

**Tabletop discussion  
Staff Session, November 30, 2005**

**Criterion 1**

- 1. Before giving them the Mission Statement, ask them if they remember any buzzwords from the mission statement.**
  - Seen, but not read it; located in bulletin;
  - MSUM mentioned in mission statement;
  - Life-long learning (used in Library material);
  - Citizenship (?)
  
- 2. Have them read the Mission Statement.**
  - Top one is the condensed version;
  - Bottom is the longer version – off President’s page;
  - Back – aims.
  
- 3. Ask them what phrases/concepts from the M/S best summarize the mission of MSUM.**
  - To provide education environment that supports;
  - Life long learners;
  - Common liberal studies;
  - The unique talents.
  
- 4. Ask them what’s missing from the Mission Statement that also speaks to what’s unique about MSUM or what is also a part of the mission of the university.**
  - Men and women distinction – maybe better word or reference – *e.g.* For all;
  - Little mention of staff;
  - Continual professional development means staff, too;
  - Staff Development day – there is a lot of negativism from staff – feel alone, or not important. University needs to work on that. Key people are not sent to places to learn more about their area of work;
  - Faculty emphasis is not always the case in the learning/teaching process;
  - Need to build up the morale of the students for all the ‘little’ things they do;
  - Proud to work here and love job – bottom line;
  - Conducive to working as teams in work areas and colleges; as well as campus-wide;
  - Unique in the community with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration; Straw Hat Players; Compact campus – easy to get around – nice looking campus. A community within Moorhead – hair services, food services, banking, etc.
  
- 5. Ask them how the mission of the university applies to their daily activities.**
  - The shorten version gives the hint that we all have knowledge, talent and skills;
  - Encourage good faculty to get tenure;
  - By encouraging students to continue with studies;
  - Can maintain a positive attitude – for paragraph 2.

- Working with students – helping them develop research skills; how to act responsibly;

**6. Does it accurately reflect our campus? Need to be changed or shortened?**

- Needs to be shortened – some won't read it;
- 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph has good stuff;
- Baccalaureates – we already know it's provided (last two sentences in paragraph 1 could be eliminated);
- Graduate programs – maybe condensed somewhere else;
- Need to shorten to entice more people to take notice and read it;
- During recruitment the mission statement is important to display.

**7. Departments have mission statements?**

- Library may have the MSUM M/S outside a door;
- Science Lab may have a version;
- Financial Aids has one displayed;
- Different versions on different web pages – nothing universal;
- It needs to out there – more signage;
- Quick fixes – NCA web site – will have updates and news when drafts are available; Continews will have a separate color and page for NCA updates; open forums in the spring;
- Sense of community – President's opening fall meeting appears geared to faculty only, but was intended for all. The talk was geared to faculty more so, too;
- Need more support from the top coming down to encourage supervisors to let staff attend forums.

## Criterion 2

### 1. Environmental scanning

- Constantly. We all spend time in my department reading information/listservs/nobody knows everything. Now we have to specialize. We hear a lot from students about expectations. And parents. Conferences in areas of specialty. Made great strides in the past two years keeping up;
- Listservs/director very involved in making sure everything is up to date and holes are filled. We always ask students for input. Process used to determine needs for new books, etc. Request process used;
- Not much direct contact. Do have students and parents call with problems. We refer to other departments to help resolve problems;
- We are forever getting practices and policies and procedures from the Chancellor's office. We respond. Give information to employees. Monitor confusion and help to alleviate confusion by communicating with employees. Most of what we get comes to us from the office of the chancellor. We see a lot of changes with where instructors are located when they teach online. Must make adjustments to taking care of their needs for paperwork/orientation/etc. Must make them feel a part of university. Trying to improve;
- Don't always have time to read campus information because of workload. Must keep track of bills and track down responsible people. Word of mouth. Conversation. Credit card use by employees. Taking student credit cards. Online tuition statements/payments.

