, a common set of learning outcomes, and common grading rubrics.
- The Comm 212 project scores are overwhelmingly "unacceptable" (47 unacceptable; 27 acceptable; 1 target). Department directed faculty of that course to review the project and the learning outcomes, and return to the department with details, explanations, and proposed changes.

Clearly the review process adopted by the department has provided more direct understanding of student learning and success. The changes noted demonstrate a willingness on the faculty's part to make improvements and stay focused on student achievement.

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

Campus

A variety of campus constituents are involved in making decisions about academic assessment at VCSU. The department chairs, the Assessment Committee, and the General Education Council all have primary roles in decision-making and implementation of processes. Their decisions are informed by established research and good practice:

- The Assessment Committee reviewed the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as an example to guide revision of institution-wide learning outcomes, while considering revisions to the University learning outcomes. The Committee also focused on VCSU's "defining commitments" (the mission, vision, and university purposes) as part of its discussion. The resulting Institutional Learning Goals and Outcomes were reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate in December 2014 for Fall 2015 implementation.
- The General Education Council revised the General Education learning outcomes in accordance with the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) *Essential Learning Outcomes* (ELO)
- The overall framework for academic assessment has been guided throughout the process by Walvoord's text, *Assessment Clear and Simple.* Department chairs and members of both committees have attended to the organizing principles of this text in planning processes that will both improve communication between groups (to make assessment more useful) and provide useful information that results in meaningful change.

General Education

The General Education Committee met June 4, 2014 to review and propose revisions to assessment within the General Education program, based on the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) *Essential Learning Outcomes*. The General Education Committee outlined 10 learning outcomes within the categories of Literacies, Values, Habits and Breadth of Knowledge.

The General Education Council is responsible for completion of its annual program assessment. This review, with recommendations for revision, is presented to the General Education Program Faculty, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and the Academic Policies and Affairs Committee (APAC), which then discuss and act on the findings of the program review. Faculty make program decisions, while APAC provides the VPAA with input for budget decisions and strategic planning.

As a part of the General Education assessment plan, the General Education Council and Director of Institutional Research and Assessment began conducting annual meetings with General Education faculty in Spring 2013 to review courses in their respective areas. The meetings are intended to reaffirm General Education course connections, evaluate projects for strengths and concerns, identify General Education course changes, and determine actions that the department desires from the institution in regard to General Education offerings. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment provides student projects to the departments to facilitate department review of their General Education courses. The Director of Institutional Research takes meeting minutes and returns them to the departments for additional feedback prior to being finalized. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment compiles a summary report of findings for the General Education Council, Assessment Committee, Curriculum Committee, APAC, and Cabinet/Executive Team.

All faculty, therefore, have a role in assessing the quality of the general education courses offered within their own department, and faculty and staff on four committees, in addition to administration, receive summary information which in turn helps clarify strategic and budgetary decision-making.

Business Administration

Program assessment activities include a variety of direct and indirect measures with significant input from program faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders. These measures include:

- Advisory Board
- Employer Survey Results (one- and five-year results)
- ETS Exam – Content Exam
- Focus Groups
- Graduate Survey Results (one and five year results)
- Job Placement Data
- Course projects
- Senior Portfolio
- Student Surveys (Advising, New Student, and Upper-Class)
- Experiential Learning

All department faculty are involved in the semi-annual review of outcome data; the use of the advisory board, which also has access to all the program data, provides a strong secondary review measure to assure decisions being made connect effectively with the workplace.

Professional Communication

Program assessment activities include both direct and indirect measures, with significant input from program faculty, students, and external stakeholders. Assessment measures include

- Direct review of student projects by department faculty
- Formal alumni survey; informal email and Facebook contacts each semester creating an informal opportunity for reflection and advice, allowing for job forecasting and understanding of workplace issues
- Examination of first-destination job placements of our students to determine how they are transferring the skills and knowledge they have learned to their career choices.

To improve communication, especially clarity of expectations and understanding of outcomes, the department faculty (including adjuncts) work together on assessment days, developing common syllabi and rubrics for consistency. Faculty are also encouraged to implement midterm student evaluations to make course corrections and identify and respond to any lingering student learning concerns.

Sources

- 2015 VCSU Student Planner
- 2015 VCSU Student Planner (page number 42)
- Assessment Plan Rubric
- Business Administration - Accounting Assessment Plan 2014
- Business Administration - Agribusiness Assessment Plan 2014
- Business Administration - Finance Assessment Plan 2014
- Business Administration - Human Resources Assessment Plan 2014
- Business Administration - Management Assessment Plan 2014
- Business Administration - Marketing Assessment Plan 2014
- Communication Project Assessment Reporting 2015
- Math Education _ Response to Findings
- Professional Communication Assessment Data 2013
- Professional Communication Assessment Data 2015
- SocScichanges
- Spring 2013 General Education Meeting Summary
- Spring 2014 General Education Meeting Summary
- Spring 2015 General Education Meeting Summary
- Student Affairs End Of Year Report-2015
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015 (page number 3)
- VCSU Assessment of Student Learning Book 2015 (page number 17)
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 106)

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

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

VCSU is attentive to the retention, persistence, and completion rates of its students. In the 2011 Self Study, VCSU reported an average IPEDS retention rate of 65% over the previous 10 years. The campus strategic plan for 2010-2015 set a goal of 70%, a percentage slightly above other, similar universities in the region. VCSU is a regional public institution in an area that does not have a nearby community college. Local high school students therefore often treat VCSU as a two-year school, indicating that they will complete their "generals" at VCSU before transferring to NDSU or another, larger campus. Exit surveys often indicate "did not have my major" as a reason for transferring. The goal of 70%, therefore, appeared a reasonable aspiration, and the tools being employed—improvements in the Learning to Live curriculum, increased support for the Learning Center, and continued attention to advising and support services, appeared reasonable approaches to move us toward that goal.

