

## CHAPTER ?, CRITERION 1: MISSION

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

Southwest Minnesota State University formally articulates its mission through a number of different channels, including written publications, the University web site, strategic planning, budget priorities, and its daily operations. The mission guides and instructs the manner in which the institution operates. The University mission is observable within program and departmental mission and curriculum development, strategic planning, co-curricular activities, adult education, concurrent enrollment programs, and partnerships with a variety of organizations.

The mission of Southwest Minnesota State University states:

Southwest Minnesota State University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Our comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition, are dedicated to connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.

The vision statement for the University is simple, yet precise: "Southwest Minnesota State University is a university of choice." The mission and vision are further accompanied by a list of thirteen guiding values, described in detail in 1B.

An example of how the mission guides the institution's operations is the dramatic transformation of University's general education program, formerly known as the Liberal Arts Core (LAC) but now referred to as the Liberal Education Program (LEP), which occurred over the course of five years. The University mission maintains a deep commitment to teaching in the "liberal arts tradition," and the investment by the University community to transform the general education program to satisfy a key feature of the mission is apparent. For a full description of this process, see Chapters ? and ?. The LEP is an exemplar of how the mission has guided the institution's operations, as administrators, faculty, and students channeled their efforts to create a general education program that was responsive to the University mission, to the students, and to the communities it serves.

In living out its mission, SMSU engages in meaningful partnerships across the region and provides students and community members access to a broad variety of educational opportunities, not only through its degree programs but through the rich activities it sponsors. Over the past ten years since the last review, as described in Chapter 1: Introduction, SMSU has added key programs in demand in the region, strategically expanded and improved its facilities so as to enable the community's use of them, and enhanced the leadership and critical thinking skills of its students through multiple avenues for civic engagement and professional development.

## CORE COMPONENT 1A: THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION IS BROADLY UNDERSTOOD WITHIN THE INSTITUTION AND GUIDES ITS OPERATIONS.

*1A1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.*

The current SMSU mission stated above has been in place since 2007, when it was approved by the MnSCU Board of Trustees after an extensive revision process in which the full SMSU community participated. Attention to the needs of the southwest Minnesota region has always been at the heart of SMSU's mission since the University was chartered in the mid-1960s. Additionally, since the MnSCU system was created by the legislature in 1995, SMSU's mission and strategic plan have been aligned with the system-level mission and strategic directions.

### HISTORY OF THE MISSION STATEMENT

SMSU's commitment to service began with its creation in 1963 and the development of its mission statement. The first mission statement received approval by the Minnesota State University Board on March 19, 1966. That mission statement emphasized the liberal arts and professional programs with special attention directed to the southwest Minnesota region. The mission statement remained largely fixed for the next three decades, except for formatting changes to the mission statement directed by the governing board.

In the 1980s, the university changed its focus from offering technical programs to supporting programs in two-year colleges through 2 + 2 programs and articulation agreements. While not a change in the mission, it highlights SMSU's shift in collaborating with regional two-year community college partners. Then, in 1993, the mission was revised to include graduate programs as one of the University's commitments to regional needs. Such programs included master's degree programs for teachers and administrators and for employees in the business field. At that time, the Minnesota State University Board approved a revision to the University's mission. The 1993 mission read:

The mission of Southwest Minnesota State University is to provide high quality liberal arts, professional, and technical programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Southwest Minnesota State University is dedicated to excellence in teaching and to preparing students to be life-long learners in a changing global, social, and natural environment. The University has a special commitment to the educational needs of people in its service region. This commitment is reflected in the curricula, cultural enrichment programs, cooperative relationships with other regional institutions, and in service and research contributions to both the public and private sectors of the region.

In addition to the approved mission statement, in 1993 the University established nine values and a vision statement (see Appendix \_\_\_).

This 1993 version of the mission, vision, and values were in effect during the previous HLC review in 2004. Though in 2000 the System Office had proposed that each university review its mission at a future board meeting, Southwest Minnesota State University received permission to postpone their

review until after completion of the self-study and accreditation review in 2004. On a related note, it was during this time that the name of the University changed from “Southwest State University” to “Southwest Minnesota State University” in 2003.

During that HLC self-study process, no changes in the mission and values were proposed with the exception of revising outdated language used to refer to vocational-technical colleges and institutes, now known as technical colleges, and revising wording to reflect the change in emphasis on technical programs. The 2004 HLC review team commended SMSU, stating in the Assurance document that they found “There is strong evidence of the growing recognition of the multiple responsibilities the campus has in serving a community, the 19-county service region, and the state,” and that the name change had been helpful in identifying the University with the region per its mission.

---

## SHARED GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPING THE CURRENT MISSION STATEMENT

To follow up on the previous self-study’s recommendations and to move forward with an official review, on September 28, 2006, President David Danahar assembled a Brown and Gold Task Force to help create a “road map” for the next five years. A significant charge to the Brown and Gold Task Force was to consider revision of the mission, vision and goals of the University. The President had all branches of his cabinet prepare biennial strategic plan white papers to aid the Task Force in their work. With these in hand, and over the next seven months, the task force worked to provide a series of recommendations to President Danahar.

The task force was made up of four students, six faculty, and eight staff members appointed to the group by their respective unions or organizations and led by Dr. Mary Hickerson, Associate Provost, per President Danahar’s guidelines. The group was given the directive to study the history and consider the future needs of all components of the university and come up with a series of recommendations. There were three primary questions for the group to address: 1) How might SMSU’s mission, goals, and vision statement be revised and updated? 2) What can be done to achieve the goal of SMSU’s being the University of choice for students? and 3) How can the undergraduate experience at SMSU be enhanced? The task force members were instructed to reach out and talk to all areas of the university and, while being aware of the realities the university faced, to set forth ideas not yet thought of or enacted on campus. Task force members were told that the goal was not necessarily to abandon the then-current mission statement but to suggest revisions as fitting with their research and planning, and that the revised mission statement, and the rest of the work of the task force, would be used in helping shape Strategic Planning.

The Brown and Gold Task Force members decided to split into three subcommittees per the questions to be addressed. Each subcommittee elected their own chair; as an example of the involvement of the various constituent groups, a student chaired the Undergraduate Experience Subcommittee, while faculty members chaired the Mission Subcommittee and the University of Choice Subcommittee. The task force’s recommendations were delivered to President Danahar on May 1, 2007. The task force recommended a revised mission and vision statement, thirteen “Core Values,” and eight “Strategic Priorities” to help focus the work of the university in its next round of strategic planning. The President took all of the recommendations under advisement over the summer and in the fall of 2007 announced that he accepted the task force’s work on the mission, vision, and values and organized Strategic Planning Day in September of 2007 around the Task Force’s recommendations. The recommendations were integrated into the strategic planning

process. The Board of Trustees approved the revised mission, vision, and values in September of 2008. Documentation of the Brown and Gold Task Force's recommendations and strategic planning can be found at <http://www.smsu.edu/administration/strategicplanning/?id=4291>.

During the mission, vision, and values revision process, President Danahar required that all constituencies on campus be represented. Doing so ensured that the revisions strongly reflected all of the varied perspectives, not just one leader's vision of what the campus should be emphasizing. Involving all constituencies also helped create buy-in across campus to the prioritization of this activity, enabling the tight turnaround time of a mere seven months for such a large project, and guaranteeing the project a high profile on campus. It is a good example of the importance of shared governance on the SMSU campus, and represents a fitting and appropriate approach for the SMSU university context.

*1A2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.*

---

#### ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND THE LIBERAL ARTS FOUNDATION: SMSU'S CENTERPIECE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

SMSU's academic programs consist of the Liberal Education Program (LEP), which every student must complete, and the degree program(s) chosen by the student. Both are necessary components for fulfilling the promises inherent in the SMSU mission statement.

##### *The Liberal Education Program (LEP) Cornerstone*

A cornerstone of the SMSU mission is the offering of "comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition." The Liberal Education Program (LEP) at SMSU provides the foundation for exposing all students to the liberal arts, regardless of their major. The LEP in its current form came into effect fall semester 2010, as a result of five years of planning and research prompted by the previous HLC review (see Chapter 7: "Response to Previous Review" and Chapter 7: Criterion 3 for the full history related to this revision). The LEP is built upon ten learning outcomes that were developed by the faculty to represent this foundation of higher education:

- Understand the techniques and habits of thought in a variety of liberal arts disciplines, having attained an adequate foundation of knowledge in those disciplines.
- Communicate effectively.
- Be creative thinkers able to identify, formulate, and solve problems using interdisciplinary perspectives.
- Be critical thinkers who evaluate information wisely and examine how assumptions and positions are shaped.
- Understand both physical and social aspects of the world and their place in it.

- Embrace the similarities among peoples and appreciate the diversity that enriches the human experience.
- Analyze moral judgments and engage in moral discourse.
- Practice responsible citizenship in their local and global communities.
- Continue life-long learning.
- Integrate mind, body, and spirit, the essential elements of a flourishing life.

The LEP is designed to ensure that all students obtain a solid, general education across the fundamental domains of human knowledge. Faculty believe that, when empowered with these ideas, facts, skills, and values, students can understand and effectively participate in the affairs of the community, nation, and wider world.

The University took great care in developing the LEP so that it reflects a philosophy and blend of coursework that align with the University's mission and student needs. While many of the LEP outcomes correspond to the statewide Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC) goals (the MTC provides a template of forty credits of undergraduate general education which are fully transferable to other MnSCU institutions and the University of Minnesota), the LEP outcomes were created by SMSU, for SMSU, and reflect deeply researched and intentional themes in higher education most appropriate to SMSU's student body and in keeping with its role as a state institution.

