

CHAPTER IV

CRITERION THREE: ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PURPOSES

Criterion 3. The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

This chapter provides evidence that Moorhead State University is accomplishing the purposes set forth in its mission statement. Evidence of this comes from planning and goal-setting activities, departmental annual progress reports, periodic external reviews, and assessment activities. The chapter begins with overviews of the University's assessment plan and the academic program review process. Then each of the six major components of the mission statement is described, and evidence to support the accomplishment of each is presented. The evidence cited provides examples of implementation of our mission; we do not attempt to describe and evaluate all of the activities which are undertaken throughout the institution. Finally, indicators of student satisfaction with the college experience are described. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of our assessment activities.

Evaluative Processes

There are two major components of evaluative analysis at Moorhead State University-- assessment activities and program review. Both are critical to the on-going evaluation of how well we meet University goals.

The University's Assessment Plan

In January of 1992, a Task Force on Assessment was formed in response to a mandate by the North Central Association (NCA) that higher education institutions develop and implement a strategy for assessment. The charge to the Task Force was to develop and gain approval of a University assessment plan which would allow for assessment of institutional effectiveness, the Liberal Studies requirements, and major programs. The assessment plan is based on the following principles:

- The primary purpose of assessment is improvement of instruction and services.
- Faculty must own and control the assessment process.
- The process of assessment must be on-going and useful.
- Feedback of results to constituent groups is an important component of assessment.
- Multiple measures should be used to assess effectiveness.

The MSU Plan for Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness was submitted to NCA in October 1993. President Barden received notice of approval of the plan in July of 1994. (The approved plan and related materials are available as GD-6.)

The plan called for the formation of two university assessment committees: the Liberal Studies Assessment Committee (LSAC) and the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC). The LSAC oversees the progress of assessment related to the University's Liberal Studies Program. The IAC is charged with monitoring assessment of institutional effectiveness and providing guidance to departments regarding their assessment activities. These committees have been in existence since the fall of 1994.

The plan also called for the appointment of a university assessment coordinator who is responsible for tracking, coordinating, and reporting assessment activities on campus. Marsha Weber, an assistant professor of finance, was Assessment Coordinator from 1993-1996. Dr. Ernest (Willie) Hallford, a professor of psychology, became Assessment Coordinator in the fall of 1996. The coordinator serves on both the LSAC and the IAC and reports assessment activities and recommendations to the university community.

During the 1994-95 academic year, the IAC worked to develop a system for evaluating institutional effectiveness. Surveys were administered to incoming freshmen and transfers, graduating seniors, and alumni. The committee also analyzed how assessment activities relate to the University's mission. Results of this analysis are provided in tables filed with the assessment plan in GD-6.

Program Review

A number of years ago, the Minnesota State University System (MSUS) began requiring each academic department and curricular program to be extensively reviewed every five years. MSU has continued to require five-year program reviews even though the merged system no longer requires them. (Directions for review are in GD-94.) Program review begins with departmental self-study. An external reviewer then visits campus and submits an evaluative analysis of the department or program being reviewed. The department, dean, and academic vice president meet together to discuss the self-study and the external review.

As a result of the five-year review process, the department establishes long- and short-range goals. The department's assessment plan reflects these goals. Each fall the department submits an annual departmental progress report of the previous academic year's activities. The annual report describes departmental goals, assessment data collected, and departmental activities and evaluates its progress with respect to its own goals and the university's initiatives. (The most recent five-year external reports and annual departmental progress reports for 1994-95 and 1995-96 are on file in the resource room as GD-94 a-d.)

The processes of evaluation used in the divisions of Administrative Affairs and Student Affairs are different than that described above for Academic Affairs. They are discussed in Chapter V as evidence of our planning processes. The remainder of this chapter focuses on evidence which supports the accomplishment of our mission.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

As the mission statement makes clear, the primary purpose of Moorhead State University is “to foster excellence in teaching and learning.” The first of our aims reasserts this as our highest priority. We have long communicated our emphasis on quality teaching and learning to our students, to those we hire, and to our public. As noted in Chapter II, faculty, staff, students, and community members report--through surveys and focus groups--that MSU faculty are dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning.

Moorhead State is proud of its high quality faculty. We seek to ensure high quality faculty by conducting careful searches and then using the processes defined in the negotiated agreement for professional development, for evaluation, and for making retention, tenure, and promotion decisions. Faculty members must write professional development plans (PDPs) that address five evaluative criteria; the first and most important of these is effective teaching.

While IFO contract language prevents us from requiring uniform student evaluation forms, faculty are mandated to supply documentation of teaching effectiveness in every year that they are evaluated for continuation, tenure, or promotion. This evidence often includes written student evaluations. Newly agreed-upon guidelines which mandate a process of student assessment of teaching became part of contract language in 1996 (IFO Agreement, Article 22, Section D, subd.1 and Appendix G). The academic deans are charged to independently review faculty and, for many years, have interviewed students (selected randomly) as part of that review. We believe that these processes encourage faculty to remain good teachers.

Evidence of our commitment to student learning is provided later in this chapter in the sections on baccalaureate degree programs and graduate programs. The sections below cite non-departmental evidence of our commitment to student learning.

Integrated Academic Experiences

One way in which we demonstrate our commitment to student learning is our history of offering integrated and enrichment experiences. At the time of our last NCA site visit, we were phasing out integrated upper-level team-taught Liberal Studies courses (X-courses) due to lack of resources to support the enrollment levels. In recent years, a liberal studies core program was developed. Two interdisciplinary core courses are offered: The Beautiful and the Good, and Civilizations and Migrations. The core concept links together two courses, which are team taught.

Significant financial support has been made available through the Q-7 initiative, an MSUS-sponsored program described in Chapter I. A number of departments utilized Q-7 funds to develop capstone courses. Q-7 funds have also helped to underwrite the campus service learning model, Volunteer Visions, which sends students into the community as volunteers and helps faculty integrate service learning into their courses.

Integrated experiences with a focus on international studies and diversity also exist. Moorhead State has operated a student teaching abroad program for many years and also sponsors a student teaching program in Texas. Exchange programs exist with academic institutions in Great Britain, China, and Japan. Shorter overseas tours are available, including a Eurospring experience which is coordinated with Oxford University. We recently signed an agreement with historically-Black Rust College in Mississippi. The agreement will encourage faculty and student exchanges as a way to increase experiences of diversity.

Improving Academic Performance

To help students meet the standards we establish, we have a long history of providing student tutors in most disciplines. The Counseling Center coordinates this program. Other efforts to help students succeed include the Write Site, a center for helping students with writing; Supplemental Instruction, which uses trained peer tutors to teach study skills and to explain concepts in some of the more difficult courses for beginning students; the New Center, which offers an alternative educational experience for students who did not meet our standard admission requirements, and the First Year Experience program. Some of these were described in Chapter III. In addition, the Student Development Office offers a program of study skills workshops each semester for the general student body, specific academic skills workshops and study groups for students of color, and supplemental English instruction for international students.