However, beginning with the 2009 cohort, VCSU experienced a significant, three year decline in the IPEDS retention rate, from 63% (2009) to 54% (2011). This drop indicated that there was more work to be done. The VCSU administration approved the recommendation of a faculty committee (the Academic and Scholastic Standing Committee) which had been researching tools that would improve processes for communicating with students who required intervention, including both the purchase of software and a half-time position to support the ongoing work related to managing the information provided by the new system.

In January 2013, VCSU launched Starfish™ with the goals of improving communication between faculty and Student Academic Services, providing tracking of our interactions with students, and heightening student awareness through early alerts. We also provided faculty with information and training to support their role in improving retention, implemented a "Viking Preview" program for

first-year students, and worked with coaches for early identification of athletes who needed Learning Center services. The improvement in IPEDs cohort retention rate was remarkable: 64% (2012), 69.8% (2013), and 70.8% (2014).

We have been assured by a consultant this summer that we can improve our retention rate by at least 5% by changing our current scholarship program, as we currently have a gap in awarding scholarships to sophomores. Our new President is currently leading a study of campus capacity and growth strategies that will help us set new goals for retention and persistence, along with a retention plan to partially support campus growth.

Persistence and completion rates (as reported through IPEDS) take some time to catch up with the retention work being done on campus (since the biggest student loss typically occurs between the first and second years). However, faculty efforts on retention have increased headcount and FTE each semester since we began using Starfish™, and these efforts have already impacted the 6-year graduation rates, as we moved from 40% (2004 cohort, reported in 2010) to 46% (2007 cohort) and 48% (2008 cohort). Clearly we are moving in the right direction, and future investments in time, tools, and training based on current planning should have a significant impact.

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

The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment maintains information on student retention, persistence and program completion by semester. Data regarding retention and persistence are reported on our website, through IPEDs, and, because we are a member of the North Dakota University System, through the NDUS Dashboard, which tracks this data as a metric for the NDUS Strategic Plan (Goal 3: Equip Students For Success).

In addition, VCSU's Director of Institutional Research analyzes this data by program and by year, and it is made available to department chairs and campus leaders via intranet for Annual Program Updates, strategic planning, and budget requests. For example, the recent optimization study (described in 5.C) utilized this data as part of the metrics for program analysis.

3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data. Three examples serve to illustrate the various ways this data may be used:

The decision to implement Starfish™ (described above in more detail) is a one example of VCSU's use of retention data to inform several decisions that would impact both campus culture and ongoing budget decisions. And, because Starfish™ includes all students at VCSU, the impact of this program has improved communication and student support across the entire student body, improving retention at all levels (not just the first-year cohort).

Additionally, retention initiatives have been based on the need to support target populations. An example of this is the Viking Preview summer program that targets incoming student-athletes, primarily football and volleyball. This program began in 2013 after a year with high attrition rates for student athletes. Viking Preview is now in its third year.

The Program Optimization Process (POP), currently underway with a target date for completion of task-force data analysis of October 15, 2015, also illustrates the deliberate use of retention and persistence data to help us understand program quality, performance, and potential (see 5.C. for description of the Program Optimization Process). This year Cabinet deliberately delayed as many

budget decisions as possible pending completion of the report, so as to have as much information as possible in determining strategic use of available funds.

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

Valley City State University has participated in the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) since the 2013 inaugural year. This measure accounts for students transferring to and completing degrees from other institutions in an increasingly mobile society. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment submits the student cohort names to the Student Tracker service maintained by the National Student Clearinghouse and uploads the resulting reports in the Student Achievement Measure portal. The SAM site maintains information for one year at a time; however, VCSU maintains digital copies of past SAM displays for use by campus leaders.

According to the Student Achievement Measure website which tracks student persistence at other institutions, VCSU's 2007 First-Time, Full-Time student cohort (reported in 2013) registered completion rates of 22, 39, and 44 percent in 4, 5, and 6 years respectively at the institution. The percentage of students who transferred to and graduated from another institution within 5 and 6 years was 11 and 15 percent respectively. Full-Time Transfer students registered 36, 66, and 69 percent completion rates within 2, 4, and 6 years.

The institution's 2008 First-Time, Full-Time student cohort (reported in 2014) registered completion rates of 24, 45, and 49 percent in 4, 5, and 6 years respectively at the institution. The percentage of students who transferred to and graduated from another institution within 5 and 6 years was 8 and 13 percent respectively. Full-Time Transfer students registered 8, 51, and 62 percent completion rates within 2, 4, and 6 years. Ten percent transferred to and graduated from another institution within 6 years.

Since the North Dakota University System uses IPEDS and SAM to track retention and persistence, it makes sense for VCSU to use them as well. In addition, VCSU tracks enrollment trends by major and minor and completions by major and minor to help determine program success.