All undergraduates who begin their education at SMSU must take LEP 100 First Year Seminar, a first- and a second-year writing course, and a speech course. These courses provide a baseline in the "core skills" of critical thinking, oral and written communication, and information literacy. Other LEP goals are introduced in the remainder of the MTC requirements. The LEP requirements extend beyond the first two years of MTC general education outlined by the MnSCU System and include course requirements in the junior and senior years. In order to receive a bachelor's degree from SMSU, in addition to the MTC curriculum, students must complete 1) a core skills-focused class within their major, 2) a capstone within their major (in some degree programs, the major capstone double-counts as the core-skills major requirement), and 3) the LEP capstone, an interdisciplinary LEP 400 Contemporary Issues seminar which also revisits the core skills while emphasizing creative thinking. (See the LEP/MTC grid for a visual overlay of the requirements.) Thus, the new LEP directly reflects many of the "High-Impact Educational Practices" advocated by AAC&U: a first year seminar, common intellectual experiences, writing-intensive courses, and capstone courses and projects. In this manner, the LEP provides an overarching frame for a student's education at SMSU. Though not embedded directly in the LEP curriculum, other high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, collaborative assignments and projects, service learning, and internships can be found throughout SMSU's academic program offerings. The LEP and the enactment of high impact practices help students make the connection between the foundational liberal arts and their academic degree programs.

#### *The Alignment of Academic Programs to the Mission*

In keeping with the mission, Southwest Minnesota State University provides a breadth of academic programs spanning from a limited number of associates degrees through key master's programs in Business and Education. SMSU offers the following distribution of degree options:

Associate in Arts	1
Associate in Science	4
Bachelor of Applied Science	4
Bachelor of Arts	19
Bachelor of Science	33
Graduate Certificate	1
Master of Business Administration	1
Master of Science	3

The University is organized into two Colleges, the College of Arts, Letters, and Sciences (ALS), and the College of Business, Education and Professional Studies (BEPS). BEPS is further subdivided into three schools: the School of Business and Public Affairs, the School of Education, and the School of Graduate Studies. One hallmark of SMSU's academic programming in regard to this part of its mission is the development of programs and related institutional structure designed to fulfill needs in the region. For example, in 2006, in response to the needs of the food industry for product development, the Culinology program was instituted. In 2012, an institutional task force was charged with exploring possible restructuring to add a fourth school related to agricultural programs; determining the best arrangement continues to be discussed. This is another example of the University reviewing its offerings and structure in order to best align with contemporary needs and expectations.

Through the variety of degree options offered, SMSU is able to provide the "comprehensive degree programs" noted in the mission. Since 2004, several programs have been added to acknowledge demand from certain sectors and to enhance enrollment. These programs include an RN-to-BSN degree in Fall 2013, which was the result of a University task force's investigation. The task force, which included members from the local and regional medical community along with SMSU faculty, administrators, and staff, found high demand for such a degree in this area. The acknowledgement of the community and region continues in the form of a Nursing Advisory Board, made up of ten nursing supervisors, administrators, and educators from across the area. Another example is the Associate of Arts degree. Though within the MnSCU system the community colleges are primarily responsible for associate degrees, the four-year universities offer a small selection. These associate degrees help students take advantage of coursework being offered by the University that suits their immediate needs and could be built upon later for a full four-year degree. While SMSU has long offered Associate of Science degrees in several areas, in 2013, the University added an Associate of Arts degree. This degree is intended for students who begin a four-year degree and fulfill the requirements for an Associate in Arts degree in that process but leave before completing the full four years. At the Master's level, the Master of Science: Physical Education is the newest addition and has already met its enrollment projections.

These programs are only the latest examples of this creative energy. As noted in the Introduction to the self-study, the following programs have all been developed, supported by feasibility studies with input from external stakeholders, since 2004:

- AA degree (start Fall 2013)
- BS Finance (start Fall 2005)
- BS Management (start Fall 2005)
- BAS Marketing (start Fall 2006)
- BS Culinary (start Fall 2006)
- BA Music Management (start Fall 2006, closed Fall 2013)
- BS Hospitality Management (start Fall 2007)
- BA Professional Writing and Communication (start Fall 2008)
- BS Agronomy (start Fall 2008)
- BS Exercise Science (start Fall 2010)
- BA Medical Laboratory Science (start Fall 2012)
- BS Special Education (start Fall 2013)
- BS Education Studies (start Fall 2013)
- BAS Agriculture (start Fall 2013)
- BS Ag Solutions (start Fall 2013)
- BS English as a Second Language (start Fall 2013)
- RN to BSN (start Fall 2013)
- Master of Science: Physical Education (start Fall 2013)

In addition to developing new programs in accordance with regional need, another manner in which SMSU makes certain that all of its academic programs are consistent with its mission is through the annual department report process. Each year, all departments submit a report of their activities, assessments, and related accomplishments. Each department has its own mission statement, which is aligned with the University mission. The annual reports springboard from these departmental mission statements. In 2012, a new Program Analysis System (PAS) was also instituted to provide annual data which helps make it clear to programs what the costs of their programs are and what the trends are related to enrollment. Departments use the data for efficient planning and respond to it in their annual reports. This data is also of use during the strategic planning process related to academic programming. More information on department annual reports can be found in Chapter 7: Criterion 4.

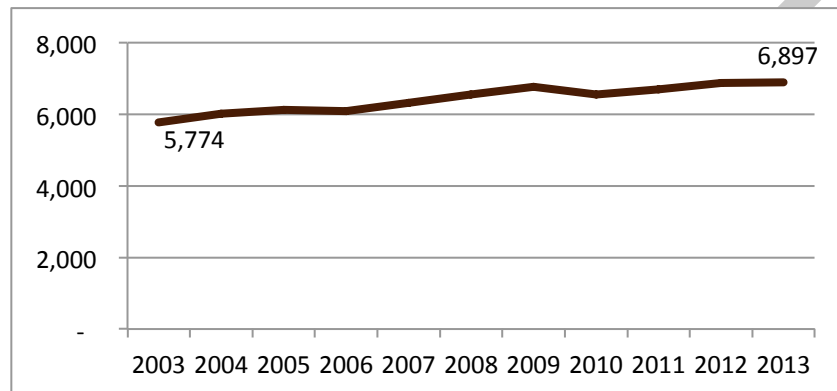
One other type of program that serves the institutional mission in a distinct way is the SMSU Honors Program. The Honors Program provides well-prepared and highly motivated students with an alternative to the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum portion of the LEP requirements. During the first semester, the student, in consultation with the Director of the Honors Program and a review board of faculty members from various disciplines, designs his/her individual program of study. Each program must include three courses from a selected list of honors courses and a senior-level honors interdisciplinary seminar. In addition, each student is required to complete an hour-long senior dialogue with selected faculty members. Students apply to the Honors Program, and while new students must have a strong record of achievement and a letter of recommendation, there is no minimum cut-off. Students who earn a 3.3 GPA while at SMSU and have a recommendation from an advisor may also apply. The Honors Program provides a rich educational engagement opportunity for high achieving students who might otherwise choose to pursue their education elsewhere. (For more information, see the section in the Catalog: <http://www.smsu.edu/catalog/?program=197>).

## SMSU ENROLLMENT PROFILE

SMSU's enrollment profile is consistent with the University's mission of "connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world." SMSU was chartered to provide access to higher education in southwest Minnesota and to serve the broader needs of the state. In doing so, SMSU not only provides a traditional undergraduate residential experience and selected on-campus graduate programs but also has a strong presence throughout the state, exemplified by our 2+2 programs, College Now program, and graduate programs.

Overall enrollment at SMSU has gradually increased over the past decade, moving from 5,741 in 2003 to 6,897 in 2013.<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 1.1; for consistency's sake, enrollment numbers are based on fall averages and thus do not include additional spring and summer students; over the past decade SMSU has annually averaged a total enrollment of more than 7,700 unique students).

FIGURE 1.1 FALL ENROLLMENT HISTORY 2003 TO 2013

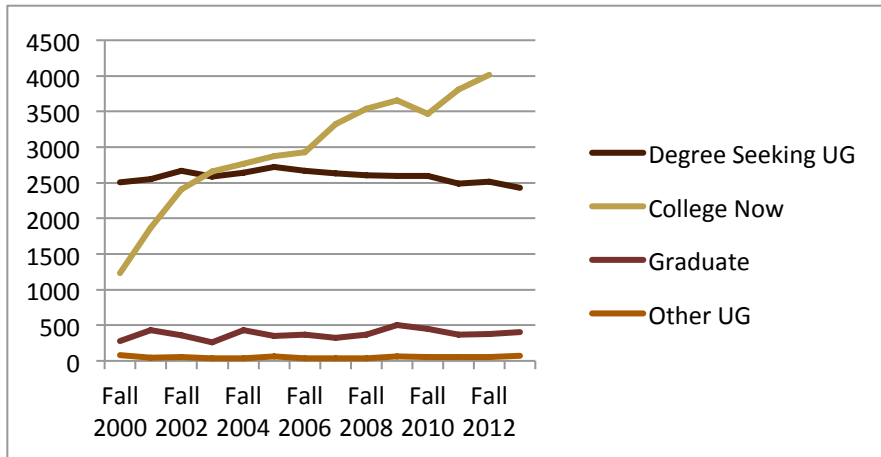


Much of the enrollment increase can be attributed to the extensive programming SMSU offers across the state, in particular, the College Now dual credit/concurrent enrollment program. The program, known within Minnesota as Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO), is responsible for more than 90% of this increase. SMSU's Undergraduate Degree-Seeking (UDS) student population has faced a slow decline over the past decade, and Graduate student enrollment has remained relatively stable (see Figure 1.2).

<sup>1</sup> 2013 data will be final and revised at the end of Fall 2013 term around January 10, 2014.