The Liberal Studies Program

The second major component of the MSU mission points to our commitment to a liberal studies base. The mission states that "the academic programs at the University are founded upon a common Liberal Studies experience." To this end the associate degree and all baccalaureate degree programs require the completion of 45 semester hours of Liberal Studies courses. (Transfer students who have completed an A.A. degree are considered to have met the Liberal Studies requirement.)

The mission of the Liberal Studies program is as follows:

The Liberal Studies Program of Moorhead State University is designed to provide a broad base of knowledge and cultural themes derived from the diversity and universality of human experience. Through this requirement, students gain exposure to basic thought and interpretation provided by various disciplines so as to enhance the quality of their participation in and understanding of the world around them. Liberal Studies courses involve more than a knowledge base alone by seeking integration and synthesis of knowledge and ideas. Courses which focus on the application of knowledge to career development should be reserved for the major, minor and/or elective programs. Finally, the Liberal Studies Program should provide a basis for lifelong learning.

This mission statement is published in a program brochure (GD-79), which is provided to all students. The program brochure describes the liberal studies requirements and lists the courses approved for liberal studies credit.

We believe that our liberal studies requirement effectively addresses our aims of teaching higher order thinking, encouraging a global and multicultural perspective, and laying a foundation for responsible citizenship and lifelong learning. Almost all of the students who participated in the 1996 NCA focus group discussions recognized the importance of this strong liberal studies foundation to their degree programs and future career success.

Liberal studies courses are required in each of the following areas: Freshman English (Division A), Natural Sciences and Their Processes (Division B), Behavioral and Social Sciences (Division C), Western Tradition: Humanities and Fine Arts (Division D), Communicative and Symbolic Processes (Division E), and Multicultural and Global Studies (Division F). In all divisions except the first, students may select courses from a list of approved choices. Each liberal studies division has specific divisional objectives. They are listed on pages 20-27 of the APAC Manual (GD-77).

A university committee is responsible for oversight of the Liberal Studies program. The committee reviews courses and recommends that APAC approve or not approve liberal studies designations. The committee also conducts periodic reviews to ensure that approved courses are current, meet advertised descriptions, and meet Liberal Studies goals. The first review was completed during the semester conversion process. (See GD-6 for review forms.)

As a part of the NCA self study, the Criterion Three Subcommittee informally reviewed syllabi for Liberal Studies courses to determine whether the established objectives for Divisions B through F were met. In general, it seems that the objectives for each division are adequately covered by courses within the division; however, some of the objectives are not covered as well as they might be. The Liberal Studies Assessment Committee plans to work with the Liberal Studies Committee in periodically reviewing courses to insure that they actually meet the objectives stated in the course profiles.

The committee also plans to survey students participating in the Liberal Studies Pilot Project (described below) to determine student perceptions of which objectives are met in which courses. By continuing the analysis in these ways, the committee hopes to obtain information about how well liberal studies courses are meeting their stated objectives.

Assessment of the Liberal Studies Program

During the Spring 1995 pre-registration period, we surveyed juniors and seniors to assess their perceptions of whether their knowledge, skills, and readiness for work had increased during their years at MSU. The survey was specifically designed to measure progress on six of seven Q-7 indicators. (See Chapter I for a description of Q-7.) These indicators closely parallel several of the Liberal Studies goals and correspond closely with MSU's second aim to provide

instruction that promotes life-long learning; higher order thinking; multicultural, global, and international perspectives; and responsible citizenship.

Respondents were asked to rate their improvement using a 1 to 10 scale, with one being “very little” improvement and ten being “very much” improvement. Average responses for juniors and seniors were similar for all indicators. The highest average ratings of improvement were given for “higher-order thinking” and “readiness for work and career.” Table 7 summarizes the results of this survey.

Table 7
Student Responses to Q-7 Survey

Indicator	Average Response	
	Juniors (N=221)	Seniors (N=147)
Higher-Order Thinking	7.5	7.5
Readiness for Work and Career	7.4	7.0
Multicultural Perspective	7.0	6.6
Global Understanding	6.7	6.7
Scientific and Quantitative Literacy	6.5	6.5
Responsible Citizenship	6.2	6.1

Faculty were surveyed at the same time to determine their perceptions of how MSU graduates' knowledge, skills, and readiness for work improved as a result of their education. Faculty were also asked to indicate what percent of time they spend in their classes on activities related to each indicator. Surveys were mailed to all faculty and returned by 78 of them (a return rate of approximately 25%). Like the students who were surveyed, responding faculty perceived that students showed most improvement in higher-order thinking and in readiness for work and career. Faculty also indicated that they spend the most class time on these two indicators. Results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8
Faculty Responses to the Q-7 Survey

Indicator	Average Response	Percent of Class Time
Readiness for Work and Career	7.8	38
Higher-Order Thinking	6.8	39
Scientific & Quantitative Literacy	6.1	34
Multicultural Perspective	5.8	21
Global Understanding	5.8	18
Responsible Citizenship	5.4	20

Assessment of Critical Thinking

The Liberal Studies Assessment Committee (LSAC) chose assessment of critical thinking as its first project, since the objective that students "become critical thinkers" was common to all Liberal Studies divisions. During the 1994-95 academic year, the LSAC developed a definition of critical thinking and examined resources designed to assess critical thinking. A three-stage assessment plan was then piloted during the 1995-96 academic year.

First, all students in Freshman English were asked to write a short essay on a controversial issue. A representative sample of 200 students was asked to participate in the rest of the pilot project; only 38 agreed to do so. The essays were evaluated on critical thinking dimensions such as issue definition, development and support for inferences, and support for conclusions. The sample students were asked to take the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) and to assemble portfolios of their work in Liberal Studies courses. At the end of their liberal studies experience at MSU, the students will be asked to (1) write another essay, (2) re-take the CCTST, and (3) submit their portfolios for review.

The committee held focus group sessions with 23 of the participating freshmen during April 1996 to obtain students' perceptions of their Liberal Studies experience and to improve the process used for the pilot project, if necessary (GD-6). The vast majority of the students (91%) reported that they believe the Liberal Studies program will provide them with "a good base for life-long learning." All but one reported that the Liberal Studies courses taken so far had met some or all of their expectations. Another group of students will be asked to participate in an assessment project during the 1996-97 academic year.

Baccalaureate Degree Programs

While the liberal studies requirement provides a common base, MSU exists to provide degrees. According to our mission statement, "the University provides baccalaureate-level programs in the liberal arts, natural and social sciences, teacher education, business and technology, the fine arts, and professional areas." This section of the chapter begins with an overview of the degrees offered at MSU and of the divisions and departments offering those degrees. The chapter then presents several types of evidence to support our claim that we are accomplishing this portion of our mission.