Sources

- 2013 VCSU Student Achievement Measure
- 2014 VCSU Student Achievement Measure
- Academic Year Major Completion Trends
- Academic Year Minor Completion Trends
- Annual Program Update Instructions
- Baselines 2014–15
- Fall Major and Minor Enrollment Trends
- NDUS 2015-2020 Strategic Plan framework-for-transformational-change
- NDUS 2015-2020 Strategic Plan framework-for-transformational-change (page number 5)
- Program Optimization Process
- Retention Services-Starfish
- Student Achievement Measure Information
- Student Achievement Quick Facts

- VCSU Strategic Plan 2015
- VCSU_Withdrawing_and_Non-Returning_Student_Survey
- VikingPreview2015-NewStudentR1

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

VCSU employs a two-part program review process that includes an annual program update (due each September) and a program review due every six years. An executive summary of each program review is shared with the Executive Team, Cabinet, Curriculum Committee, and NDUS Chancellor, all of whom may use the information for budget and planning decisions.

VCSU has policies in place to assure the quality of credit accepted in transfer or through prior learning/credit-by-exam. The faculty manage the curriculum and assures quality in coursework via all delivery modes, including dual credit; common syllabi, learning outcomes, and regular assessment comparisons are used to ensure equivalencies. Several programs maintain specialized accreditation, including Music, Education, Library, and (currently in progress) Athletic Training.

VCSU continues to improve its assessment of student learning, and has made real progress in improving academic assessment processes across campus. Many programs point to specific curricular and program changes made because of assessment processes in place for their programs. In response to the Team Report from the 2011 HLC Team Visit, VCSU has made significant changes and updates that reflect thoughtful, campus-wide discussion and that have influenced a shift in campus culture toward a stronger understanding of the cycle of assessment and the role it plays in planning and budget.

VCSU is attentive to retention, persistence, and completion rates. In the last five years, faculty and staff have implemented consistent, effective strategies to improve these rates and, as a result, student experiences and success at VCSU.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

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

Valley City State University is committed to maintaining a level of expenditure that provides both human resources and the environment necessary for effective teaching and learning. Resources are allocated in a manner that supports the goals and strategies of the institution. With enrollment increases, budget allocations are made to hire additional faculty in high-demand growth programs and staff to support increased enrollment.

Whether students, faculty, or staff, the human resources of VCSU are notable for their steadfast dedication to maintaining an environment conducive to learning, providing technical and clerical assistance, keeping records, and managing the physical plant.

Valley City State University permanent employees are either faculty or staff. Staff includes administrators and other support personnel. Employees are also categorized by funding sources into state-funded positions, or grant and local positions. In addition to permanent employees, Valley City State University has adjunct faculty, temporary employees, and student employees. [verbatim from 2011 self-study]

VCSU employs a total of 450-480 people, including faculty, staff, administrators, adjunct faculty, part-time employees, and students. The full-time equivalent (FTE) of all permanent employees included in the 2015–16 annual budget is 197, an increase of about 35 FTE compared to the 2010-11

report. During this time we have added faculty positions to support growth areas and added assistant coaches in for most athletic teams.

Under the current funding model for the North Dakota University System, state funding is allocated based on weighted successfully completed credit hours with a component for operating and utility inflation. This model supports campuses as they grow by providing additional resources based on increased credit hour production.

VCSU has continued its commitment to a technology-infused teaching and learning environment by refreshing laptop computers with the latest technology every two to three years and by allocating resources for technology upgrades in classrooms.

Valley City State University is fortunate to have an array of well-constructed, beautiful, and historically significant buildings, many built in the early to mid 20th century. Despite being well-maintained, older buildings pose significant challenges with deferred maintenance, efficiency standards, accessibility, safety, and usual wear-and-tear. To address these challenges, VCSU received funding within the 2015-17 biennium budget for a new heat plant and contingent funding for a new Communication and Fine Arts building. Completion of these two buildings will result in removal of three old buildings with significant deferred maintenance. The institution completed its first major capital project, a $10.3 million renovation of Rhoades Science Center, in August 2013. A $3.6 million renovation of classroom and office space in Vangstad Hall will be completed in late 2015. The campus also is working with the Valley City community to build a Wellness Center, which will be partially funded through student fees and rental income (from VCSU, for the space used to house VCSU's Physical Education program). These projects will enhance the student learning experience and significantly reduce deferred maintenance expenses.

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

The Valley City State University budget represents a plan for how resources will be used to advance the university's mission. The budget-planning process involves working with the campus and the North Dakota University System (NDUS) to develop a biennial budget request of the state legislature. Major capital projects are budgeted separately from other operating expenses, and budgeting is done on a biennial basis. Tuition and fees are reviewed annually by the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE). Locally, the university manages an annual budget-planning process as a means to respond to changes and opportunities within the biennial period.

The system of checks and balances among the university, NDUS, SBHE, and the state legislature works to ensure that financial resources are appropriately directed toward educational purposes, and in the current system, there are no superordinate entities.

Valley City State University, through the comprehensive North Dakota University System financial audit, receives an unmodified opinion on its financial statements from the North Dakota State Auditor's Office annually.

Tables with Budget by Fund and Budget by Program follow.