### 2. What do you know about planning on campus?

- Not know exactly, but I hear peripheral information. See what gets put together. Know that we have a budget and planning committee. Don't have time to do planning in our office. Aware of planning, though;
- A lot of planning is done for us. We're on the edge, but not involved in the process. Office as a whole isn't necessarily involved. Get pieces, but not the whole discussion. Have things to do as part of planning, but not know how these pieces relate to others. People too busy to keep everyone in the loop;
- Not always have knowledge of when bills get paid, etc. Seem to be some gaps in the process;
- Department meetings. Director good about letting know what's going on. Must be part of planning. Constant equipment updates and facilities upgrades. We know what's coming to us;
- Not much knowledge from a couple of departments. Not really know the plan for the university. There is a plan, but we all don't know about it. Problem being allowed to go to meetings where planning is discussed. Should be more opportunities for more employees to volunteer for committees. Descriptions of what's involved. What's the plan for the committee? More communication. Don't hear about the outputs of committee work. Some place to summarize what has been decided and how it was decided;

- It's not clear how people are selected for committees. Not clear what's done on committees. Need more clear call for volunteers. Staff do not feel that they can take part in committees. If allowed to go, someone else has to pick up the slack.

**3. How does planning happen in your dept.? How does it relate to college & university planning?**

- We do regular budget planning. Several cycles. Have a process to determine how budget priorities are established;
- Directors don't really have time to do planning in their own offices. Regular staff meetings. Informal and formal. As the need arises in some cases. Planning for specific events.

**4. What suggestions do you for improvement of campus planning processes?**

- Communication about planning;
- Time to do planning;
- More open process to get people involved. Some people would get involved, but aren't aware;
- Send messages out to people for information, but don't hear anything;
- Better communication: Open forums are good, Continews, listservs doesn't always get immediate attention. Running short-staffed and that makes it tough to have the time to keep up with things. Keeping things current is difficult. Too much information. Good information could be condensed;
- Personal responsibility.

**5. How does your department create yearly goals? What drives how those goals are created?**

- We haven't gotten there yet. We talk about it. Used to have to come up with goals for vp but not just doing it as it comes. In transition. Looking for new ways of doing things;
- Have to keep up with the work. Others, too. Have to learn new systems/technologies/ways of doing things. Regular work takes priority over planning;
- New systems/technologies are overwhelming at first, but in the end should be better. Keeping up with new systems/technologies takes a lot of work. We have competent people handling transitions/training;
- Lots of staff meetings. Director has open door policy;
- Change can be hard for some people/offices;
- We have some specific and annual goals. Deadlines for projects/ordering/etc. Work on a timeline. A lot follows the fiscal year, but some follows the academic year. Other goals come along as projects come up. Time frame. Have some technical goals and it is tough to achieve some of those goals. Goal-oriented process;
- Hard to have a plan. Have to go with what comes. Lots of pressure from system/etc. to work on specific things. Gets in the way of planning. Frustrating when have plan, but can't accomplish it. Go with flow, plan in the back of your head. Always in flux.

**6. How does the campus assess the effectiveness of your office/department?**

- Sometimes someone will tell you how well you're doing. Don't hear the positive. Do hear the negative and will have to deal with it;
- Office survey on email. Do get responses. Wish would get more negative comments. People don't always provide comments. People are afraid to say things. Minnesota Nice;
- We do get a lot of feedback in our office. We get positive and negative feedback. A lot of general complaints. But a lot of positive, too. Can't take things personally;
- Students get confused about where to go and who to see for things;
- Flowcharts. Listing of offices and what they are responsible for. Need an information phone number in the phone book. Need a central point for information. Information person or center. Students, Visitors. New Employees.