Degrees and Majors Offered

Moorhead State University offers Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Bachelor of Music (BM), and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degrees. Each requires the satisfactory completion of 128 credits of college courses including 45 credits in approved Liberal Studies courses. MSU students may choose from 43 non-teaching majors and 19 teacher licensures. (A complete list of degree programs is provided in

Appendix F.) Approximately three-quarters of the bachelor's degrees awarded at MSU each year are in business, education, and the social sciences.

Degree programs are offered by 28 of the University's 30 academic departments. Tables 9-12 list the departments in each division, the number of faculty assigned to each, and the number of declared majors and graduates for each department during AY95-96. The faculty numbers represent full-time equivalents and include overload assignments, adjunct faculty assignments, and extended duty days for chairs.

The Arts and Humanities Division (Table 9) had approximately 93 faculty in eight departments in AY95-96. While this is the largest division in terms of faculty, it has the smallest number of majors and awards the fewest degrees. The division plays a major role in the provision of Liberal Studies courses.

Table 9
Division of Arts and Humanities
1995-96 Student Enrollment and Faculty Data

Department or Program	Number of FTE Faculty	Number of Majors	Number of Graduates
Art	10.5	239	35
English	27.2	190	37
History	6.4	117	23
Humanities-Multicultural Studies	7.8	13	4
Languages	10.4	53	9
Music	15.3	144	33
Philosophy	5.2	22	7
Speech-Theatre	10.0	136	31
Division Total	92.8	914	179

The Division of Social and Natural Sciences (Table 10), like the Arts and Humanities Division, plays an important role in providing Liberal Studies courses. The Division has ten departments, one of which (Geography/Geology) does not offer a degree program. The largest major in the Sciences Division is criminal justice, which is housed in the Sociology/Anthropology Department. Biology and psychology are attractive majors for many new entering students, but graduation rates suggest that a large proportion of these may switch to other majors or transfer to other institutions. (Several biology majors are enrolled pre-professional programs.)

Table 10
Division of Social and Natural Sciences
1995-96 Student Enrollment and Faculty Data

Department or Program	Number of FTE Faculty	Number of Majors	Number of Graduates
Biology	10.0	246	35
Chemistry	5.9	58	10
Computer Science	7.5	117	29
Geography/Geology	1.8	N/A	N/A
Mathematics	19.2	60	16
Physics/Astronomy	5.2	8	1
Political Science	5.9	86	21
Psychology	11.2	222	37
Sociology/Anthropology	12.3	305	100
Speech/Language/Hearing Sciences	7.1	128	37
Division Total	86.6	1230	286

The Division of Education and Human Services (Table 11) employs 64 full-time equivalent faculty in seven departments. While the Secondary Education Department is included in this list, it ceased to exist at the end of AY95-96, as noted in Chapter I. Secondary education majors earn B.S. degrees in a designated content area and are, therefore, double counted in secondary education and their teaching field. The New Center for Multidisciplinary Studies does not offer degrees.

Table 11
Division of Education and Human Services
1995-96 Student Enrollment and Faculty Data

Department or Program	Number of FTE Faculty	Number of Majors	Number of Graduates
Elementary/Early Childhood	11.9	523	144
Health/Physical Education	12.6	150	47
New Center	11.3	435	N/A
Nursing	4.9	72	12
Secondary Education	4.9	N/A	(270)*
Special Education/Counseling	12.0	251	53
Social Work	6.4	244	75
Division Total	64	1675	601

*Duplicate count; also counted in teaching field.

There are five academic departments in the Division of Business and Industry (Table 12). The Business Administration Department is one of the University's largest both in number of faculty and number of graduates. The Legal Assistant program is housed within the Accounting Department, but the faculty function largely as an independent unit.

Table 12
Division of Business and Industry
1995-96 Student Enrollment and Faculty Data

Department or Program	Number of FTE Faculty	Number of Majors	Number of Graduates
Accounting	9.8	279	69
Business Administration	14.3	595	160
Economics	7.2	16	3
Legal Assistant	3.7	124	39
Mass Communications	8.6	344	60
Technology	5.7	226	51
Division Total	49.3	1584	382

In addition to the majors offered on our campus, MSU and neighboring North Dakota State University (NDSU) offer several "covered programs" through the Tri-College University. These allow students who are residents of one state to complete the first two or three years of their education at their home-state campus and transfer to the other campus to complete degree requirements. In this way, Minnesota residents may complete engineering, pharmacy, and agriculture degrees at NDSU, and North Dakota residents have access to degrees in social work and speech pathology, which are offered at MSU.

Time to Graduation

Another indicator of program effectiveness is time to graduation. However, time to graduation is difficult for us to calculate since so many of our students transfer into or out of MSU. According to retrospective data compiled by the MnSCU System Research Office, 51% of those earning baccalaureate degrees at MSU in 1994 began their college careers here, while 35% of the graduates had entered as transfer students. The remaining 14% were returning students whose origin campus could not be traced. Approximately 45% of these 1994 graduates had completed degree requirements in four, or fewer, years, and 90% had earned degrees within six years.

Another set of system data examined students who entered MSU in 1988 as new freshmen. Of these, 23% dropped out after one year, and an additional 12% left at the end of the second year. Of the students enrolled in the 1988 entering freshman class, 21% graduated from MSU after four years, an additional 20% graduated after five years, and another 5%

graduated after six years, for a total of 46% graduating within six years. These rates are similar to those of the other Minnesota State Universities.

Accreditation

The number and variety of accredited programs is one indicator of the strength and quality of our curricular offerings. The teacher education programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); in addition, Moorhead State has accredited major programs in art, chemistry, construction management, industrial distribution, industrial management, legal assistant, music, nursing, school psychology, social work, and speech pathology. The University is currently in candidacy for accreditation of its business programs through the American Association of Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB). (Accreditation reports are available in GD-96.)

Departmental Assessment Plans

This section of the self-study presents evidence that MSU is accomplishing its aim (#4) "to incorporate instruction in all majors that provides breadth and depth in the discipline." All 34 academic departments have submitted assessment plans. Assessment results are reported in departmental annual progress reports. Most departments began implementation of their assessment plans during the fall quarter of 1994, and many are just beginning to collect data.

Departments use (or plan to use) a variety of activities to assess student preparation for, progress in, and completion of degree programs. These include completion of pre-program requirements (e.g., in business and in education), standardized tests (such as GRE subject tests), exit interviews, student self-evaluations, participation in undergraduate research, completion of portfolios or projects, job placement rates, and post-graduation surveys of alumni and/or employees. Table 13 provides a summary of the types of assessment activity used. (Department assessment plans and progress reports are available in GD-94 a-d).

Table 13
Techniques Used to Assess Program Outcomes

Assessment Measure	Number of Departments Using Measure
Capstone Course/Experience	11
Critical Thinking Instrument	2
Portfolio	9
Senior Project or Recital	3
Practicum	3
Internship	3
Standardized Exam	5
Locally Written Exam	1
Graduating Senior Survey	13
Alumni Survey	19
Employer Survey	6

During the 1995-96 academic year, the Institutional Assessment Committee's (IAC) main goal was to help departments with their assessment activities. During fall semester, departments were asked to submit revised assessment plans, and the IAC provided guidance to departments in improving their plans. The committee awarded over \$5,000 in grants to eight departments to purchase instruments, develop surveys, or to pilot the evaluation of portfolios.