FIGURE 1.2 FALL ENROLLMENT BY CATEGORY

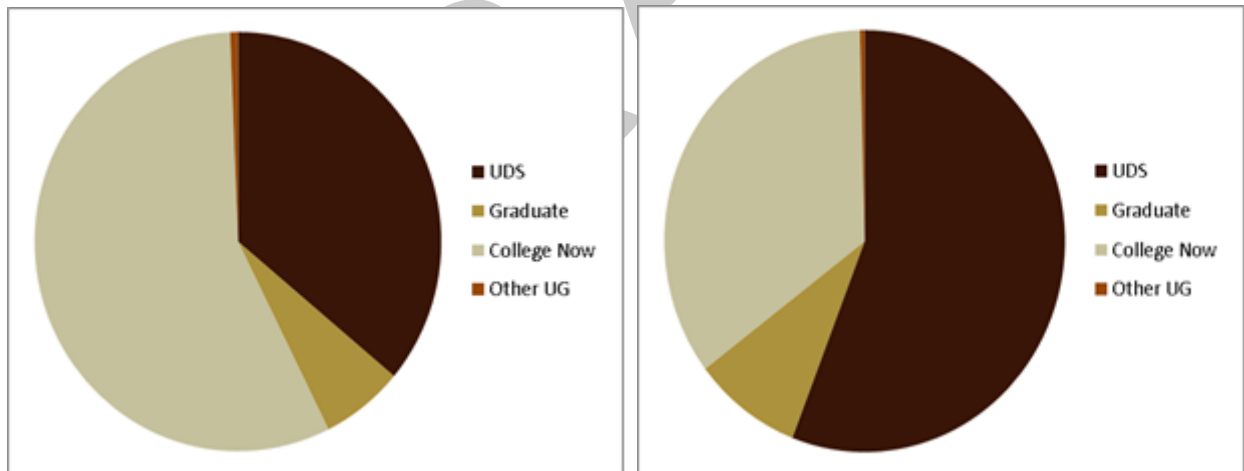


Although the total headcount reflects a large percentage of College Now enrollment, that picture shifts dramatically when viewing the data and its influence on SMSU’s functions in terms of FTE. Whereas the undergraduate degree-seeking (UDS) and Graduate student groups only represent 43% of student headcount, they represent 65% of FTE enrollment. (See Figure 1.3 below)

FIGURE 1.3 FALL 2013 HEADCOUNT AND FTE ENROLLMENT SHARE

HEADCOUNT

FTE



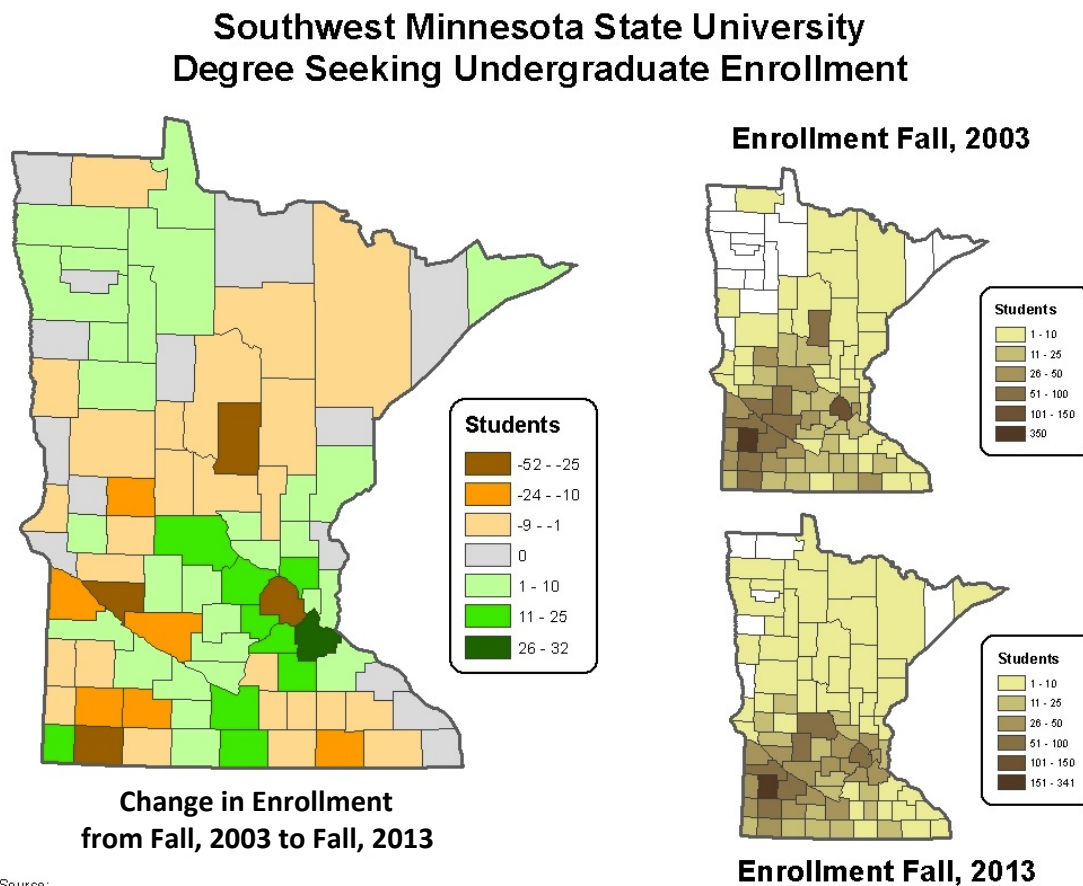
Thus SMSU maintains a strong focus on traditional undergraduate programming and services, while also building upon its graduate and landmark concurrent enrollment programs.

*Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Student Enrollment (UDS)*

In keeping with its charter, SMSU’s undergraduate enrollment comes predominantly from within the borders of Minnesota (85%). The majority of students who attend SMSU come from the 19 county service region.

However, in the past ten years, the overall percentages of students coming from the local region have decreased as demographic patterns have shifted populations toward urban and suburban districts. Enrollment from the 7 county metropolitan Minneapolis/St. Paul region is up approximately 20% since 2003 (See Figure 1.4). Despite SMSU's primarily in-state enrollment mix, twenty-eight other states as well as 24 countries are also represented within the Undergraduate student body.

FIGURE 1.4 TEN YEAR ENROLLMENT COMPARISON BY MINNESOTA COUNTY, FALL 2003 COMPARED TO FALL 2013

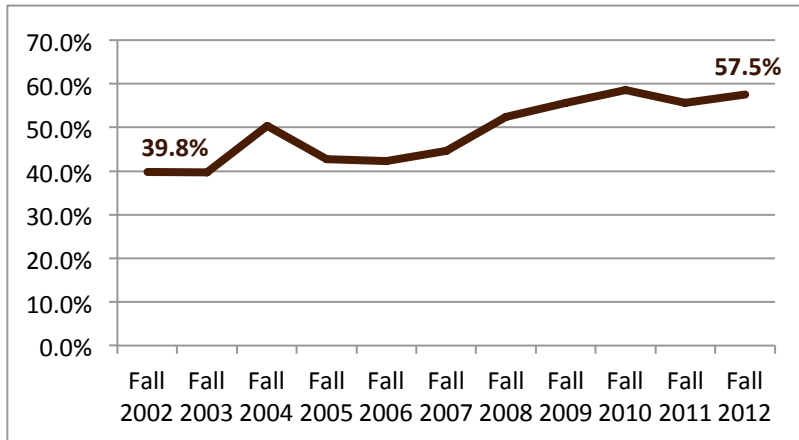


Source:

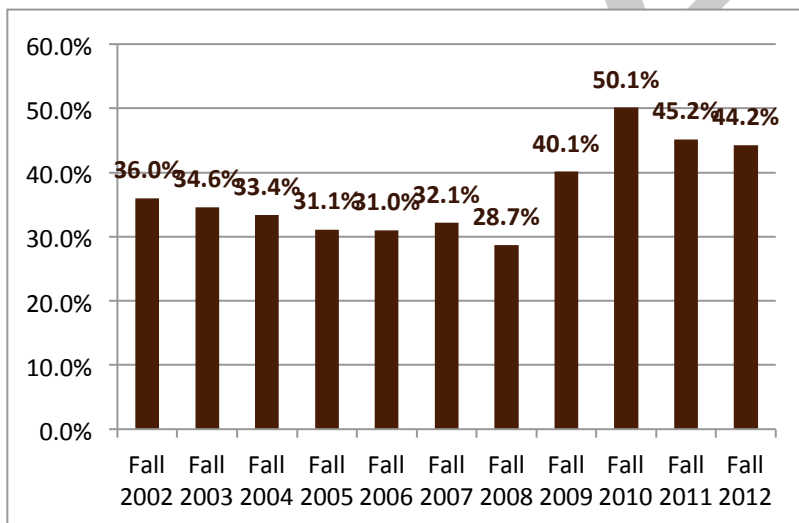
Beyond geographic measures of diversity, SMSU helps students from many disparate backgrounds “connect their experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.” This is especially true of students with disabilities, first-generation college students, and students who come from low-income families. SMSU was built in the late 1960s as a barrier-free campus, and has attracted students with disabilities ever since, helping them to achieve their goals of higher education. The UDS population has steadily reflected this. In Fall 2012, 109 students were being assisted by the Campus’s Office of Disability Resources. That amounts to 5% of the UDS student population. In addition, forty-seven years into the University’s history, over 50% of full-time entering first-year students are first-generation college students. This poses a challenge to SMSU’s retention and persistence efforts as half of SMSU’s students come from families with little firsthand exposure to higher education. In addition, many students from the region come from low income circumstances. Over

40% of New Entering undergraduates are Pell Eligible (a proxy for income categorization). According to US Census data, the median household income in the region is lower than the national average (as it was ten years ago), even though the average income in Minnesota as a whole is higher than the national average.