### Criterion 3

#### 1. How does your office/department contribute to student learning?

- We support teaching and learning by providing support for the faculty;
- Students also learn from us when they work for us;
- One person sets goals, objectives, and outcomes expected for her student workers – has set levels of mastery for them in areas such as web work, word processing, excel worksheets, information management, cleaning files, file organization and computer organization. She sees them eventually develop pride and ownership in their work;
- Financial aid provides counseling to students to help them learn credit management, as well as counseling parents and students, they teach them about financial aid and its availability. They also run the job shop that provides opportunities for student to work both on and off campus;
- The library now has a main floor with an excellent learning environment. Library staff stress their responsibility to students – all staff, not just librarians, are to look friendly, respond to questions and help maintain a comfortable atmosphere;
- Another office manager noted problems with work study students, noting a change over the years in their willingness to work. She feels she can't fire them as she needs help, but there is a need to help them see the requirements of working and responsibility;
- In general we need more student help and we need the ability to transfer work study students (doesn't like the work priority system);
- Another person noted that in HR, they tell students how important their work is; do need to stress confidentiality. All agreed confidentiality was a skill needed by student workers in all offices;
- The discussion seemed to bring out the need for training of student workers and the many skills that student workers can develop from the experience if they are taught those skills. This can enhance the work experience by providing a number of learning outcomes as well as funds. It seemed also to indicate a need for helping office managers understand what kind of training and expectations they should have for student workers, especially work study students.

#### 2. What distinguishes MSUM from other schools? What are our strengths?

- Tri College is special;
- Student exchange programs, both NSE and study abroad opportunities;
- New nursing program;
- What do we have that's cool? – small size of upper level courses, new science lab building, research;
- students working with faculty; everyone is approachable;
- We are "real" about working and emphasizing undergraduate education;
- BFA, graphic design programs;
- We need to get more information out in the paper about the great things we have: speech/language clinic – outreach. But how many people know;
- It seems like Minnesota State University Moorhead is known for education, but not much else. We are not well known;

- Beauty of the campus – people find the mall area very attractive.

**3. What specific changes might result from the self-study process?**

- One person indicated that, as a newcomer, it was interesting to hear how under prepared incoming students are – maybe focus on bringing students up to pace or making our standards higher;
- need to bring incoming freshmen up to certain levels;
- Make sure all graduates have a certain level of skills e.g. writing competency;
- As students need to come up to par, so do faculty – get lots of complaints from students about faculty who don't communicate well – especially due to the language barrier;
- It was also noted that there seem to be different standards for different students, especially athletes who don't seem to have the same level of accountability;
- All agreed Minnesota State University Moorhead needs more advertising and PR. It seemed like we never used to have to do PR, but we are a “one newspaper” town and we seem to get less coverage all the time;
- Regarding the university as a whole, we seem to have lost our inner spark – everyone is so busy and don't get time to sit and reflect. Eat lunch at our desks. Not good. I hope we find a way to feel prouder to be here – even this event is helping;
- Loss of Owens Lounge has left us without a common gathering place. The Dragon Den does not do it. We need more get-together areas –the push is to keep working, but the social part is needed;
- We need to have more staff participation in events – support staff tend to feel more “out of it” as they are not faculty. That is another good thing about the library as all tend to work together cooperatively there;
- We need more student help – there is not enough student help provided now.

**4. As you look at the statement and core components for Criterion 3 in your handout, what are some key issues you think the self-study should address in this area?**

- Preparation of students; computer labs are very positive – phenomenal learning environment in those;
- Ultimate accountability for mastery of information;
- Library is an inviting environment;
- The role of student work and work study jobs in learning needs more attention and/or training;
- FYE and work of Sara Leigh, Senior Experience. FYE is a strength but should be required of all. It gives a connection to the university and survival skills.

**Comments of Moderator – I see these themes in the discussion.**

1. Need for more involvement of staff in university affairs.
2. Need for more student help in departments.
3. Need for more social interactions on campus for all.
4. Need for better PR especially in the Forum.
5. Importance of student work study jobs as a learning experience and indications that this aspect of student work could be improved.