In April of 1996, the IAC sponsored an assessment mini-conference on campus. Speakers from Southwest State University presented a plenary session and workshop on assessment. Members of the MSU faculty also discussed some of their departmental assessment activities. The purposes of the mini-conference were to provide departments with ideas about assessment activities, to improve existing assessment plans/activities, and to motivate departments to continue their assessment activities.

Departmental assessment plans and annual progress reports indicate that there are many acceptable and appropriate assessment methods. Several departments have been especially successful in developing multiple assessment measures. We intend to use several models of such multiple measures in our continuing effort to provide assistance and guidance to all departments in their assessment activities. Four of the departmental plans, one from each academic division, are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Philosophy. The department developed a detailed list of expectations for philosophy majors, encompassing six areas: reading and understanding texts, writing essays, discussion, knowledge, constructing arguments, and research. These served as the focus for the assessment plan which utilizes five measures. The Senior Portfolio is a student-generated sampling of the student's work, and is evaluated by the faculty in the student's last term of enrollment. Standardized Critique Sheets for course papers are prepared and kept by faculty for consultation the next time the course is taught. Faculty Evaluations of Courses for upper-division courses will be prepared each semester, and the results compiled and analyzed as part of the five-year review. Results from Departmental Evaluation Forms for all courses will also be compiled and analyzed for the five-year review. All courses will be monitored by faculty for Blue Ribbon Papers, which will be kept in the department and will be available for public inspection.

Portfolios were not mandatory in 1995-96, but 11 have been collected and evaluated thus far. Starting in 1996-97, all graduating philosophy seniors will submit portfolios. Collection of Critique Sheets and Departmental Evaluation Forms was initiated in 1995-96, and the second round of collection is in progress this year.

Technology. The department established several objectives for which assessment procedures were developed. Three of these objectives were specifically targeted toward student academic work and outcomes: (1) evaluation of student progress, (2) evaluation of employment information from both alumni and employers, and (3) tracking of students' professional development after graduation. These objectives were used to develop five assessment measures. Three measures were surveys: an Entrance Survey for entering students, an Exit

Survey for graduating seniors, and an Alumni Survey designed to provide a clear picture of the students' expectations, attitudes, and opinions regarding their educational experience and subsequent careers. A fourth Survey of Employers will be used to provide comparative information regarding the preparation and skills of alumni, as well as the appropriateness of the department's program. A fifth measure, Assessment Progress, will utilize senior projects, portfolios, and certification exams. The Exit, Alumni, and Employer Surveys will be evaluated annually in the spring, and the Entrance Survey and Assessment Progress data will be analyzed for all graduating students each semester. The first stage of survey administration is in progress this year, with surveys sent to currently enrolled students, alumni, and employers.

Nursing. The Nursing Department has developed one of our most ambitious and effective assessment plans, as an outgrowth of evaluation procedures which they have had in place for many years. They are currently using four types of evaluation (content, input, process, and product) based on a systems-theory model. Although all types include some student-outcome components, product evaluation is most intensively directed toward assessment of outcomes and involves assessments both during and after the conclusion of the program.

The specific measures currently in use provide entry-level, mid-program, graduating-senior, and post-graduate assessments. Entry-level items include the NLN Comprehensive Nursing Achievement Test, performance rating scales, an assertion inventory, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), and critical thinking inventories. Mid-program measures include examples of written assignments and performance in clinical conferences, laboratories, and seminars. Graduating-senior measures include an exit questionnaire, a post-test assertion inventory, the CPI (post-test), and a faculty evaluation. Post-graduate measures include both employer and alumni surveys at one and five years after graduation.

Preliminary implementation of these plans has included administration of the CPI and an assertiveness inventory both to entering students and to seniors. Two tests of critical thinking have been administered to entering students. Surveys have been sent to alumni at one and five years after graduation, with a corresponding set of surveys to the alumni's employers.

Psychology. Eight desired student outcomes have been identified as the focus of the Psychology Department's assessment activities for the undergraduate program. These outcomes center on various aspects of knowledge, writing skills, library research, statistical data analysis, verbal discussion and reporting, and ethics.

Four assessment methods have been developed and are currently being used. A Senior Exit Interview (qualitative) and a Senior Exit Questionnaire (quantitative) are used (1) to provide information regarding students' perceptions of the strengths of the department and suggestions for improvements and (2) to provide specific data regarding the eight desired student outcomes. A Senior Course Rating Sheet is filled out by the faculty teaching the senior seminar and two senior-level experimental courses. These ratings are also tied directly to the eight outcomes and thus provide additional specific assessment information regarding them. These data are collected on all seniors and typically are provided by three different faculty members each

semester. Alumni Feedback will be obtained by means of a survey currently being developed. It will be administered to alumni three years post-graduation and will include items relevant to the eight desired outcomes, as well as information regarding the relevance and effectiveness of our program to their careers or post-baccalaureate studies. The fourth assessment measure involves the tabulation and evaluation of Student Research Projects which result in publications or presentations at professional meetings, such as the American Psychological Association (national), the Midwestern Psychological Association (regional), the Minnesota Psychological Association (state), and the Red River Psychology Conference (local). Some of these papers and presentations are evaluated by outside reviewers and hence provide external feedback regarding the quality of the work. Success in these projects usually reflects success in most of the desired outcomes.

Summary. Most department plans address the five principles upon which Moorhead State University's assessment plan is based (p. 61). Three of these principles--improvement of instruction and services, an assessment process that is on-going and useful, and feedback to constituent groups--are all explicitly identified as central components of most plans. Since most plans are only now in the beginnings of implementation, we do not yet have clear information regarding the effectiveness of our assessment procedures regarding those three principles. Faculty ownership and control is, of course, implicit in all plans, since they are developed, implemented, and monitored by the faculty. The use of multiple measures is readily apparent in many departmental plans, as exemplified in the preceding paragraphs. However, there is some unevenness in this regard, and one of our on-going objectives is to assist departments to identify and develop additional measures which are appropriate to their own goals.

Curricular Improvements

In response to five-year reviews, departments have made curricular and program changes designed to improve the quality of instruction. Some of these are summarized below.

Chemistry. The Chemistry Department revised its curriculum to adhere to the American Chemical Society (ACS) guidelines and requirements for an ACS-certified degree. Some courses were realigned and sequences were streamlined as part of semester conversion. Safety training is now mandated for all chemistry lab courses, and several courses have been redesigned to stress descriptive, rather than theoretical and mathematical, aspects of chemistry.

Computer Science and Information Systems. In recent years the CSIS Department has developed several new courses, including Introduction to the Internet, Introduction to Computers and Programming I and II, and Graphical User Interface Programming. The department is now developing courses in Decision Support Systems and Object Oriented Programming to enhance its majors.