Budget by Fund — Fiscal Year 2014–15		
Funding Source	*Millions*	*% of Total*

State Appropriations	$10.4	40.4%
Student Tuition and Fees	$ 7.7	29.8%
Gifts, Grants and Other	$ 4.1	16.2%
Auxiliary Enterprises	$ 3.5	13.6%
TOTAL Budgeted	**$25.7**	100.0%

Budget by Program — Fiscal Year 2014–15		
Program	*Millions*	*% of Total*
Education and General		
Academic Instruction	$ 8.1	39.4%
Student Services	$ 3.6	17.7%
Physical Plant	$ 2.8	13.4%
General Administration	$ 2.6	12.6%
Technology Services	$ 2.0	10.0%
Academic Libraries	$ 0.5	2.4%
Academic Administration	$ 0.4	1.7%
Internal Service Funds	$ 0.3	1.6%
Institutional Research	$ 0.2	0.8%
Community Service	$ 0.1	0.4%
TOTAL Educational/General	*$20.6*	*100.0%*
Other		
Auxiliary Services and Other	$ 2.7	51.5%
Scholarships and Fellowships	$ 2.4	48.4%
TOTAL Other	*$ 5.1*	*100.0%*
GRAND TOTAL	**$25.7**	

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

In developing the initial operating-budget proposal, discussion includes changes to programs or services, especially those related to strategic initiatives. In development of the fiscal year 2016 operating budget, a new budget request process was used. A request was given a higher priority ranking for funding if the reason for the proposed initiative related to the 2015–16 University and Department Strategic Plans or was in response to a mandatory increase required by law, regulation, or accreditation. The development of planning and budgeting for FY 2016 and beyond will be based on

mission and objectives identified in the NDUS and VCSU strategic plans.

On the revenue side, state appropriation, tuition, fees, grants and contracts, and fundraising are taken into consideration. Then, in consultation with the SBHE, a request is made of the legislature for both capital and operating funding. Following legislative action on the appropriation, tuition is set and confirmed or revised by the SBHE. Finally, the overall budget and the timeline for strategic initiatives are revised to reflect the appropriated revenues.

Valley City State University strategic plans have resulted in significant, intended changes. These changes are evident in how the campus master plan relates facilities to strategic initiatives and how it allocates resources to meet the goals of the strategic plan.

VCSU's ability to expand the Master's of Education (M.Ed.) program, add several new undergraduate programs, expand science research in response to needs within the scope of the mission, deliver online programs and services, and partner with other universities to deliver programs in response to community needs has been possible because the university has been able to devote resources needed to achieve these plans.

Collectively these new programs have necessitated staffing changes, technology services, library resources, laboratories and equipment. The university has anticipated these needs and has deployed multiple strategies to provide resources, including:

1. setting aside new funding
2. reallocating resources
3. working cooperatively within the North Dakota University System
4. obtaining outside funding

The university's goals are typically delineated in multi-year strategic plans that are developed from the ground up. A strategic planning committee solicits planning documents from individual departments, offices and programs. Those entities suggest their own goals for the planning cycle, providing justification and noting needed human and fiscal resources. These sub-plans are gathered, sorted by thematic focus, and organized into a planning document.

As the leaders of these individual departments, offices and programs participate in the budget process, they request both needed positions (human resources) and budget dollars (fiscal resources) for their individual plans, referencing the requests' fit within the institutional strategic plan.

In 2014–15, VCSU began a Program Optimization Process (POP). Through this process, VCSU seeks to identify key programs and initiatives to ensure that resources are allocated optimally to vital and emerging entities within the university. This process is described more fully in 5.C.

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

Faculty and staff are hired with appropriate qualifications; the university follows careful hiring practices with reference checks and background checks. Position announcements include requirements and preferences. A point system and a rating sheet are used to evaluate staff candidates, and on-campus interviews typically include a session open to the campus at large.

Annual summer training activities include a teaching academy for a group of faculty and a professional development seminar for staff. In addition, an orientation session for new faculty and staff is held during Welcome Week, traditionally the week before classes begin in the fall. Individuals

and campus committees frequently participate in professional conferences and training.

Staff members are reviewed after a six-month probationary period and then reviewed annually after that. VCSU instituted a new staff annual review process (with a new appraisal form and appraisal guide) in 2014 to assist both supervisors and employees in discussing performance in a more meaningful way. Regular performance reviews, evaluation, assessment, professional development, and individual growth plans promote increased productivity and generate improvements.

Faculty qualifications are established in VCSU policy 605.1, which includes expectations for academic credentials and tenure pathways for professionally qualified faculty. All faculty hires, including those for adjunct and special appointment positions, must meet these standards. This policy is currently under review in light of the recent HLC statement of expectations for faculty qualifications, as the policy meets the spirit but not the specificity of the HLC statement.

Lists of faculty and staff and their academic credentials can be found in the university catalog.

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

An annual budget is developed by the university by gathering input from campus constituents, aligning budget requests with university strategic initiatives and following State Board of Higher Education guidelines. The State Board guidelines include consideration of legislative intent as contained in the biennial appropriation bill.

Campus input is gathered through a budget request process which includes completion and submission of budget request forms to the Vice President for Business Affairs. The form requires the requester to include justification of the budget item and an indication of how the item relates to the strategic plan. The requester is encouraged to include metrics to demonstrate the need for the requested budget allocation.

The VCSU Cabinet reviews all budget requests and estimated revenue; determines which budget requests will advance the institution's strategic initiatives and are rated highly by the university's Program Optimization Process; and allocates available funding or reallocates existing funding to specific budget items. The finalized budget is submitted to the NDUS Chancellor for approval.

