Info on BSU’s Continuing Accreditation Process

This is the third of five newsletters, each highlighting one of the criteria.

Digging Deeper into the Self-Study: Criterion 3

Criterion 3 focuses on student learning and assessment. HLC is interested in how institutions use assessment to plan for change and then make budgetary decisions to drive those changes. This process is known as “closing the loop.” In the self-study process, we found a number of examples of closing the loop on our campus:

- Faculty-Student Collaborations
- The Advising Success Center
- Smart Classrooms
- Nursing Department
- Linden Hall Suites

**HOT TOPIC!!**

A Master Data Site Deep Dive

Closing the Loop. For the complete list of closing the loop items we identified, see http://www.bemidjistate.edu/hlc/process/master_data/university/closing_the_loop.pdf

Do you have a “Closing the Loop” example to add? Send it to hlc@bemidjistate.edu. Please include the following information: the name of the office or area, the assessment or strategy used, how resources were allocated, the results of the allocation, and, if possible, a cross-reference to the criterion it’s aligned with.

General Findings: Criterion 3

In fulfilling its mission, the university uses direct and indirect measures of student learning, satisfaction, and engagement to assess success in attaining its goals. Since they were developed in 1995, the three Dimensions of Student Learning and eight Student Learning Outcomes have formed the core areas of program and service area assessment. Effective teaching is fulfilled, in part, through professional development for faculty, innovative pedagogy, program review by an external consultant every five years, regular assessment that informs the curriculum, and services that stay abreast of evolving needs and technologies. University resources are allocated in support of learning, teaching, and student advising.

Process Recaps

Self-Study Process Started in 2008. Over fifty students, staff, administrators and faculty have contributed time, effort, and intellect to the self-study process since it began in spring 2008.

Self-Study Document Completed. The self-study document was completed and sent to HLC and the consultant evaluators on January 25, 2010.

Site Visit Set for March 22-24. The campus community will have at least one opportunity, if not more, to meet with consultant evaluators during their March 22-24 visit. A schedule for the team visit will be released to the campus soon.

Criterion 1 Components Met. BSU clearly and consistently states, articulates, and lives its mission and vision.

Criterion 2 Components Met. BSU’s planning process demonstrates its capacity to improve education while responding to challenges and opportunities.
Core Component 3a
The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

The five-year planning and assessment cycles — required of all academic departments and programs and of student development and university services departments — reflect the university’s commitment to using evidence of success in establishing its educational mission. These planning and assessment cycles are described in the University Assessment Plan and informed by the university’s Dimensions of Student Learning. The Master Academic Plan arises from and reflects the goals and values of the university’s academic colleges and departments. Outcomes for co-curricular learning are linked to the Dimensions of Student Learning and guided by the Student Development and Enrollment J-Plan adopted in 2008. Several initiatives undertaken by the Center for Extended Learning help ensure that assessment activities specifically related to distance learning courses and programs are directly incorporated into planning at the department, college, and university levels. Goals and measurements evaluate achievement of the University Plan and of related items in MnSCU’s Strategic Plan and are reported in an Accountability Dashboard. The newly constituted Gaps and Trends Committee consolidates, analyzes, interprets, and reports on assessment findings.

Core Component 3b
The organization values and supports effective teaching.

The university is committed to excellence in teaching at all levels. The diversity and quality of student projects displayed during the annual Student Scholarship and Creative Achievement Day attests to the centrality of student learning in the university’s mission. Innovations in pedagogy are supported across the curriculum in the form of experimental courses, interdisciplinary teaching in the Honors Program and in the People and the Environment courses in Area 10 of Liberal Education, and in student-faculty collaborative projects. The Center for Professional Development supports continuing development for faculty in effective teaching by sponsoring workshops and discussions about pedagogy; providing classroom evaluations and consultations as well as mid-semester and end-of-semester class evaluations; mentoring new faculty; and promoting dialogue about pedagogy in open forums, workshops, white papers and its annual newsletter, Metamorphosis.

Core Component 3c
The organization creates effective learning environments.

Learning and teaching are supported through services and with buildings, equipment, technology and related features, including the following:

- The Advising Success Center results from many years of effort and focuses on advising services for students, especially for at-risk and undecided students.
- Library Services includes on-campus and electronic holdings and services to patrons.
- TRIO/SSS provides comprehensive direct services to 350 eligible students through a student-centered learning model.
- The American Indian Resource Center (AIRC) is dedicated to providing support services for Native American students and is a resource for other students across campus.
- D2L, a course management system that provides a password-protected environment in which students can interact online with each other and with their instructor, allows for the development of blended course delivery models using multiple methodologies.
- ATC provides technologically advanced tools such as smart classrooms to enhance the learning experience.
- New hardware in the computer lab, which is open to all students, faculty and staff, is rotated in every two to three years.
- Bemidji State recognizes and has responded to the national trend of increased interest in distance learning and of its value for students and faculty.
- Co-curricular learning opportunities such as student government, student union programming, health services initiatives, recreational programming, on-campus jobs, international student programming and related activities are offered.
- Faculty-student collaborations on internships, community activities, research projects, and creative events result in professional-level experiences in the world of work as well as community businesses and organizations for BSU students.

Core Component 3d
The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

The university’s curriculum processes are supported at several levels and include the allocation of resources. The quality of the faculty is assured through various means, including a rigorous promotion and tenure process. The university continually assesses for learning and teaching success and for student satisfaction and engagement. Improving learning and teaching is prioritized in budgets, as indicated by funding provided for the direct assessment of student learning for all academic programs; four faculty assessment coordinators to assist with program-level and university-wide assessment; a curriculum liaison to assist in curriculum planning; and student and university services plans and reviews.

Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Strengths
- The institution has continued to develop a culture of assessment stemming from widely shared student-learning outcomes that culminate in improvements based on assessment across university divisions. These efforts have been widely supported by the university (e.g., assessment coordinators, Academic Assessment Committee, Gaps & Trends Committee) as evidenced by widespread participation in five-year program reviews (academic and non-academic). Examples of closing the loop on assessment include efforts to revise liberal education, laptop and smart classroom upgrades, the development of the J-Plan and the Advising Success Center, the renovation of Linden Hall, and numerous examples of program and curriculum revisions.
- BSU is learning focused.
- The Liberal Education initiative.

Priorities for Improvement
- Graduate Studies: Plans for developing high quality assessment practices have been proposed and are under discussion.
- Professional Education: The Board of Teaching sets high standards for monitoring and assessing student competencies. BSU’s education program is developing a portfolio process that will permit tracking students’ competencies and consolidating program information using TaskStream.

See the Self-Study Report for More Criterion 3:
http://www.bemidjistate.edu/hlc