Mathematics. The Mathematics Department implemented a math placement program in 1993 to help place entering freshmen in the appropriate mathematics courses. A requirement for

computer work has been added to the calculus sequence and multimedia lectures have been introduced in statistics, math modeling, and differential equations courses.

Philosophy. In response to its 1990 five-year review, the Philosophy Department developed several new courses: Philosophical Thinking, Philosophy of Education, Roman and Medieval Philosophy, Dynamics of Prejudice and Oppression, Major Philosophers, Topics in Feminist Theory, and Senior Portfolio.

Psychology. After its last five-year review, the Psychology Department redesigned the curricula in response to the external reviewer's recommendation of a core curriculum. The Department developed a group of junior-level courses which are required of all majors, thus forming a content core. When semester conversion came the next year, the department made only slight modifications in its redesigned major.

Graduate Programs

In addition to baccalaureate programs, Moorhead State also awards master's and specialist's degrees. Our mission statement indicates that the University "provides selected graduate programs in response to regional needs." We offer Master of Arts (MA) degrees in studio art and music; a Master of Business Administration (MBA); a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing; a Master of Liberal Arts (MLA); Master of Science (MS) degrees in Art Education, Counseling and Student Affairs, Curriculum and Instruction (new in 1996), Educational Leadership (formerly Educational Administration), Elementary Education, Music Education, Public and Human Service Administration, Reading, School Psychology, Special Education, and Speech-Language Pathology; an Educational Specialist (EdS) in Educational Administration; and a Specialist degree in School Psychology. MSU cooperates with the University of Minnesota, which provides distance learning programs leading to graduate degrees in nursing and social work to place-bound students in our region. (All graduate programs are described in the Graduate Bulletin, GD-70.)

The degree programs in education and school psychology are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the graduate program in Speech-Language Pathology is accredited by the Educational Standards Board of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association. The MBA program is currently in candidacy for AACSB accreditation.

An M.S. in Computer Science was discontinued in 1995 as part of the first budget reduction plan. Since most of the students in the program were international students, it did not appear to meet a "regional need." The degree program was discontinued because it did not fit the university's mission.

One of MSU's aims (#5) is "to provide instruction in graduate level programs that promotes increased depth in disciplinary or interdisciplinary studies and professional specialization." All graduate programs require a final integrative experience which assesses the body of knowledge that has been acquired through the course work and research. The form of the final requirement

differs among degree programs but always includes an oral examination. Candidates in most MS and MA programs must also demonstrate competence in the major field through a written comprehensive exam. Table 14 provides examples of assessment activities for some of MSU's graduate programs.

Table 14
Graduate Program Assessment Activities

Program	Assessment Activities
Master of Liberal Arts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Written integrative project 2. Oral exam--defense of final written project and assessment of other components of the program
Master of Business Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oral exam--a comprehensive exam of the conceptual basis of the program 2. Survey of graduates to evaluate program
M.S., Counseling and Student Affairs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Periodic review of interpersonal competence and counseling skill development 2. Internship 3. Written comprehensive exam 4. Masters Project or Thesis 5. Oral exam to review final project
M.S., School Psychology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student self-evaluations of progress required annually 2. Written comprehensive exams 3. Thesis 4. Oral exam over thesis and coursework 5. Graduation survey to evaluate program
Specialist, School Psychology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio demonstrating mastery of program objectives 2. National School Psychology Exam 3. Oral exam based on portfolio materials

Scholarly and Creative Activity

The fifth component of our mission to be featured in this chapter states, “The University encourages scholarly and creative endeavors that promote a commitment by faculty and students to their disciplines, to continuing professional development, and to excellence in learning.” This section of the chapter reports on faculty research and creative activity, undergraduate research, and professional development activities of faculty and professional staff.

Research and Creative Activity

While Moorhead State University’s primary mission is teaching, faculty are also expected to engage in some type of on-going scholarly activity. Those faculty who have not yet been

granted tenure or have not been promoted to full professor are probably the most active, but faculty at all levels and across disciplines make significant contributions within their fields. The activities of a few departments are highlighted here to provide a sense of what is taking place across campus.

Accounting. There are 12 full-time faculty in accounting. In 1995-96, four of them had articles published in professional journals, eight presented papers or served on panels at regional or national meetings, and three gave talks at meetings held on campus. Six department members completed 25 or more hours of continuing education activities during the year, and one is working on a law degree.

Biology. Six of the ten department members published papers or abstracts in professional journals or presented papers at regional or national professional meetings during 1995-96; many were co-authored with students. Four faculty gave a variety of talks to local organizations. Three faculty received internal grant funding for research activity, and one student received a summer study award from the Council on Undergraduate Research. The department secured an Eisenhower Grant which funded summer workshops for area elementary teachers.

Elementary and Early Childhood Education. The EECE Department had 12 full-time faculty in 1995-96. One co-edited a book, published two journal articles and a book chapter, and presented six papers at regional and national conferences. Five others presented a variety of papers at local, regional, and national meetings. The department received two externally-funded grants for collaborative teaching projects.

English. The English Department is the University's largest, employing the equivalent of 27 full-time faculty; only 21 are in probationary or tenured positions. There are a number of published authors among them; several of them have won regional and national awards. Two department members are on Fulbright exchanges during the 1996-97 academic year.

Mathematics. The Mathematics Department had 18 faculty members in 1995-96. Seven of them published a total of five papers, presented eight papers at professional conferences, and submitted six other papers for publication. Approximately half attended professional meetings, and several served as officers in professional organizations. One department member is the current editor of a professional journal.

Philosophy. All five members of the Philosophy Department engage in research. During 1995-96, all five presented at scholarly conferences, two published papers, and one published a book.

Special Education and Counseling. During 1995-96, this combined department had nine full-time faculty on staff. Four published papers in professional journals, and six presented papers at professional meetings. Department members received two grants from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, and one was named the Cornell University Jason Millman Promising Scholar.

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity. In addition to faculty research and creative activity, there is also a significant focus on undergraduate research and creative activity at MSU. One way of encouraging undergraduate activity is through our unique scholarship program, the Honors Apprenticeship (HA), which began in 1990. Apprenticeships are offered to selected applicants who graduated in the top 5% of their high school classes and/or demonstrate talents or have special skills. In return for a \$2,000 per year renewable scholarship, the HA spends eight hours per week working with a faculty or staff mentor on a project of his or her choice. During 1995-96 there were 72 HAs working in 35 offices on campus. Six of the 1996 HA graduates were awarded highly competitive and prestigious scholarships to attend graduate or professional schools.

In addition to the HAs, a number of students have completed a mentored research experience with a faculty member, and many also have presented papers or posters at regional and national professional meetings. Notable records have been established in the areas of psychology, chemistry, and biology. The psychology major requires several courses with research components. During 1995-96, 24 student papers in psychology were presented at professional conferences or published in journals. The Chemistry Department has recently instituted an undergraduate research requirement for majors, and all faculty are involved in mentoring research students. Half of the biology faculty supervise undergraduate research projects, and several HAs are placed in the department as research assistants. Twenty-four biology students had research published or presented at professional meetings in 1995-96.