*FIGURE 1.5 PERCENTAGE OF NEW DEGREE-SEEKING UNDERGRADUATES THAT ARE FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS*



*FIGURE 1.6 PERCENTAGE OF NEW DEGREE SEEKING UNDERGRADUATES THAT ARE PELL ELIGIBLE*

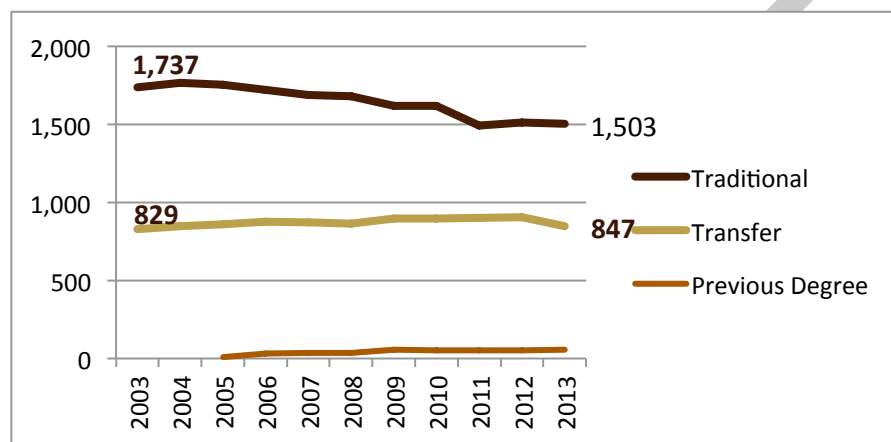


Of the total UDS students, enrollment is split 58% female and 42% male. The disparity in college participation between genders continues to widen, much like national figures. Although the population of the region continues to be predominately European-American, SMSU’s racial and ethnic make-up has steadily changed over the past decade. As of Fall 2013 nearly 11% of UDS were students of color. That reflects a rather steady increase over the past decade. However, those gains were offset by the decline in International UDS

enrollment. Several efforts have been undertaken to renew SMSU's recruitment of international students. See Section 1C for a fuller description of issues related to diversity on the SMSU campus.

Transfer students remain a strong portion of the UDS population. It is not uncommon to hear that students from the region first attempt school elsewhere, but transfer to SMSU for a variety of reasons, ranging from appreciating the smaller class sizes and ability to interact directly with faculty to economic considerations requiring them to return home. Transfer students represent about 35% of the UGS category, and in the past decade their enrollment has remained steady. Over the past five years SMSU has witnessed an increasing number of previous degree recipients returning to college to obtain another undergraduate degree. These previous degree recipients represent a tiny, but increasing slice of UDS enrollment. Despite the overall growth in total enrollment at SMSU during the past decade, the UDS student population has faced a slow decline. Traditional students make up the majority of this category, and that group has declined 13.5% during the time period.

FIGURE 1.7: UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE SEEKING ENROLLMENT, FALL SEMESTERS 2003 TO 2013<sup>2</sup>



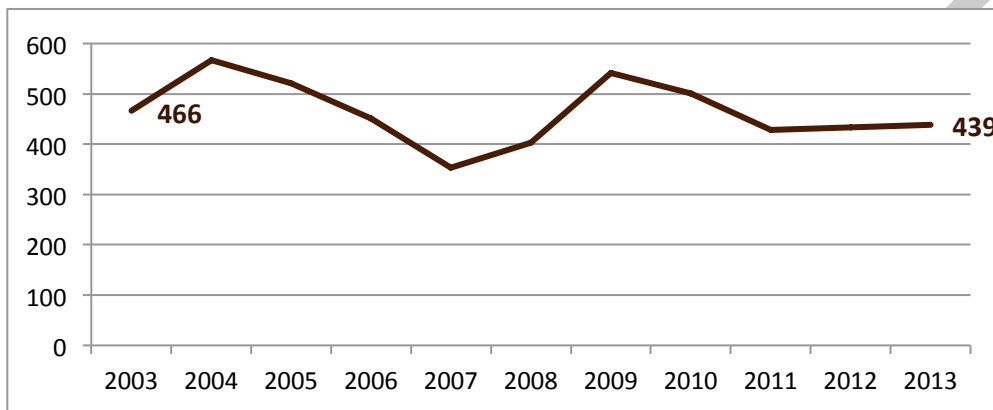
As a result of this decrease in UDS students, SMSU has begun efforts to address this issue in terms of both recruitment and retention. In Fall 2013 the President convened an Enrollment Analytics Team with the goal of reviewing enrollment and retention data to guide recruitment and retention. Other efforts on this front involve the Office of Student Success that has been at work since Fall 2011 and an Advising Task force begun in Fall 2012. All of these efforts are directed toward revising or instituting high impact practices with the goal of better serving students and improving the retention rate of students. More information about these efforts can be found in Chapter ?.

### Graduate Student Enrollment

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS

The University offers graduate programs in Education and in Business. The graduate programs support the mission of the University by responding to needs of citizens and employers in the region, delivering education to rural areas, and contributing to the quality of life in the region. Further, the programs support the system mission by meeting workforce and community needs. Graduate enrollment has some built-in volatility due to the 2-year nature of the programs as well as factors such as cohorts, external locations, teaching loads, and impact of the broader economy. In 2004 and 2009 enrollment peaked at over 540 students. Average enrollment has been near 460 students. In the past 3 years enrollment has been between 425-440 students (see Figure 1.8).

FIGURE 1.8 GRADUATE ENROLLMENT

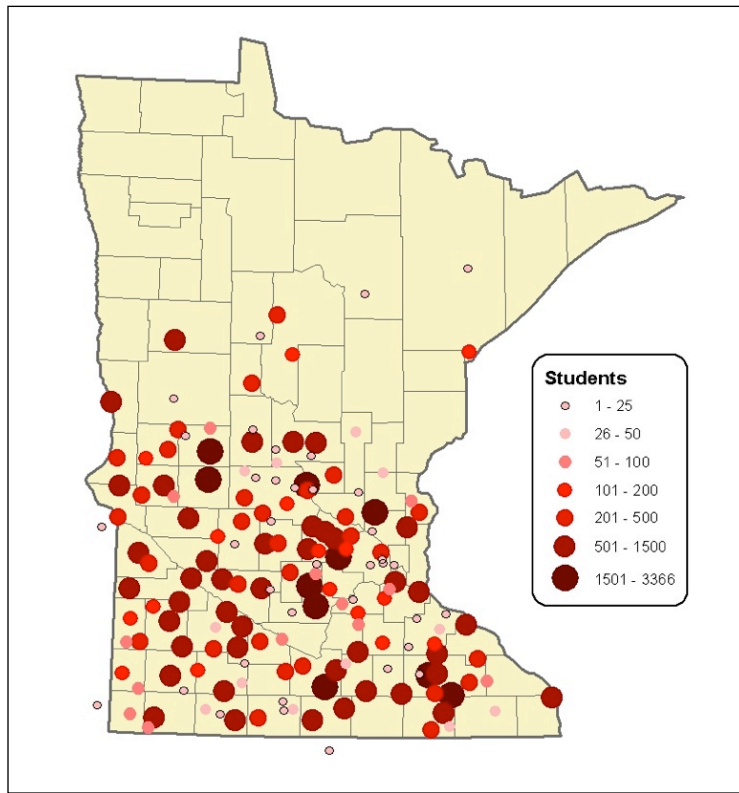


In response to regional needs and to the growth in the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program, in the past decade Graduate programs have shifted from being 75% online to 57% online. Similarly, over the past decade the mix of graduate programs has shifted from 80% enrolled in Education programs to 65%, with the growth being in the MBA program. In terms of enrollment diversity the largest gain has been in international student enrollment where Graduate enrollment has grown from 1% to over 10% in ten years.

#### *College Now Enrollment*

Perhaps no specific student group better shows SMSU's relationship to the region than enrollment in SMSU's College Now program. The map shown below in Figure 1.9 reflecting enrollment in College Now by high schools across the state emphasizes the many locations and numbers of students that SMSU has assisted on their educational journey. Since 2004, SMSU has served students at nearly 180 high schools and enrolled more than 28,000 individual students.

FIGURE 1.9 COLLEGE NOW ENROLLMENTS BY HIGH SCHOOL SINCE 2004



## STUDENT SUPPORT: ALIGNMENT OF THE MISSION AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

SMSU is a university community deeply committed to academic student success. Student support services are designed to serve the range of enrolled students' needs; while academic programs serve as the foundation for academic student success, a variety of student support services help students achieve their goals.

From the moment prospective students or parents contact the University or come to visit campus, Admissions staff guide them individually and help them address all of their questions. Some of the key resource areas for all students include Financial Aid, the Registrar, and Business Services. Each of these areas have developed information tailored to students' and their families' concerns.