The VCSU Business Office publishes Actual versus Budget schedules monthly for the entire campus community to review. The reports assist departments in managing their respective budget areas. Additionally, the Vice President for Business Affairs monitors each of the departments and related funds to ensure budgets are being met and variances discussed.

Expenses are signed off by employees, their supervisors, and the Business Office to ensure expenses are prudent and align with strategic plans and goals of the department, institution, and university system.

The use of Purchasing Cards has allowed additional monitoring of expenses and has been a cost-effective way to procure goods and services. A small percentage of each purchase price comes back to the university from the Purchasing Card contractor, which provides additional resources for the institution.

Additionally, all employee expenses within North Dakota are tax exempt, and tax exempt cards are provided to employees to ensure the effective use of appropriated funds. VCSU is required to follow SBHE and North Dakota Century Codes and policies as they relate to travel and other expenses.

Sources

- Actual vs Budget Schedule
- Employee Appraisal Form
- Employee Appraisal Form Guide
- FY16 Position Budget Request
- NDUS Annual Financial Report FY 2014
- Operating Budget Request Form FY 2016
- Program Optimization Process
- SBHE 800 Index Financial Affairs
- V605.01 VCSU Tenure Procedures
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16
- VCSU Catalog 2014–16 (page number 190)

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies— including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

1. The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

Please see 2.C for a description of the SBHE councils that ensure good communication and oversight of each institution's financial and academic policies.

VCSU sends SBHE board members monthly printed reports with campus updates; the Alumni Bulletin is also mailed to this group, keeping each member apprised of campus events, people, concerns, and success.

2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies in shared governance.

VCSU students, staff, and faculty each have a Senate which organizes committees to manage the affairs of its constituency. In turn, these senates and their members participate in shared governance through a variety of committees. These committees are divided into two groups: those that are structured by the Faculty Association constitution and report to the Faculty Association; and those that are designed to meet administrative needs and report to the administrative office that developed them. Faculty Association committees are described in the Faculty Association Constitution; Administrative committees are described in Policy V302.4.1.

This committee structure serves several important purposes. First, it shares the work of the University across campus, involving faculty and staff more widely in making plans and decisions where their expertise and interests may be put to valuable use. Second, it increases opportunities for communication and provides a vehicle for discussion, collaboration, and recommendations for change or resolution of issues. Since many of these committees have deliberate representation from each organizational area on campus, the membership is expected to take back to their constituents the information, issues, and questions for further discussion.

In addition, Student Senate identifies students to participate in each of the Association and Administrative committees; each of the senate presidents is a member of the Executive Team and

participates in strategic planning and a variety of campus decisions.

VCSU Policy 100.01 (Policy on University Policy) establishes a University Policy Committee (UPC) to assist the president in keeping the policy manual updated and in managing new policies as they are proposed. The University Policy Committee, with broad campus representation, meets monthly to review policies proposed by any individual or group on campus. This committee serves as a clearinghouse for policy discussion by assuring that all groups or individuals affected by a policy have had opportunity for discussion, and then by forwarding policies to the President for review and approval. The established review process ensures that constituents at all levels review policies related to their areas; it is the committee's responsibility to send policy back to constituent groups such as staff or faculty senate or other committees for intermediate approval before forwarding these policies to the President. Any interim policies approved by the President require review by the relevant groups and UPC approval within six months (see section 2 of the policy).

3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

The Curriculum Committee is a Faculty Association committee comprised of faculty (who vote) and several administrators who serve in an advisory capacity, along with a student member. Any changes to the published catalog of courses and programs must be presented to this committee for review and approval. This includes program and course changes, including graduate school revisions, changes in the General Education program, and policies governing academic processes, graduation requirements, and degree requirements. Items approved by this committee are forwarded to the Faculty Senate for review and approval, at which point they are implemented. The policy outlining the structure of this process is V403.1

New programs, which must be approved at the state level (by the SBHE), begin with this campus review and approval process before they are submitted to the Board office for review and approval. Because administrators serve only in advisory capacity, there is a very real sense that the faculty "own" the curriculum and maintain the academic structure at VCSU.

The Academic and Scholastic Standing Committee (ASSC) is a second Faculty Association committee, that, in addition to hearing academic appeals, reviews academic policies and proposes updates; these proposals are reviewed by APAC and Faculty Senate to assure agreement among faculty groups; draft policies from this committee typically also are reviewed by Student Senate because the actions proposed often affect students' academic circumstances. Three recent examples include the change in the number of credits a student must attempt before being placed on probation (from 16 down to 12, in order to identify and assist students after a first, unsuccessful semester); the development of a one-time drop option for students who need to drop a class after the last day to drop in the 12th week; and revisions of the Academic Integrity and Student Grade Complaint policies.

The Academic Policy and Affairs Committee (APAC) is an administrative committee made up of department chairs and directors in academic affairs departments across campus. This group provides leadership in academic policy development and sets up the procedures for implementing policy decisions. Its policy work is reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate before being submitted to UPC and the president, once again giving faculty a strong voice in matters that involve academic affairs decisions, curriculum, and related policies.

Sources

- V100.01 Policy on University Policy
- V201 Constitution of the VCSU Faculty Association
- V302.04.01 VCSU Committee Structure
- V403.01 Curriculum Change Procedures

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

During the past academic year, VCSU has initiated a Program Optimization Process (POP), based on Robert Dickeson's *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* (2010). The intent of the process was a systematic review, using common measures, to increase transparency in making budget decisions and to identify the best ways to invest in future growth.