Students in other departments have engaged in a variety of creative or professional activities. Some examples follow. Mass Communications students annually produce the Prairie Documentary Book Series which features photographs taken by students and their faculty sponsor. "Campus News," a weekly news show produced by students, is distributed via Prairie Public Television. Student teams in advertising and public relations consistently place in regional and national competitions. For example, in 1995-96 the advertising team placed first in district and 11th in national competition. The public relations team won first in regional competitions in both 1994-95 and 1995-96 and placed in the national competitions both years.

The Speech/Theatre Department has an active forensics program. During 1995-96, over 60 students participated in 20 tournaments, winning awards in all regional events entered. Art majors are required to exhibit their work in the MSU art gallery prior to graduation. Student writing is reviewed, and the best works are published annually in the English Department's Red Weather journal. During six of the past seven years, Music Industry students have produced, recorded, and released a tape or compact disc in the "Dragon Tracks" series.

Faculty Development

Faculty development opportunities are essential to maintaining a quality faculty. Under the collective bargaining agreements, teaching faculty (IFO) and administrative and service faculty (MSUAASF) have annual travel awards which they may use to attend professional meetings or to purchase professional texts, journals, or software. There are a number of other

ways in which the institution supports faculty development, as well. A few of these are described in the following sections.

Faculty Grants. The University administers a competitive program which provides faculty with modest grants for research or creative activity, release time for research or creative activity, and faculty improvement grants (FIGs) for professional development activities. Beginning in 1994-95, the three separate award processes were combined into a single competition. Due to University financial pressures, release time awards were discontinued and replaced with summer stipends for research, creative activity, or professional development. Table 15 summarizes awards made to faculty from 1991 through 1996.

Table 15
Faculty Grant Awards

Year	Research/Creative Activity Awards		Faculty Improvement Grants		Release Time Awards
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number
1992	15	\$20,000	20	\$21,981	12
1993	14	\$20,000	20	\$24,150	19
1994	20	\$22,011	16	\$25,659	16
1995	31	\$41,044	29	\$33,234	NA
1996	27	\$39,704	20	\$28,427	NA

Bush Grants. Through two major three-year grants from the Bush Foundation to the Minnesota State University System, the MSU Faculty Development Committee and the Bush Team have provided a number of opportunities to fund faculty attendance at meetings and/or develop workshops on teaching techniques, classroom assessment, cooperative learning, critical thinking, and diversity. MSU's share of the grant was between \$9,000 and \$11,000 each year. The Bush grant has funded state-wide conferences featuring presentations by system faculty as well as outside plenary speakers.

Sabbaticals. Based on the negotiated IFO Agreement, faculty are eligible to apply for sabbatical leave after seven years of employment (or six years after the last sabbatical); faculty who submit a "satisfactory plan" must be granted a sabbatical after ten years employment (or ten years after the last sabbatical). One-semester sabbaticals are granted at full salary. First sabbaticals are granted at two-thirds salary for a full academic year; subsequent full-academic-year sabbaticals are funded at increasingly higher rates (IFO Agreement, Article 19, Section C). While sabbaticals are one of the better forms of professional development, our financial problems in recent years have led to granting sabbatical leaves only for those with the contractually-required ten years of service since the last sabbatical. Three full-year sabbaticals and six one-semester sabbaticals were granted for

academic year 96-97. MSUAASF employees are also eligible for sabbaticals after completion of at least six years of service; however, there is no mandatory point at which the administration must grant the leaves (MSUAASF Agreement, Article 15, section C).

MSUAASF Professional Improvement Funds. Administrative and service faculty receive annual professional development funds through their contract in the same manner as teaching faculty. In addition, competitive awards for professional improvement--which are usually used to attend workshops, conferences, and to undergo specialized training--are available. Table 16 summarizes the MSUAASF Professional Improvement Fund competitive grants awarded during the past five years.

Table 16
MSUAASF Professional Improvement Funds

Year	Amount Granted*	Number Awarded
1991-92	\$12,081	16
1992-93	18,179	28
1993-94	17,857	19
1994-95	19,050	21
1995-96	13,320	15

* Amounts refused/returned are subtracted from total grants in each year.

Service to the Region

In addition to offering a quality education leading to baccalaureate degrees with a common grounding in the liberal studies and to providing selected graduate degrees, Moorhead State University also has a responsibility to our service region. The final sentence in our mission statement says, "The University enhances the quality of life of the region with the professional, cultural, and recreational services offered by its students, faculty and staff." Moorhead State University makes a significant contribution to the region through the fine arts. Examples are provided below.

- Our summer theatre--Straw Hat Players--completed its 33rd season in 1996. Each summer, five productions are launched with three or four performances each week over nine to ten weeks. Performances typically play to full houses, and community residents far outnumber University employees and students in the audiences. In addition to the Straw Hat series, the Speech/Theatre Department produces several other plays during the academic year, including a production for children each December.
- Each year, the Regional Science Center provides programs to over 24,000 people, including a large number of K-12 students.

- The Art Department maintains a public gallery and sponsors an active visiting artist's program which provides exhibitions, lectures, and other forums for the visual arts.
- The English Department sponsors the annual Tom McGrath Visiting Writers Series at Moorhead State University. Each year regionally- and nationally-known writers visit campus to read from their works and visit with faculty and students. MSU faculty also participate in the McGrath series. All events are free and open to the public.
- The Music Department sponsors many concerts and recitals each year. Eleven members of the music faculty perform with the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra; one of these is concert master, one writes program notes, and one just completed a term as president of the orchestra's board of directors. Four faculty perform with the Jazz Arts Big Band, two are members of the Fargo-Moorhead Chamber Chorale, and two others conduct area youth music groups. In addition, the department hosts an annual Honor Band and Choir Festival for regional high school students and teachers.

The University provides service to the region in other areas as well. The following paragraphs provide some examples of these services.

- The University operates a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) which provides assistance to existing small businesses or to people anticipating a business start-up. The SBDC director, business faculty, and students aid in developing business plans, conducting market research, establishing accounting systems, etc.
- Accounting students provide income tax preparation assistance.
- Faculty from many departments serve on a variety of professional association or community boards and consult with businesses, organizations, and schools in the region.
- Faculty in Elementary Education and Early Childhood initiated the SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) project several years ago and focus campus and community attention on issues of cultural diversity. The group has hosted several workshops and speakers for students, faculty, and area K-12 teachers.
- Faculty in the physical sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics have offered several summer workshop for area school teachers funded through Eisenhower and National Science Foundation grants. Over the past eight years, these programs have impacted over 300 area teachers.
- Health/physical education students help with an annual Special Olympics track meet held on campus.
- Technology students and faculty complete a variety of community projects. For example, in 1994, a team assisted a local manufacturing company in redesigning its production facility.