6. Need for more work with under prepared students (one person).



## Criterion 4

### 1. What distinguishes MSUM? What are our strengths?

- Small classes;
- Nice size campus;
- Friendliness – faculty and staff;
- Willingness of staff, etc to “help” people (visitors) on campus;
- Preparedness of students for life after MSUM;
- Student advising program;
- We need to “publicize” our mission;
- Sense of community on campus;
- People know each other, both staff and students;
- Personal experience and a sense of family, especially in areas with a large number of student employees and high student traffic;
- Able to grow and improve as a university with limited financial resources;
- Practice creative, legal money management;
- Size of the university is good for building community (Goldilocks and the three bears);
- Students don’t feel as though they are just a number;
- We have a broad range of students both in age, gender and ethnic diversity;
- Offer distance learning;
- Strong nursing program;
- Large number of military veterans;
- Corrick Center provides great opportunities for students;
- Gateway program is growing and providing entrance to students;
- Non residents receive resident tuition – great for international students;
- Large number of international students;
- Great programs offered in student affairs – opportunities for growth of faculty, staff and students;
- Strong connections built between faculty and students;
- Excellent undergraduate research opportunities for students (many other schools don’t offer the same until graduate level);
- Study abroad program;
- Eurospring;
- National Student Exchange;
- Programs offered by Office of student Activities;
- Student employment in the CMU – training, evaluation etc. is a regional example;
- College for kids program.

### 2. What changes do you or your departments need to make to better encourage life-long learning?

- Make better connections with alumni;
- Refresher courses for alums (specifically on programs that depend on software applications) – summer workshop type;

- Better upkeep of “events” on webpage;
- Better coverage in offices to allow for attending work sessions, etc;
- Increase off campus work study opportunities;
- More available staff training/professional development opportunities at MSUM;
- Changing how instruction is offered to students;
  - Provide more time for advanced research instruction;
  - Provide an opportunity for staff to tour library and learn resources;
- Allow staff to take classes with **release time** during the work day;
  - This serves as an example of life long learning for students;
- Directors to encourage staff to attend student affairs staff meetings;
- Technology orientation for non traditional students;
  - Many enter MSUM w/out even basic skills;
- Housing staff well trained to provide support for wireless internet in the residence halls;
- More effectively, educate tour guides – make sure that accurate information is provided to prospective students about services offered. (Career services doesn’t find you a job when you graduate, it provides tools to assist in the search);
- Outreach to alumni about services still available to them on campus to encourage life long learning – library, career services etc.;
- Provide better parking on campus so services are accessible to community – no one wants to come to campus for a class at night and walk 4 blocks;
- Provide adequate information about projects happening on campus to the whole campus community – MA renovations, food service and wellness center buildings;
- Meet ADA requirements to provide a welcoming campus to all members of the community;
- Develop an office for non traditional student support;
- Provide a consistent FYE program to engage incoming students thus encouraging further learning;
- Offer more support to diverse student populations so they feel welcome and part of the learning community

### **3. What evidence would you use to support Criterion 4(a, b, c, d)**

#### **General**

- Tuition waiver offered as part of contracts encourages growth (more equal release time across bargaining units would be nice);
- Professional development meeting in the division of student affairs;
- A variety of free technical training is offered across campus;
- Continuing studies program;
- Saturday classes;
- Weekend workshops;
- Career services, library services, CAB programs etc. are open and offered to alumni, faculty, staff and the community at large;
- Technical ability to connect with the campus when one is off site via email etc.;
- Commencement and convocation speakers are alumni;
- Reduced class cost for senior citizens.

**a. Life of learning**

- Tuition waiver – positive;
- Attending classes as staff great opportunity to experience MSUM from a student perspective;
- Many internship opportunities for students in variety of departments.

**b. Breadth of knowledge**

- Many campus opportunities;
- Additional art gallery in the Union;
- More art in the workplace.

**c. Curricula – global, etc**

- More emphasis on our international students, programs, etc.;
- New liberal arts will help broaden that.

**d. Apply knowledge**

- TOCAR very important;
- Information sharing – difficult to know how to help students with forms, etc when we haven't been told how to help them and often can't find the information;
- Computer classes have been good;
- More opportunities for that kind of training.