The Division of Student Affairs encompasses a large number of offices that work directly with students (see Figure 1.10 Student Affairs – Organizational Chart below). The Student Affairs mission statement directly addresses the University mission, stating “Student Affairs supports the mission of the university by providing co-curricular programs and services that engage students in a successful, collaborative and inclusive education, preparing them to become leaders in a diverse global community.” The Student Affairs mission is accompanied by five vision statements related to all aspects of a student's education at SMSU:

- Develop services that promote student recruitment, retention, academic excellence, and graduation
- Facilitate co-curricular learning through student participation in an inclusive university community

- Encourage student wellness, personal skills development, self-discovery, and personal accountability
- Develop a community that strives for personal integrity, ethical decision-making, mutual respect and human dignity
- Develop programs that promote multicultural competence and leadership necessary for a student’s lifelong personal success

FIGURE 1.10 STUDENT AFFAIRS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## Student Affairs – Organizational Chart

### Scott Crowell

Associate Vice President/Dean of Students

Chief Diversity Officer  
 Director of Residence Life  
 Director of Student Center  
 ADA Coordinator

#### Admin Assistants

Stu Center (Karen Malmberg)  
 Res Life (Wanda Paluch)

#### Academic & Diversity Resources (AOS)

Director (Jefferson Lee)  
 Asst. Director (Michelle Sterner)  
 Asst. (Tim Gerrety)

#### Campus Bookstore

Barnes/Noble (Contracted)

#### Career Services

Director (Sheila Risacher)  
 Admin Asst (.5) (Linda Kruse)

#### Child Care Center

Contracted (Director, Kari Dahl)

#### Conference and Event Services

Director (Tim Alcorn)

#### Counseling and Testing

Counselor (Diane Stieper)  
 Counselor (Sara Fier)  
 Admin Asst (.5) (Linda Kruse)

#### Dining Services

ARAMARK  
 Director (Heidi Haro)

#### Diversity and Inclusion

Director (Jefferson Lee)

#### Disability Resources

Director (Pam Ekstrom)  
 Asst. Director (Carrie Hanson)

#### Hazardous Materials

Coordinator (David Hemp)

#### Health Services

Director (Val Dallenbach)  
 Admin Asst (.46) (Jill Dopp)

#### International Student Services

Director (Don Robertson)  
 Coordinator (Michael Kurowski)

#### Residential Life

Dean (Scott Crowell)  
 Coordinator (Jess Bentley)  
 Coordinator (Scott Voss)  
 Admin Asst. (Wanda Paluch)

#### Student Success

Asst. Director (Brittany Krull)

#### Scheduling

Coordinator (Ron Schoephoerster)

#### Student Activities

Asst Director (Scott Ewing)

#### Student Center

Director (Scott Crowell)  
 Asst Director (John Alcorn)

#### Student Government

Advisor (Scott Crowell)  
 Admin Ast (.25) (Melissa Broman)

#### Student Judicial Affairs

Coordinator (David Hemp)

### Office of Student Success

While all of the areas listed in the Student Affairs division are vital to the support of students and furthering SMSU’s mission, one of the most recent additions, the Office of Student Success, serves as a good example of how the University strives to improve. The Office of Student Success was organized in academic year 2011-2012 to address issues related to retention, and helps students not only with academic issues that might be

giving them difficulty but also provides guidance to appropriate campus resources for social or personal issues students might be experiencing. The Office of Student Success coordinates the Early Alert System used by faculty and staff members to notify the Office of any concerns the faculty and staff have about a student's performance. The Office of Student Success provides a variety of "success tips" in different formats and delivery methods, with some aimed at new students who might be having trouble acclimating, but others appropriate for all students at different points in their academic careers. The Office of Student Success also employs "Mustang Mentors," upper-class students who are partnered with first-year students to provide one-on-one help and advice. In year 2012-2013, the Office of Student Success implemented an exit procedure to begin to track why students leave SMSU, in order to address any possible systemic issues. The Office of Student Success works closely with other key Student Affairs offices such as Counseling and Testing, Disability Resources, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Career Resources, and Access, Opportunity & Success to ensure that all students receive the help that they need to succeed.

#### *Academic Commons, Technology Resources, Library, and the Writing Center*

In addition to Student Affairs, other departments on campus provide key support "prepare[ing] students to meet the complex challenges" of becoming educated citizens, per the SMSU mission. On-campus students can take advantage of the Academic Commons, a study center located in a central, visible, and academically-identified location. The Academic Commons offers content-area tutoring and is home to the Education Department Learning Center, Math Lab, and Science Help Desk. A large open space with a variety of tables and seating areas, it provides students with a place to study, meet friends, and seek assistance with coursework.

On-campus and distance students alike benefit from the services offered through the University's technology resources, the SMSU library, and the Writing Center. All students have access to the course management system Desire2Learn (D2L), the platform chosen by and supported by the System Office, along with local support at SMSU. Distance classes utilize D2L and might also rely on Adobe Connect, depending on the class and instructor. All students have SMSU email, as well as access to the MnSCU e-services portal where they can view their degree progress, registration information, and class schedules. All students, faculty, and staff utilize the Help Desk, located in the Technology Resource Center, with an online presence for aiding distance students. The Library provides an array of services for both on- and off-campus students, with its online databases, multiple methods for contacting a reference librarian for help through its "Ask a Librarian" portal on the home page, excellent interlibrary loan service, a special tab on the library home page for distance students containing all of the links they need, and "LibGuides," organized online research guides developed for courses, programs, and topics for all students and faculty. All faculty, regardless of whether the course is being held on-campus, online, or as part of a College Now section, can request individualized library instruction for their class. The Writing Center has grown its services to include both face-to-face and online tutoring, offering an option of synchronous online tutoring using chat and a white board or asynchronous tutoring via email in order to serve all students from all programs as well.

While all of the student support areas have had to grapple with funding issues, they continue to serve the full range of students and continually tweak their efforts as class delivery systems and student expectations evolve. A full description of the impact of technology on campus and the ever-growing number of improvements can be found in Chapter ?, and other student support services can also be found in Chapter ?:  
Criterion 3.



### *Global Studies and the Undergraduate Research Conference*

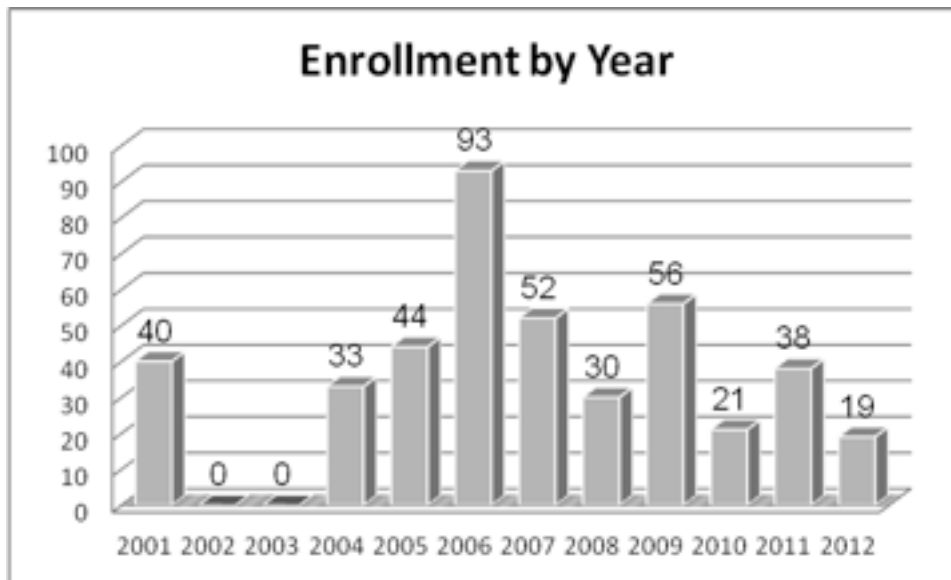
Two particular types of experiences that SMSU has become known for encourage our students to enact the liberal arts core skills and to connect their learning with the greater world beyond themselves and SMSU, two key aspects of the University's mission.

The Global Studies program has been helping students, many of whom are inexperienced with other cultures or with travel to other countries or other parts of the United States, gain a broader understanding of the world outside of southwest Minnesota. The Global Studies program began as part of the Q-7 initiative developed by the Minnesota State University System; the term "Q-7" referred to seven quality indicators, one of which was global understanding. SMSU's Global Studies program was originally funded with a multi-year grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation in the Spring term of 1993.

Global Studies was created to stand apart from the common travel abroad experiences at other universities that generally occur during a student's junior or senior year. Rather, the SMSU Global Studies program originated with an emphasis on travel connected to students' first and second year Liberal Arts Core courses. The program has evolved to include three different Global Studies offerings: the original Cluster, a Seminar, and briefer Experiences. The Global Studies clusters are integrated around a theme or region of global significance. Regular Cluster students register for five courses: the one-credit Voyage; a three-credit team-taught Seminar focusing on the site and issue, and three basic courses, typically from the LEP curriculum. The end of the semester culminates in the Voyage, a two-to-three week trip to the country or countries studied, with the students accompanied by the faculty who taught the courses. Faculty may also choose to offer a stand-alone three-credit Seminar course focusing on a current issue and related travel site, also followed by a two-to-three week trip. In the past decade, the economic downturn and poorer exchange rates made the third type of offering, the Global Studies Experience, a more attractive option for many students. An Experience is a one-credit course couple with a trip of shorter duration, usually with one week or less as travel time.

Recent Clusters have included travel to Britain, France, Greece, Spain, and Ireland. Past Experiences have included theater- and art-focused trips to New York City and participation in a civil rights conference in Jackson, Mississippi. From 2001-2012, Global Studies programs directly impacted 366 SMSU students (see Figure 1.11 below). Please note there were no programs in 2002 & 2003 due to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. The enrollment numbers in data below reflect a variety of factors; in some years, other Global Studies programs might have been offered but did not generate enough enrollment for the University to sponsor the trip. Other factors include the initial multi-year grant ending, which affected the funding and therefore staffing arrangements, reducing the number of program offerings. (For more details, please see the Global Studies Report—Spring 2012 in e-resources.)

FIGURE 1.11 GLOBAL STUDIES ENROLLMENT BY YEAR 2001-2012



Through the Global Studies program options, students not only learn about other countries and cultures but also develop their own self-confidence as well as awareness of the value of encounters with people outside their familiar surroundings. During the timeframe represented on the chart, the retention rate for these students has been 72.5%, indicating a higher rate of success retaining students who participate in Global Studies.

The annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC), which began in 2006, is another avenue for students to make connections, in this case connecting their own work to the rich traditions of research within their disciplines. In doing so, they also polish their presentation and communication skills. The one-day conference was initiated fall of 2006 by Dr. Emily Deaver, Professor of Environmental Science, as a mechanism for science students to engage in a professional exchange of scientific ideas and communicate the results of their research to the broader community, as well as a means to showcase and celebrate their hard work and accomplishments. In the first year, the program included 21 oral and 27 poster presentations from science students in Environmental Science, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. Because of the positive feedback from the academic community, the conference was expanded to include all disciplines across campus. By the seventh year of the conference in 2013, 223 presenters from 17 different programs participated. The conference continues to grow as a university-wide event as students and faculty recognize the value and benefits of participating in this event. The URC is directly aligned with the mission of the university which aims to “.....prepare students to meet the complex challenges of this century....” and to connect “.....students’ academic and practical professional development experiences....” Providing opportunities for undergraduate research and a conference event at which student research is presented to the public encourages innovative and collaborative curricula, attracts engaged students and community interest, is an opportunity for projects that focus on the local community needs and interests, and generally enhances the intellectual vitality of the institution.

*1A3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)*

While the budgeting and planning processes are discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Criterion 5, the following paragraphs highlight the important role strategic planning holds in carrying out SMSU's mission.

---

## STRATEGIC PLANNING: A TEMPLATE FOR ACTION

The strategic planning process provides an essential link between the mission in theory and the mission in action. Although SMSU's strategic plan exists to benefit and guide the university, it is also linked to and integrated with the values and strategic plans of larger organizations with which SMSU interacts, including the following:

- 1) The strategic plan for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU).
- 2) The MnSCU Annual Work Plan Action Items
- 3) The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- 4) The State of Minnesota Statute (MS 135A.053 Subdivision 1): This statute defines five legislative purposes for higher education in Minnesota.

The primary responsibility for strategic planning rests with the President's Office, which oversees the process. At Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), strategic planning has long been an emphasis. In 2002 the president and the University community agreed upon a revised strategic planning process informed by the mission and goals. This strategic planning process, integrated with refinement of strategic goals, specific objectives, and action items, has remained a consistent element of the University's ongoing operations.

The focus on strategic planning is evident in several ways. While different administrations over the past ten years have accomplished the work of strategic planning using different methods, shared governance is highlighted in the strategic planning process. A Strategic Planning Committee is a university committee established to provide support for strategic planning efforts. This committee is charged with reviewing, monitoring, and communicating the university's progress toward its strategic directions. The committee is responsible for updating the university's strategic plan as needed, obtaining input on the strategic plan from the university community, and also participating in SMSU's strategic planning events. Strategic Planning Committee members serve two-year terms. Membership spans the university and bargaining units (see glossary for abbreviations of bargaining units), including the following:

- Administration: 4
- SMSUFA: 9 (SMSUFA President; Long-range Chair; Curriculum Chair; CIA Chair; Academic Affairs; Physical Plant Chair; 3 at-large)
- MSUAASF: 2
- Council 5: 1
- Coalition (MMA, MAPE, MGR, CONF): 1
- Students: 2
- Other (Area Legislator, Community/ Region/ Alumni/ Foundation representative, Director of Institutional Research): 3
- Ex-officio Member (President)

Over the past decade SMSU has frequently built either a half-day or a full-day into the academic calendar at least once each year or has dedicated all-university meeting time to the topic. Everyone in the university

community is encouraged to participate in these strategic planning discussions, including faculty, staff, students, and even citizens of the surrounding region. Suggestions made and discussed at these strategic planning events range from very specific, such as requests for better signage, to broader goals, such as distinguishing our student-centered approach from other schools. Real change can be traced to these discussions and to the impact of having voices from multiple university constituencies asking for the same thing. For example, more smart classrooms and the addition of a women's intercollegiate soccer team can be attributed to the influence of strategic planning day discussions.

There is a significant amount of information about SMSU's strategic plan and the strategic planning process posted to SMSU's Web site. Found off of the main "Administration" tab, the Strategic Planning web page contains links to the current strategic plan as well as planning documentation since 2002.

(<http://www.smsu.edu/administration/strategicplanning/>) Thus the strategic plan is easily visible to all university constituents and the public.

Given the cycle of strategic planning, the current plan for 2012—2017 was due during *Interim* President Wood's two-year term. President Wood did not call the full Strategic Planning Committee, but an all-university meeting was held to discuss the proposed plan's components and to brainstorm suggested changes or additions. In addition, the community was engaged through the SMSU Foundation Board. From information collected during the 2011-2012 academic year, five strategic directions were developed, along with their respective goals. During 2012-2013, the strategic plan was taken through the various Meet and Confers. The five strategic directions that were developed for the 2012—2017 time-frame include the following (*SMSU 2012—2017 Strategic Plan*):

- 1) Academic Strategic Direction: Review annually all academic programs and create new programs when justified that support the changing economic and social dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 2) Enrollment Management Strategic Direction: Develop and commit to an enrollment management program to increase university enrollment both on and off campus through recruitment and retention programs.
- 3) Facilities and Equipment Strategic Direction: Modernize the campus environment and update the campus classrooms and equipment using green technology where feasible.
- 4) Community Partnerships Strategic Direction: Build partnership connections to communities, business and industry, and educational institutions within the southwest region.
- 5) Diversity Strategic Direction: Build on existing strengths in creating an environment to celebrate the accessible and diverse nature of the SMSU campus community and encourage the growth of all groups on campus.

The five strategic directions listed above clearly resonate with the University's mission to "prepare students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities" and to "connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world."

Given all of the above efforts made by SMSU toward its strategic planning process, a key consideration is how this process can be improved. In terms of a strategic planning template, it remains very important that the leaders of the university initiate and support the strategic planning process. New President Gores has announced her commitment to the process, including the work of the committee, and dedicated an all-university meeting at the beginning of her term to strategic planning discussion. A full day dedicated to planning and assessment is included in the 2013-2014 academic calendar. Suggestions to expand and improve SMSU's strategic planning process include renewing the involvement of the full Strategic Planning

committee, possibly developing Strategic Planning Subcommittees, continuing to include planning days in the academic calendar, and encouraging the participation of people at all levels of the university, including students, in the strategic planning process on an on-going basis. With these steps, SMSU has the opportunity to take its strategic planning process to an even higher, more effective level.

## CORE COMPONENT 1B: THE MISSION IS ARTICULATED PUBLICLY.

*1B1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.*

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the SMSU mission statement, vision statement, and list of guiding values are articulated publicly in a variety of ways. The mission statement, accompanying vision statement (“Southwest Minnesota State University is a university of choice”), and thirteen guiding values were all developed via the campus-wide Brown and Gold Task Force in 2007-2008.

The thirteen guiding values are as follows:

1. The primary focus of all activities is to facilitate the learning experience of our enrolled students. All faculty activities, both within and away from the classroom, are designed to enhance the learning environment.
2. It is essential for SMSU to remain current with technological advancements in delivering classroom and laboratory knowledge to assure maximum interest, impact, and retention by our students.
3. Our faculty recognize the evolving environment in which we all live and the need to insure involving students with current information and developments from the world stage.
4. Student involvement in the learning experience is critical for retention, leading to our dedication to pedagogical improvements that have been shown to enhance the learning experience.
5. We are committed to being good stewards of our resources through demonstrating environmental and fiscal responsibility. Moreover, as responsible citizens and good stewards of our resources, we foster actions, programs, and scholarship that will lead to a sustainable future.
6. We maintain and consistently seek to improve a comprehensive system of support services designed to assist our students in any way possible during their tenure at SMSU and on into the next stages of their lives.
7. We believe in the integration of campus and community. We are committed to being responsive to the needs of southwestern Minnesota and recognize that partnerships with community entities provide us with valuable talents and expertise.
8. We value a safe environment for intellectual expression and encourage open and civil communication.
9. We value a campus safe for all members of the university community.
10. We value maintaining and enhancing a physical design to provide access to all members of the university community.
11. We embrace diversity by developing a quality, comprehensive educational environment that fosters interaction among people of all religions, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and ages.

12. We foster cultural understanding on campus through social, educational, and administrative interaction with our diverse population of international students. We offer the opportunity to learn about different cultures through participation in our Global Studies programs.

13. We believe that the southwestern Minnesota region provides rich opportunities for learning that go beyond the traditional classroom and lab settings—community-based learning experiences. Therefore, we are committed to creating a variety of applied learning experiences that enhance students' practical problem-solving skills and strengthen their commitment to civic engagement.

SMSU's mission encompasses these guiding values that direct the operations of the University, whether the teaching of students, the furtherance of research, the recruitment of a diverse university community, or serving the regional interests of southwest Minnesota. These interests, while not a complete list, highlight the broad reach SMSU's mission achieves.

The mission, vision, and values are linked throughout the SMSU Web site from its primary locations on the President's page and in the Academic Catalog. The vision and the values are easily found in conjunction with the mission statement on the university web site and highlighted in select university publications. The mission in particular is clearly represented through a number of additional means, such as in the strategic planning process and related documentation, and via the departmental annual reporting process. Using SMSU's mission statement as a basis, sub-units within SMSU have proceeded to develop their own subsidiary mission statements, unique to their particular sectors of the university. Mission statements have been developed by staff departments, such as the Human Resource Department, Career Services Department, and the SMSU Library. Academic departments, such as the Finance Department, Social Science Department, and Computer Science Program, have also developed mission statements. (Links to sample mission statements from these areas can be found in e-resources.) Each of these subsidiary unit mission statements aligns with the overall mission statement of the university.