- The History Department sponsors an annual “History Day” during which approximately 100 area elementary and secondary students are on campus for a program.
- The Speech/Language/Hearing Science Department provides assessment and therapy to children and adults who have a hearing or speech problem. Students provide clinical services with faculty supervision. The department also provides speech and hearing screening services to several area school districts.
- The Political Science Department conducts public opinion polling through its Public Affairs Institute. In 1995-96 projects were completed for the Moorhead Public Housing Agency, the Clay County Sheriff’s Department, and the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments.
- Our athletic programs provide opportunities for members of the campus and the community to enjoy watching sport competitions.
- Maintenance department employees aid the community when natural disasters strike. For example, they have helped build dikes when the Red River floods, have aided in area snow removal, and have assisted individuals with medical emergencies during heavy snow storms.

MSU’s service learning program allows community service activity to be integrated with academic instruction. The Academic Service Learning program involves students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while helping students develop their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community. In 1995-96, 71 students completed 990 hours of service learning through the educational program. In addition, Volunteer Visions (a recognized student organization) works with approximately 50 Fargo-Moorhead non-profit organizations and schools to coordinate the placement of students in community service-learning experiences. Volunteer Visions has been in existence for over three years, and students have completed over 5,000 hours of service to the community.

The largest event sponsored by the University for the community is our annual “Old Fashioned Fourth of July.” On the afternoon of the Fourth, the campus mall is set up with food booths, activity and game areas, a bingo tent, and a performance stage. Children decorate their bicycles for a parade around the mall, and the MSU Alumni Association sponsors a picnic dinner. In the evening, activity moves to the stadium for a musical performance, patriotic sing-a-long, and fireworks display. About 6,000 people attend the daytime events, and 13,000 watch the fireworks display.

Summary

This portion of the chapter has provided evidence that we do, indeed, accomplish our purposes as articulated in our mission statement and aims. We value excellence in teaching and learning

and support continuing faculty development through several grant programs. We offer a variety of baccalaureate degree programs, all grounded in a liberal studies base and graduate programs which are needed in our service region. We evaluate student outcomes in major programs and in the liberal studies. Data show that we are successful in encouraging critical thinking and in preparing our students for the world of work.

Also in keeping with our mission, MSU students and staff provide a variety of professional, cultural, and volunteer services to our region. We believe that Moorhead State University is a valuable part of the Moorhead community and, indeed, of the entire western portion of Minnesota and eastern North Dakota.

Student Success and Satisfaction

This last major section of the chapter summarizes data reflecting student satisfaction with the University. For the past few years, a survey has been administered to graduating seniors to assess their opinions and perceptions of their experiences at MSU. The survey is lengthy and asks students to evaluate academic programs, advising, student services, and their own skill level. In addition, they are asked to report on their use of services and their attendance at campus events. During 1995-96, 180 students returned the survey (a return rate of approximately 13%). Sixty-one percent of those returning the survey indicated that they would enroll at Moorhead State if they were to “choose a college over again,” and 71% said they would recommend MSU “to someone who wanted to major in [their] field.” Other results of this latest senior survey are summarized in the following sections. (Copies of surveys and results are in GD-4.)

Student Services

Results from the 1995-96 Graduating Senior Survey indicate several areas of strength and weakness. The majority of students report using, and being satisfied with, the Student Union, Library, and Bookstore. They report high levels of dissatisfaction with parking, registration, the Business Office, and campus computer facilities.

Relatively few students used the Night Watch (security) program or the Counseling Center, but those who did were reasonably well satisfied with the services received. Approximately two-thirds of students utilized student housing, campus recreational facilities, or the Hendrix Health Center; most of those who did were reasonably well satisfied. Table 17 provides a summary of student ratings for all of these areas.

Academic Advising

While approximately 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their advisors were available to help them and were knowledgeable about degree requirements, 13% reported they were dissatisfied with academic advising at MSU. Approximately 57% of respondents indicated that their advisors had given them “good advice and information about careers in the

major.” When asked to respond to the statement that their advisor “made important contributions to my educational experience,” 61% agreed or strongly agreed.

Table 17
Senior Survey Ratings of Use and Satisfaction
1995-96

Service Area	Percent Rating			
	Used and Satisfied	Used and Neutral	Used and Dissatisfied	Did Not Use or Did Not Respond
Library	76.1	17.8	4.4	1.7
Student Union	70.0	21.1	2.2	6.7
Bookstore	67.2	18.9	12.2	1.7
Computer Facilities	53.3	19.4	18.3	8.9
Health Center	45.6	18.9	5.6	30.0
Business Office	36.7	39.4	21.7	2.2
Recreational Facilities	34.4	19.4	14.4	31.6
Registration	30.6	33.9	32.8	2.8
Student Housing	25.6	25.0	12.2	37.3
Counseling Center	15.0	12.8	2.8	69.5
Night Watch	10.6	8.9	7.8	72.8
Parking	4.4	17.2	59.4	19.0

Academic Programs

When asked about the effectiveness of academic programs, students also identified some strengths and weaknesses. Quality of teaching and course requirements were rated as strengths, while quality of equipment and integration of technology seem to be areas where MSU could improve. When asked to provide an overall assessment of their academic experience, 75.6% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of the faculty, and 66.7% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of the academic atmosphere at MSU. These results, and others, are summarized in Table 18.

Student Participation in Activities and Events

The Graduating Senior Survey asked about levels of participation in various student activities and campus events. A substantial majority of the respondents (82%) indicated that they participated at least once in a student organization, and nearly two-thirds participated in at least one resident hall event. The majority of students reported at least occasional attendance at campus concerts, lectures, and athletic events. Participation rates are summarized in Table 19.

Table 18
Student Satisfaction with Academic Programs

Area	Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Percent Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied
Course Requirements	82.8	7.8
Contact with Faculty	80.0	5.0
General Level of Performance Expected	76.1	9.4
Overall Quality of Faculty	75.6	5.0
Quality of Teaching	72.7	8.4
Writing Requirements	71.2	3.9
Reading Requirements	70.0	2.0
Quality of Equipment	54.4	12.3
Adequacy of Library Resources	53.3	13.9
Integration of Technology	47.3	12.8
Overall Quality of Academic Atmosphere	66.7	6.7

Table 19
Student Participation in Campus Activities and Events

Participated in:	% Indicating Participation	
	Frequently or Very Frequently	Once to Occasionally
Student Organization	38%	44%
Residence Hall Event	16%	47%
Intramural Sports	14%	29%
Intercollegiate Athletics	9%	6%
Music Activity	7%	12%
Student Government	4%	11%
Speech Tournament/ Theatre Production	3%	9%
Attended:		
Athletic Event	21%	56%
Art Gallery Visit	18%	58%
Concert	15%	62%
Public Lecture	13%	67%
MSU Theatre Production	13%	53%
Performing Arts Series	9%	42%
Multicultural Event	8%	58%

Noel-Levitz Assessment

As has been noted already in the self-study, the Noel-Levitz Centers, Inc., observed and made recommendations for MSU in the areas of recruitment and retention. In the spring of 1995, MSU administered a Noel-Levitz instrument, the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), to a sample of 528 students. The SSI measures two critical dimensions--importance and satisfaction--of a variety of items that touch upon a student's total campus experience. Noel-Levitz suggests that when satisfaction is analyzed against importance, an institution can determine where there are "performance gaps." A second performance gap measure is obtained when a local campus's mean satisfaction rating is compared to the national mean satisfaction rating.