General comment – many around the table were not aware of opportunities offered by the offices/departments of others around the table. There is a strong consensus that the university as a whole needs to do a better job marketing itself and programs to faculty and staff. Marketing should inform about who can and should attend events, workshops etc. Directors and deans need to encourage their co-worker and employees to attend

## Criterion 5

### 1. How would you describe MSUM?

- Small Midwestern, serving students from Midwest states;
- Focuses on teaching over research;
- Accessible to masses (financially and academically);
- Produce a lot of good teachers;
- Size is in our favor;
  - get to know faculty and staff;
  - class size is perfect (really varies);
- Easy access to administration;
- Good quality affordable education;
- Trained to exceed requirements for degree not just a production mill;
- We ensure students are competent in their prospective fields;
- Feel of a small community – comfort level, much more than a number;
- Students get the schedules/courses they want;
- Lots of students working;
- Students coming back for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> careers;
- Non-trationals;
- We give students a chance to succeed (Corrick Center);
- Alumni are sending their children here;
- Liberal studies university;
- Lots of organizations to participate in;
- Quality teachers being produced, accommodating professors;
- NDSU we don't hear about the academics only the research and athletics;
- Liberal arts institution;
- Upper Midwest/Minnesota;
- Small school;
- "Medium-sized" school --mid-sized - nice-size;
- Not too big, not too small;
- Are we really still a liberal arts institution?;
- We need to be quicker to respond to demographic, market, and other changes. We need to anticipate where enrollments are going to be;
- Change is painful but necessary;
- We need a mission of who we want to be rather than focusing on the past;
- We need to get out of the "bureaucracy" block that keeps us from being responsive, adaptive;
- Our current mission is too long. Is it time for our mission to change? Does it say who we are? Most of the group didn't think it was really appropriate for our future;
- Some in the group were skeptical of us moving from liberal arts to more "corporate" or "vocational." Is this where we want to go?;
- How do we decide which part of the campus we want to promote - Business? Mass. Comm.? Art?

## **2. How do we know we are being responsive to the needs of our community?**

- Economic impact in the community payroll;
- Advisory boards tell us what our students need to know;
- Crisis – the community knows to come to us for assistance (flood our vehicles, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, power outage go to Nemzek);
- Surveys of administrators in Education and B&I (may not be formal);
- Surveys of grads (Ed possibly B&I depts.);
- Art dept, straw hat, free cultural activities, White Earth, small business development center, continuing studies has workshops, College for Kids (evals), environmental scans, VITA program (tax assistance to the public), Early Education Center, Speech services, Counseling Center is unique to us;
- Expansion of programs based upon needs of profession (nursing, ITV, UofM Master's program in SW on ITV);
- Technology assistance (from students and employees for students and faculty);
- Parking lots rather than street parking;
- Job shop services employers (and student employees),
- Advisory Boards;
- Alumni surveys;
- Do we do environmental scanning? Where are those documents?

## **3. How do we create community?**

- We need more advertising! Dragon Fire, need more customer service, info booth in Owens.

## **4. Are our services valued? How do we know?**

- Attendance, comment cards for 4<sup>th</sup> of July;
- Administrative affairs visit organizations and get feedback (VFW's etc – 4<sup>th</sup> is almost a year round event);
- Alumni feedback from Foundation, enrollment, people being hired.

## **5. What formal processes are in place to provide such feedback?**

- Advisory councils.

## **6. General Discussion of Service and Engagement:**

- Need to highlight the Planetarium;
- MSUM hosting Relay for Life Cancer Walk;
- 4th of July;
- Performing Arts;
- Library is open to the community;
- Nemzek serving as an "emergency center" for Moorhead;
- Partnerships with City of Moorhead - community outreach;
- Service is better than 10 years ago;
- We need to be better about getting the community involved with the university;
- We need to track donations of time, effort, and products to inside and outside of campus.

Does anyone track what the Bookstore donates in product to support fundraising efforts, for example?