A steering committee was established in September 2014, and two peer-nominated task forces, one for academic programs and for non-academic programs, began their work in January. These groups guided the identification of programs included in the study, criteria, measures, and the survey instrument. Now that the surveys have been returned, they are currently engaged in reviewing the data and organizing a summary of findings.

The chairs of each task force reported on progress at an all-campus meeting in late August 2015, and they identified some short-term wins for the activity: both groups noted an increased self-awareness and clarification regarding purpose in some of their constituent groups. The reports are due in mid-October, and the next step will require Cabinet review of the findings and a campus-wide discussion/agreement on how these findings will be used to support budget and staffing requests going forward.

1. Institutional resource allocations align with the campus mission and priorities.

Budget request forms require justification for budget items and establishment of a direct connection with the campus strategic plan; along with recommended metrics demonstrating the need for the requested allocations. In the future, these will be revised to include documentation from the POP process/report.

Budget request forms which align requests to department and campus strategic plans are submitted to the Vice President for Business Affairs. Input from campus constituents informs annual budget development processes and ensures that budget requests align with campus strategic initiatives. The VCSU Cabinet reviews all budget requests and estimated revenue when determining whether budget

requests advance university strategic initiatives; allocating available funding or re-allocating existing funds to specific budget items.

Budget requests adhere to State Board of Higher Education guidelines, including consideration of legislative intent within the biennial appropriations legislation. The finalized budget must be approved by the North Dakota University System Chancellor as a final verification of alignment with the campus mission and priorities.

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

Faculty at VCSU complete program reviews on a six-year cycle, as required by SBHE policy 403.1.2. While this information has been regularly collected by Academic Affairs and shared with the System Office (per policy), most stakeholders on campus were not aware of the information in these program reviews, except when findings were used to support a budget request or to shape the program's strategic plan. In 2012, the VPAA began sharing summaries of the academic program reviews with Executive Team, to help increase awareness across campus of program successes and challenges. In addition, the VPAA has been requiring annual program updates from each program (beginning in 2010) and the VPSA publishes an annual end of year report for student affairs (beginning in 2012-13). These measures have informally connected assessment to planning and budgeting. However, we have been aware for a number of years that we needed to make a more consistent, deliberate effort to articulate the connections between assessment, review, planning, and budgeting.

The new Program Optimization Process (POP) will provide a stronger system for linking student learning assessment, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting, for several reasons:

1. The measures include specific reference to student learning outcomes and student success for each program
2. Each program must report on its financial operations, revenue streams (ie, FTE), and program planning
3. The Cabinet will have readily comparable data about programs at hand when making decisions, along with an understanding of how each program connects itself to the university's mission and strategic plan
4. Budget allocation process will proceed with more transparency, as everyone understands the types of data used to inform decisions.

Further alignment of POP with the Strategic Plan will ensure effective allocation of university budget resources.

3. The following examples demonstrate that the institution's planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

A. The new strategic plan demonstrates a strong effort to involve the entire VCSU community. This plan, which serves as a bridge plan from our recently completed Success 2015 plan to the plan we will be developing next year with our new president, is based on the unit strategic plans each department or administrative unit developed in Fall 2014. A Strategic Planning committee (including individuals

from all areas across campus) reviewed and collated the various plans, and developed a plan that included common ideas and strategies from across campus. The draft plan was shared back to each unit, revised, and then reviewed and revised further by the Executive Team (which includes both administration and senate presidents). The resulting strategic plan includes items from every unit across campus, pulled together in a coherent document and plan that we can all support as we move forward. Every unit has at least one item of responsibility in supporting the plan; Executive Team has established a reporting process to help units track the success of the plan monthly.

B. Several programs utilize advisory boards with internal and external stakeholders.

The Foundation Board, representing internal, alumni, and community stakeholders, has a strong relationship with campus leadership and is important in campus decision making. The Executive Director of University Advancement reports to the President and serves on the President's Cabinet and Executive Team that address campus needs in accordance with the Strategic Plan. The Board helps address needs of programs and program advisory boards. The Board has helped institute student scholarships, including in STEM-related fields. The Board has been proactive in generating financial resources to aid in campus improvements, recently acquiring land to facilitate campus growth and expansion.

The Business Department uses information from their department's advisory board, consistng of representatives from industry, educational programs, and state board advisors, to review program fit and needs of the work forces. Curriculum changes have been made based directly on this information. Examples include the new agriculture concentration, diversity course, and combining the Accounting and Finance concentrations, adding a field experience/internship requirement, Recruiting and Selections course, Operations Management course, and BUSI 249 Business Profession & Emerging Leaders course to increase soft skills among students.

The Teacher Education Committee serves an advisory role to the Teacher Education program. The committee consists of one faculty member from each division or school, the Chair of Teacher Education, Director of Field Experiences, the Assessment Coordinator, one elementary teacher, one secondary teacher, one public school administrator, a current VCSU Elementary Education major, and a student majoring in one of the secondary education programs. The committee assists in teacher education candidate admission decisions, reviews curricular changes, and reviews policies. The program regularly shares data with the committee and with partner schools. The process strengthens P-12 partnerships and yields insights from P-12 educators for program improvement. Data sharing occurs with Graduate School faculty and the Graduate Council. The Graduate School hosted a P-20 data sharing and focus group session in November 2014.