SMSU's mission statement is a central focus of campus activity and life. In order to make the mission more apparent, in 2012-2013, the mission statement was posted on the east and west doors of Founders' Hall (FH), on the main entrance to Charter Hall (CH), and on the entrance to the Bellows Academic (BA) building. By prominently displaying the mission in block letters at key entrances, SMSU students, faculty, and staff, along with visitors to the campus who use these main entrances, have the opportunity to read the SMSU mission statement each time they enter the facilities. By placing the mission statement in very visible locations across campus, members of the campus and visitors from the community and region will become very familiar with it and view it as a guide for all the campus undertakes.

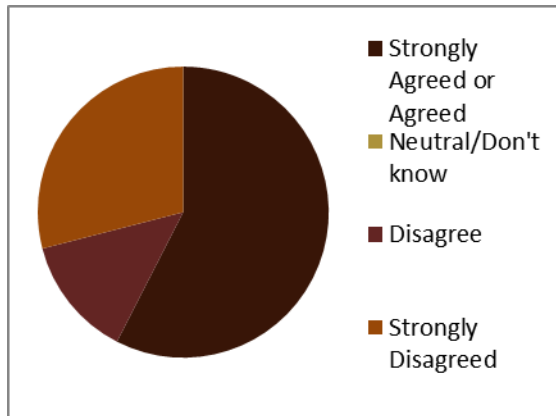
---

### PRIDE IN THE SMSU MISSION

Given the preceding examples, it is readily apparent that SMSU's mission statement is articulated publicly. A poll of community members, faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and employees conducted for the purposes of the self-study effort in spring of 2013 demonstrates strong awareness of the mission and its influence on SMSU's operations. (See Chapter 7: Preparing for the HLC Review for details on the survey.)

When the respondents to the poll were asked whether they were familiar with SMSU's mission statement prior to reading the survey, 234 or 55.3% of the respondents indicated that they "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with this statement. Only 55 respondents or 13% of the total respondents "Strongly Disagreed" (see Figure 1.11). Based on this response, it appears that many more of the respondents to the poll are familiar with SMSU's mission than are not.

FIGURE 1.12 OVERALL RESPONSE TO “I WAS FAMILIAR WITH SMSU’S MISSION STATEMENT PRIOR TO READING THIS SURVEY”



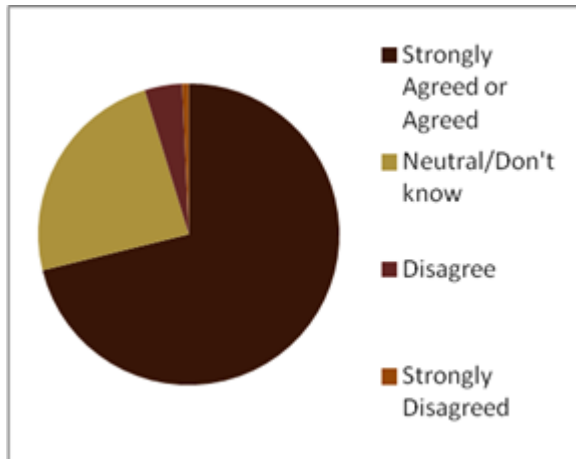
Respondents to the survey were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that SMSU’s mission statement is easily understood (Table 1.1). Among the respondents, 357 or 84.4% agreed with this statement. Only 3 respondents or .7% of the total respondents “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement. This question, in particular, appears to provide very strong evidence that SMSU has a mission statement that is easily understood by the general public.

TABLE 1.1: OVERALL RESPONSE TO “SMSU’S MISSION STATEMENT IS EASILY UNDERSTOOD”

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know	Total Responses
#	113	244	33	24	3	6	423
%	26.7%	57.7%	7.8%	5.7%	0.7%	1.4%	100.0%

Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that SMSU’s mission statement accurately represents the pursuits of SMSU. Among the respondents, 301 or 71.2% of the total “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with this statement. Only 3 respondents or .7% of the total respondents “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement (see Figure 1.13).

FIGURE 1.13: COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO “SMSU’S MISSION STATEMENT ACCURATELY REPRESENTS THE PURSUITS OF SMSU”



As noted in Table 1.2, among 84 SMSU faculty members responding to the poll, when asked whether the current administrative structure (school divisions and reporting lines) effectively supports SMSU’s mission, 50 of the respondents or 59.5% of the total respondents “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with this statement. Only seven respondents or 8.3% of the total 84 faculty respondents “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement. When asked the same question, of the 82 SMSU administrators and staff members who responded to the poll, 60 or 73.2% of the total respondents “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” that the current administrative structure (school divisions and reporting lines) effectively support SMSU’s mission. Only one administrator/staff member or 1.2% of the total respondents “Strongly Disagreed” with this statement. Though there is some disparity between faculty and administrative perceptions, overall there is strong support for how well the structure supports the mission. In addition, as noted in section 1A2, discussions are ongoing to reorganize the schools within the College of Business, Education, and Professional Studies, which could address some of reasons faculty answered this question with stronger disagreement.

TABLE 1.2: EMPLOYEE RESPONSES REGARDING AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT “THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE (SCHOOL DIVISIONS AND REPORTING LINES) EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTS SMSU’S MISSION.”

Audience		Strongly Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Do Not Know	Total Responses
		#	%	#	%	#	%		
Faculty	#	18	32	17	8	7	2	84	
	%	21.4%	38.1%	20.2%	9.5%	8.3%	2.4%	100.0%	
Administrators & Staff	#	13	47	16	2	1	3	82	
	%	15.9%	57.3%	19.5%	2.4%	1.2%	3.7%	100.0%	



As detailed in the above section of this report, SMSU's mission statement is articulated publicly in a variety of ways. It is prominently displayed on the campus physical facilities and is found in multiple locations at the SMSU Web site. Utilizing these means, SMSU has been able to publicly share its mission statement quite effectively with the campus, the community of Marshall, and the surrounding service region. Per the results of the poll conducted with the help of Southwest Marketing Advisory Center (SMAC) in Spring Semester 2013, SMSU's service area is quite aware and appreciative of the university's mission statement and finds it to be very appropriate for the university.

*1B2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.*

*1B3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.*

As described in section 1A1, the mission, vision, and values were developed in 2007-2008 and are thus current, having been revised previously in 1993. The mission clearly states that SMSU is charged with offering "comprehensive degree programs" for connecting learners "in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world." The strategic planning process further aligns and prioritizes the mission and values with concrete objectives that support the system-wide needs while focusing on SMSU's target constituencies.

In addition, the mission was indirectly reaffirmed as a result of a study of higher education needs in southwestern Minnesota in 2011. At that time, then-President Danahar announced his retirement after having served ten years in office. The System Office of the Chancellor took the opportunity to engage an external consultant, MGT of America, Inc., a national higher education research and planning firm, to conduct a review of southwestern Minnesota's higher educational needs and SMSU's role in meeting those needs along with area two-year institutions. According to the consulting group's final report, they were to "Examine strategies to better align programs, services and efforts of the two system institutions (SMSU and Minnesota West) whose primary responsibility is to serve this region." The study's purpose was to examine "administrative and organizational structures, including the current institutional configuration, and other approaches that could include consolidation, administrative alignment, or other programmatic and financial opportunities to enhance or sustain programs and services in the region." In other words, the consultants looked for efficiencies across the two- and four-year institutions and examined whether or not the regional two-year school could be aligned or consolidated with SMSU. The consulting group recommended against complete alignment at this time but suggested deeper academic collaboration and moving eventually towards shared services where possible. In making their recommendation, the consulting group noted the following points relevant to how well SMSU's mission and scope are identified by its regional constituents:

- "Stakeholder commentary from across the region, and particularly in Marshall, suggest that Southwest Minnesota State has done a good job in engaging both the business community and local residents close to home (Marshall) in a variety of areas including social and cultural functions, community service, and academic program delivery."
- "Employers and community leaders are passionately supportive of the higher education entities located in their respective communities, and appreciate the critical role each plays in the economic

and educational well-being of their locale. A loss of one of these education sites would be a huge setback to the surrounding community in many ways.”

Of the consulting group’s suggested strategies, two speak to core points within SMSU’s mission:

- “Expand non-academic efforts to engage both the residents and the business community throughout the region”
- “More closely align the academic programs of the University to the economic initiatives and industry sector needs of the full 19-county region”

Specifically in regard to the second suggestion above, the group noted the need to work closely with business and industry but was also careful to state the following, affirming the foundation of liberal arts in the SMSU mission:

“Some have called for a downsizing of the current liberal arts curriculum at SMSU; however, it is an important and valued aspect of the University’s mission to engage the communities it serves. SMSU officials noted that the University recently completed a review and re-design of its liberal arts core. The new Liberal Education Program implemented this past fall semester, is based on a national survey of business, community, and campus leaders who identified what all college graduates, regardless of major, need to know and be able to do in order to succeed in the 21st Century. Thus, a continuous ‘rebalancing’ of the curriculum mix over time is a more reasonable and practical approach, that again establishes or sustains both community and business connections and meets the core educational needs of its students.”

The suggestions are in line with SMSU’s past efforts and are incorporated into the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan. The full Southwest Minnesota Higher Education Study Report can be found on SMSU’s Strategic Planning web site.

<http://www.smsu.edu/administration/strategicplanning/southwestminnesotahigheredstudyconclusion.pdf>

## CORE COMPONENT 1C: THE INSTITUTION UNDERSTANDS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ITS MISSION AND THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY.