On the SSI, students rate various areas of college life and their experiences on a seven-point scale, with "7" representing the highest level of importance or satisfaction and "1" the lowest level. Table 20 provides a few of the key findings about MSU from the SSI. The table presents information for items with the largest performance gaps between the MSU means and the national means for those items which students had rated as being important. Negative performance gaps indicate that MSU students are less satisfied with that particular aspect of campus life than are students at other campuses; positive performance gaps reflect more positive responses by our students as compared to students at other campuses. Noel-Levitz suggests that performance gaps of less than .15 are insignificant. Among the 12 items rated as important to MSU students, only two had positive performance gaps. Both of those items dealt with the library. Students also indicated positive performance gaps for the Comstock Memorial Union and the MSU Bookstore, but these areas were not rated by students as being as important as the items in the table. The complete results of the SSI are in the NCA Resource Room (GD-29).

In its report, Noel-Levitz identified several strengths MSU possesses. These include: (1) a history and tradition of providing a strong academic experience; (2) a strong nucleus of faculty dedicated to the mission of teaching and student intellectual growth; (3) a combination of quality and cost that make MSU an excellent value; (4) a core of high quality academic programs that produce well-trained graduates; (5) a number of hallmark programs including the New Center, the Science Center, and the Center for Business; and (6) a revitalized, expanded vision of the institution resulting from new leadership. As noted elsewhere in this self-study, there have been a number of actions taken in response to the Noel-Levitz reports and consultation.

Table 20
Student Satisfaction Inventory Performance Gaps
 (Selected From Items Noted By Students as Being Important)

Item	MSU Satisfaction Mean	National Satisfaction Mean	Performance Gap (MSU minus national mean)
The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate	2.43	3.16	-0.73
I am able to register for classes with few conflicts	3.92	4.51	-0.59
Computer labs are adequate and accessible	4.39	4.96	-0.57
This institution has a good reputation in the community	4.93	5.36	-0.43
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment	4.66	5.00	-0.34
This institution shows concern for students as individuals	4.36	4.67	-0.31
There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus	4.79	5.08	-0.29
There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career	4.47	4.73	-0.26
There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus	5.02	5.28	-0.26
I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus	3.88	4.11	-0.23
Library staff are helpful and approachable	5.52	5.17	0.35
Library resources and services are adequate	5.38	5.03	0.35

Assessing the Assessment Process/Program

Because the assessment process is relatively new at MSU, there have not been many attempts at assessing it, but during 1995-96, we tried to evaluate the assessment program and plan for the future. Some of our means of "assessing assessment" are described in this section.

At their last meetings for the academic year, the Liberal Studies Assessment Committee and the Institutional Assessment Committee spent time talking about the past year's activities. The IAC felt that the assessment grant process had worked well. The committee was pleased with the assessment mini-conference in that it provided helpful information to departments and encouraged more departments to evaluate their assessment plans. However, it could have been even more useful had it been better organized and promoted. The IAC suggested that another mini-conference be held in 1996-97 with those departments receiving grants in 1995-96 serving as the presenters. Finally, the IAC plans to work with departments so that their annual assessment reports are more thorough and so that they show evidence of using assessment results to improve instruction.

The focus groups held with students in the Liberal Studies Pilot Project (described in this chapter) gave the Liberal Studies Assessment Committee feedback about the project and the Liberal Studies curriculum. Another group of freshmen will be involved in a similar project in 1996-97. The method of selecting participants will be revised such that entire classes are used. This will make contact with students easier to maintain and will allow information to be conveyed via the class instructor. The LSAC reported that the process of developing a scoring system for the critical thinking essay had been useful to the group. They will continue to discuss ways of involving students in the critical thinking assessment process. The committee will also plan to assess a second liberal studies program goal in 1996-97.

Probably the most valuable means of assessing our assessment program this past year has been the NCA self-study process. Gathering information and writing the self-study has provided an opportunity to analyze and reflect upon the current assessment program and to consider possible directions for the future of assessment at MSU. The IAC and LSAC have established these assessment goals for the next few years:

1. We hope to continue the departmental grant process. In times of limited financial resources, this is one of the few means by which departments can afford to administer some assessment instruments.
2. We will strive to get all departments actively involved in assessment programs by offering on-campus conferences/workshops where campus departments can share their assessment experiences and speakers can be brought in to share new perspectives on assessment.

3. The LSAC hopes to gather enough information about Liberal Studies courses and how well they meet stated objectives to help improve instruction in the Liberal Studies program and to help in the next revision of the Liberal Studies program.
4. Given campus conditions of the past few years (semester conversion, retrenchments, budget problems, etc.), it has been difficult for departments to make time for assessment projects. We anticipate having more time to devote to assessment activities in the future.

Challenges and Opportunities

This chapter has provided evidence to indicate that MSU is accomplishing its educational and other purposes. We offer 62 baccalaureate programs in the liberal arts, natural and social sciences, teacher education, business and technology, the fine arts, and professional areas. We also offer 16 master's degree programs and two specialist degree options, all of which meet regional needs. All undergraduate majors have a common liberal studies base. In keeping with our mission, we focus our primary energies on excellence in teaching and learning. As a secondary mission, our faculty (and students) engage in research and creative activity that promotes their disciplines and supports professional development and excellence in learning. Finally, the University enhances the quality of life in the region through performances, public lectures, consultation services, research activity, and volunteer service.

While we feel comfortable with the ways in which we are accomplishing our mission, we recognize that challenges remain in documenting those achievements and in using the feedback we receive through assessment and evaluation to improve our performance. Several challenges were noted in the previous section on "Assessing our Assessment Program." Other challenges and opportunities include the following.

1. The University must continue to effectively meet its mission with decreasing financial and human resources. We are continually challenged to accomplish more with less.
2. Our contention that we have excellent faculty is based largely on opinion and anecdotal evidence. In order to begin to effectively evaluate the quality of teaching in a uniform way, we need to find a way to separate student evaluation of faculty and classes from the use of student assessment in making personnel decisions, as the IFO Agreement prohibits use of a mandatory format for evaluating faculty performance.
3. We must continue the process we have begun of linking curricular review, assessment, and planning. We have established the groundwork and have begun to gather a variety of data. The challenge lies in maintaining our collective motivation to implement our plans. Continuous improvement of our programs and their outcomes is imperative for our survival in an increasingly competitive higher education environment.