The Great Plains STEM Education Center has established an internal advisory board to guide program activities, presently consisting of faculty members from the departments of Science, Technology Education, Software Engineering, and Mathematics.

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

The institution conducted a space-utilization study to facilitate enrollment growth management and affirmed the presence of significant academic space to accommodate the growth. A Health, Physical Education, and Wellness building is being constructed to assist in enrollment growth in health and

physical education related majors. The building on VCSU property will be owned and operated by Valley City Parks and Recreation with VCSU as a tenant.

During the 2013-14 academic year, the SBHE hired a consulting firm to review the deferred maintenance situation at all 11 campuses and develop some common metrics to allow the SBHE to prioritize capital requests. The results of this analysis for VCSU buildings was included in the 2014-15 Masterplan update; VCSU used this information to inform its requests for a new heat plant and communication and fine arts building during the 2015 biennium.

A new North Dakota University System policy (810.1 Appropriated Funds Reserve) encourages institutions to reserve funds for a variety of needs including enrollment decreases. Over the last four years of historically strong student enrollments, VCSU has increased the funds placed in reserve in order to help plan for future years when enrollment numbers may not be as strong. The State Board of Higher Education reviews additional financial metrics to determine the health of the institution within the university system. Valley City State University scores well in most categories and has a strong Composite Financial Index ratio. For additional information on the CFI and other ratios, please review the 2014 Campus Financial Review. State support increased dramatically with the new funding model emphasizing completed credit hours.

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

As a small campus, it is essential that VCSU be attentive to emerging changes and nimble in addressing change while assuring continuity and sound decision-making.   Discussion of potential threats and thoughtful discussion of strategies to keep VCSU on the forefront of technology and innovation are a standing agenda item each week at Cabinet. Quarterly Cabinet retreats also include an environmental scan to support planning and budgeting decisions.

One recent example: As the demographics have changed in western North Dakota due to the oil activity, VCSU has developed an Environmental Science degree to meet specific curricular demands. With this change, the campus has also seen an increase in applications from the western side of the state. Campus enrollment has eclipsed the Success 2015 Strategic Plan goal of 1,300 students. At the same time, however, VCSU is aware that this market may drop with the price of oil, so it has been attentive to developing relationships in other regions and needs served effectively by distance delivery, such as supporting teacher shortages in Wyoming.

Technology changes related to emerging trends are noted here.

Instructional Design has kept pace with emerging technology trends through activities such as Summer Academy workshops, Brown Bag presentations, "Tech Tuesdays," conference attendance/presentations, and through the Instructional Design Facebook page.

Sources

- 2014 NDUS Program Review Summary
- 2014-15 VCSU Master Plan

- Baselines 2014–15
- Campus Financial Review-2014
- Foundation Fact Sheet
- FY16 Position Budget Request
- Instructional Design Blackboard Organization
- NDUS Financial Review FY 2014
- Operating Budget Request Form FY 2016
- Press_Statement_May_1_2015_VC_Park_District
- Program Optimization Process
- SBHE 403.1.2 Institutional Instructional Program Evaluation
- SBHE 800 Index Financial Affairs
- SBHE 810.1 Appropriated Funds Reserve
- Strategic Planning Committee Members
- Student Affairs End Of Year Report-2015
- Technology Services 5C
- VCSU Strategic Plan 2015
- VCSU_Academic_Programs_POP_Survey
- VCSU_Non-Academic_Programs_POP_Survey

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations in a variety of ways.

Faculty, staff, and students are actively involved as contributors of data from a variety of campus sources. The institution uses data from student, faculty, staff, and employer-focused assessments to improve programs and campus operations. Data analysis helps identify campus and program strengths and weaknesses that inform decision-making. Successful outcomes promote decisions by the campus and programs to stay on course. Identifications of weakness require that changes be considered. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment helps identify areas of strength and challenge from a variety of data sources. In addition, the School of Education and Graduate studies continues to maintain a Central Assessment System that collects specific teacher education student data as well as data on campus outcomes and portfolio evaluation scores.

In accordance with shared campus governance, campus committees meet regularly to plan, implement, evaluate, and reflect upon decisions related to academic and administrative issues, staffing, budgets, and other relevant topics. Many committees include faculty, administrative, staff, and student membership. Each decision-making body seeks input from its constituency and disseminates information throughout campus through interpersonal connections and published minutes of proceedings. Each faculty committee publishes its minutes and an annual report (included in the Faculty Senate consent agenda) to document its performance and enhance communication.

The institution uses a wide range of data and information services to facilitate planning, evaluation, and decision-making. The data is often tailored to the needs of campus units. A commitment to campus collaboration and campus governance structures promote the use of data to evaluate performance, assist in planning, inform budgets, formulate improvement strategies, continuously integrate technology into learning, and facilitate change. These collaborative efforts and shared communication enhance campus vitality in support of our mission and vision.

The commitment to continuous improvement drives innovatison, reform, and advancement within our mission, vision, university purposes, learning outcomes, and values. The 2015-2017 Strategic Plan, "Defining Great: The VCSU Difference" provide a framework for specific goals among campus units and constituencies. The primary sources for this plan are the unit plans developed by each area in Fall 2014. The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed and summarized the plans to determine common goals that unite our campus. Units were asked to identify one activity from their unit strategic plan that maps to the Campus Strategic Plan. Outcomes, units, and completion dates are outlined here.

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

VCSU actively gathers and utilizes performance assessment to improve both its programs and the workplace. Two examples below illustrate the way VCSU gathers and responds to assessment:

Campus Quality Survey / Employee Satisfaction Survey

The Campus Quality Survey, developed by Performance Horizons, has been administered to campus employees in even-numbered years since 2002. An executive summary was completed for the December 2014 administration highlighting survey methodology, selected findings, and recommendations. After discussion regarding the results of this survey, Staff Senate developed an Employee Satisfaction Survey to gather input about workplace engagement, perceptions, and campus climate. Employee Satisfaction Survey results from February 2015 were compiled and shared in March campus forums with additional feedback provided. Staff Senate presented results and recommendations to Cabinet in June 2015.

Cabinet decisions stemming from the June 2015 presentation included: allowing Facilities Services a position on the Executive Team to enhance communication about campus projects, distribution of Executive Team agenda items and meeting minutes to all faculty and staff, exploring ideas to increase campus pride and morale, and Staff Senate Leadership of monthly Campus Inter-Functional Forum (CIFF) meetings sharing information with campus stakeholders. (CIFF is a further expansion of a group (CIFT) initially designed to share information about student information system (SIS) user information. The CIFT group will continue as a smaller group for individuals working directly with SIS information as needed.) In addition, the survey highlighted faculty concerns with workload and committee fatigue, resulting in Faculty Senate studies of these two areas during the coming year.

Program Review/Annual Program Update -- Teacher Education

The Annual Program Update and Program Review process for academic programs requires analysis of learning activities, reflection upon the results, and plans for future changes. The Teacher Education program demonstrates significant success in learning from operational experience and making significant improvements.

The 2008 NCATE report highlighted the types and uses of student data within the Teacher Education program:

> Candidates are evaluated at various transition points on dispositions and field experience successes. Final evaluations provide data for future growth, but formative data such as student teaching progress evaluations after 3 weeks and 7 weeks are helpful for continuous improvement. Candidates assess their confidence level of the three domains, the INTASC standards, the University Abilities and the conceptual framework at three transition points during their undergraduate studies.

> Advanced candidates [graduate students] are assessed at key transition points on their perception and confidence level of the NBPTS and VCSU core values. The assessment is used by candidates to improve performance and help them realize how their learning connects with the University's model for teacher preparation as well as NBPTS expectations. The assessment is aggregated and used by the unit to identify the progression of candidates through the program.

Candidates in both initial and advanced programs can monitor their progress toward program completion by accessing their own candidate summary on the unit's Central Assessment System.

This assessment process allows for program improvement and quality assurance for a program delivered to three different student groups (on the VCSU campus, online, and on the NDSU campus), as the report indicates:

Assessment data collected on candidate performance in specified preparation programs on the main campus, at off-campus sites, and in distance learning programs suggests that program effectiveness for intended learner outcomes is essentially the same across all three areas of the initial teacher licensure programs. For example, elementary education majors on campus and at the off-campus site experience the same curriculum and same assessments.

Cooperating teacher evaluations of student teachers, PPST, PraXIS II tests indicate quality outcomes at NDSU (off-campus) as well as VCSU (main campus). The off-campus program is taught primarily by the same faculty members with the same curriculum. The disaggregated data confirms the University's commitment to providing an off-campus program with the same quality as the main campus. Should outcome data demonstrate a deficiency, the unit would need to make adjustments in the curriculum or delivery to ensure quality at both locations. Assessment data at key transition points in the program do not reveal any significant difference in quality performance at the present time.

Unit faculty use data to make knowledge-based decisions about program strengths and weaknesses. At times aggregated data indicates successful outcomes and promotes staying on course, other times the data necessitates change. The unit not only makes decisions based on assessments, but the unit improves its assessments. "Development and Reflection" has been added to the elementary education portfolio to increase candidate reflection on their growth in the teacher preparation experience. Field experience forms have been made more consistent to indicate candidate growth through transition points in the program. The student teaching data in categories like responsibility and dependability produced almost identical scores on candidates, so the two attributes were combined and additional questions on diversity and the belief that all candidates can learn were added.

The Teacher Education process of assessment, reflection, and improvement provides a strong model for other programs on campus as they seek to use performance data to enhance program effectiveness.

Sources

- Annual Program Update Instructions
- Campus Quality Survey
- Employee Satisfaction Survey Themes 2015
- Executive Summary of the 2014 VCSU Campus Quality Survey
- Program Review Template
- Strategic Plan 2015-2017 OUTCOMES CHARTv2
- Strategic Planning Committee Members
- VCSU Strategic Plan 2015
- VCSU_Employee_Satisfaction_Survey

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

VCSU has the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to support its educational endeavors. The physical plant is well-maintained; the University follows a master plan in planning for future improvements. While deferred maintenance continues to be a problem, the state legislature has supported VCSU's capital improvement requests for the next biennium.

The campus is flexible in responding to changes in its physical, political, and academic environments. The resource allocation system being developed through the program optimization process promises to strengthen ties between assessment, planning, resources, and budgeting.

The campus employs a systematic use of shared governance that results in collaborative decisions about policies and curriculum; faculty, administration, staff, and students all participate in decision-making through their work on campus committees.

Sources

There are no sources.