### *1C1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.*

SMSU has a strong tradition of addressing multiculturalism and promoting an inclusive student body and staff. From its publicly stated support of including diversity in its guiding values, Liberal Education Program goals, and academic programs, to its welcoming physical design, having been built barrier-free in the late 1960s before ADA, SMSU demonstrates a commitment to diversity in its many forms. The University recognizes and strives for the transformative educational experiences that can occur when bringing together students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

## PROVIDING FOR AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

### *Guiding Principles and Values*

The relationship between SMSU’s mission and a diverse society is clearly stated in a number of guiding documents. Several of the University’s guiding values directly address diversity, specifically values 11 and 12:

11. We embrace diversity by developing a quality, comprehensive educational environment that fosters interaction among people of all religions, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and ages.

12. We foster cultural understanding on campus through social, educational, and administrative interaction with our diverse population of international students. We offer the opportunity to learn about different cultures through participation in our Global Studies programs.

Diversity awareness, recruiting, and support have been consistent components of SMSU’s strategic plan. For example, the Biennial Strategic Plan from 2003-2005 reported on the following goal related to diversity and the progress made by 2005, described below in Table 1.3:

*TABLE 1.3 BIENNIAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2003-2005 DIVERSITY COMPONENT AND PROGRESS*

<i>Goal Two.</i> SMSU will create comprehensive learning experiences for its students
<i>Objective 2.</i> Explore options to expand cultural/diversity awareness. This may include expanding Study Abroad, supporting an Ethnic Studies program, developing a mentor program for minority and international students, and enhancing a Women’s Center in the new Student Center Complex.
<p><i>Related Progress Points Reported in 2005:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working to insure campus services, facilities and programs are aligned with and accessible to students with disabilities and international students (HLC Criterion 3)</li> <li>• A Women’s Center is planned for the new Student Center Complex</li> <li>• Grants are being sought to support Global and Ethnic studies programs and travel abroad</li> </ul>

The 2007-2012 Strategic Plan (Table 1.4 below) contains similar goal and strategy language:

*TABLE 1.4 STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2012 DIVERSITY COMPONENT AND PROGRESS*

<i>Goal Two.</i> SMSU will create comprehensive learning experiences for its students
<i>Diversity-Related Strategy Statement:</i> 1) Increase cross-cultural interactions to promote understanding and appreciation within the campus community.
<p><i>Relevant Objectives</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Actively seek participation from a diverse population of students, faculty, staff, and community members, and promote physical and social inclusiveness, particularly for physically disabled and international students.</li> <li>5. Continue to explore options to expand cultural diversity/awareness, develop and expand collaborative learning opportunities, study abroad programs, and international exchange programs.</li> <li>6. Develop a mentor program for minority and international students</li> </ol>

In the most current SMSU Strategic Plan for 2012-2017, issues related to diversity and inclusion have taken on a more prominent role, as diversity is one of the five primary strategic directions, noted in Table 1.5 below:

TABLE 1.5 STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2017 DIVERSITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION

<p><i>Diversity Strategic Direction:</i> Build on existing strengths in creating an environment to celebrate the accessible and diverse nature of the SMSU campus community and encourage the growth of all groups on campus</p>
<p>Goal 1-Foster partnerships with groups and organizations across the region and state that create a climate that supports the understanding of diverse individuals and groups.</p> <p>Goal 2–Foster a campus climate that celebrates the interaction of diverse cultures from historical and current perspectives in all academic and student service programs.</p> <p>Goal 3–Maintain and expand existing activities and programs that draw internal and external groups to celebrate the richness of our diverse world.</p> <p>Goal 4 – Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that the University makes continuous and ongoing progress to ensure accessibility and to reach current and future Title IX requirements</p>

The SMSU strategic plans align with the system-level initiatives to raise the profile of diversity throughout MnSCU. The 2010-2014 MnSCU Strategic Plan (which is very similar to 2008-2012 MnSCU Strategic Plan established by the previous chancellor) references diversity within the top strategic direction: “Strategic Direction 1: Increase access, opportunity and success” and first related goal: “Goal 1.1 Raise Minnesota’s participation and achievement in post-secondary education by meeting the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and educational goals.”

*Diversity Plan, the Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues Grant, and Ongoing Work*

In addition to guiding principles and values, in 2003 SMSU published a five-year diversity plan titled “Commitment to Diversity: SMSU Plan for Excellence.” The plan was aligned with the Biennial Strategic Plan at that time as well as the mission, goals, and vision statement in place in 2003 (which have since been revised in 2008). The 2003 diversity plan described the challenges related to increasing diversity at SMSU and set ambitious, specific strategies and goals related to diversity. Though in some cases extending beyond the original five year target, a number of those goals have been attained, such as the establishment of a Bridge program and SMSU’s collaboration with Upward Bound, and the goal to increase the number of students of color and culturally diverse students enrolled at SMSU from 7 percent to 10 percent, which was achieved in 2013. Despite staffing turnover and reorganization, the work outlined in the original diversity plan has continued to develop and evolve; currently a new diversity plan is in development in order to address the emphasis on diversity in the new strategic plan and MnSCU directive as well as the new administration’s commitment to diversity. (The 2003 diversity plan can be found here: <http://www.smsu.edu/administration/strategicplanning/pdf/diversity.pdf>)

From 2006 through 2010, the University was privileged to be awarded a Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues grant, which ran for two two-year phases. The intent of the Difficult Dialogues work, according to the faculty group directing the grant, was “to create an inclusive campus environment steeped in respect for all voices and to influence equivalent attitudes within the larger community.” The first phase of the grant included hiring an outside consultant who designed and implemented a two-year plan to work with the campus community. As cited in the final grant report, goals and accomplishments during the first phase included the following:

*Completed in 1st Phase:*

1. Mission/Goals and Activities: Serve the needs of the Indigenous Nations and Dakota's People's population on campus and in the region. Activities: Support the Annual Conference hosted by the Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies Program at SMSU.
2. Create student awareness and dialogue on the damaging impact of racism and bigotry directed at Native Americans, the Islamic Population, and the GLBT community. Activities: Create new classes reflecting the subject matter: Homophobia and Sexualities; Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Breaking the Native American Stereotype. Host Speaker Series of Immigration Serve the needs of the Indigenous Nations and Dakota People's Population promoting Indigenous authors, scholars, and artists. Successfully launched, published and distributed journal.
3. Educate the SMSU faculty on cultural sensitivity and awareness and encourage dialogue on this issue. Self-understanding and clarity were garnered surrounding the peculiar needs of the campus community and how to proceed in improving our level of intercultural competence.

*Completed in 2nd Phase:*

1. Continue creating student awareness and dialogue on the damaging impact of racism and bigotry directed at Native Americans, and the GLBT community, and the resulting issues of Genocide and Human Rights. Activities: Create new classes reflecting the subject matter: Expand courses previously developed in Phase I and incorporate new courses in Phase II. Develop "yoked courses" across disciplines with speakers.
2. Serve the needs of the Indigenous Nations and Dakota People's Population promoting Indigenous authors, scholars, and artists. Activities: Continue the biannual journal: *Yellow Medicine Review: A Journal of Indigenous Literature, Art, and Thought*.
3. Continue to educate the SMSU faculty on cultural sensitivity and awareness and encourage dialogue of this issue. Bring in an external consultant to offer educational dialogue training sessions to dialogue team members.

While the Ford Foundation initiative and funding have ceased, the publication of the *Yellow Medicine Review: a Journal of Indigenous Literature, Art, & Thought* has been able to continue, with the support of the University. Since debuting with the Spring 2007 issue, *YMR* has published 14 issues with creative work from hundreds of indigenous authors. (All documentation related Difficult Dialogues, including the final grant report from which the excerpts above are taken, can be found in the e-resources for the review team.)

While there have been many improvements to diversity on campus and at the system-level, personnel from both faculty and administration across the levels ensure that the issues related to diversity remain in focus. Concerns that diversity-related issues are being adequately addressed are shared across the entire MnSCU system. At the system-level, MnSCU has its own Diversity and Equity division and a System Strategic Diversity Plan, responsible for concerns of students as well as employees. The InterFaculty Organization (IFO), representing faculty from all seven state universities in the MnSCU system, conducted a Campus Climate study over the span of two-years (2010-2012) involving a survey and focus groups of faculty in the system. As noted in the executive summary of their findings, "the central foci of the study were to identify what, if any, forms of inequality exist for women, faculty of color, and GLBT faculty." The study found that diverse faculty report more negative experiences in their workplace than the general view and a higher incidence of "incivility and differential treatment," some of which was severe.

The system-wide IFO Campus Climate study parallels many concerns voiced by faculty here. In 2011-2012, SMSUFA Faculty Assembly brought forward issues regarding diversity to Meet and Confer with the administration. In April 2012, a memo drafted by the SMSUFA Multicultural Issues Committee and endorsed by the Faculty Assembly was given to the administration. The memo described faculty concerns regarding cultural diversity and the institution's responsibilities regarding diversity on campus, listing seven items including the diversity plan, cultural diversity office structure, need for more minority student scholarships,

and a request to support an anti-racism team on campus, among others. (A copy of the memo is located in the e-resource room for the review team.) Though Southwest has participated in Difficult Dialogues and has made strides with its diversity planning, the University recognizes that there is much progress yet to be made.

*A Profile of Diversity within the Student Population*

As noted in Section 1A2, SMSU's student profile includes a large number of students from lower-economic status and first-generation college students, as well as students with disabilities. The growing diversity of our region and state is also reflected in our first generation, students of color, new immigrant and underserved and underrepresented student body. In addition, Southwest consistently welcomes students from 22-25 countries from around the world. Figures 1.13 and 1.14 below display the number and the percentage of enrolled students of color and international students from 2003 through 2013 at SMSU.

FIGURE 1.13 NUMBER OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS 2003-2013

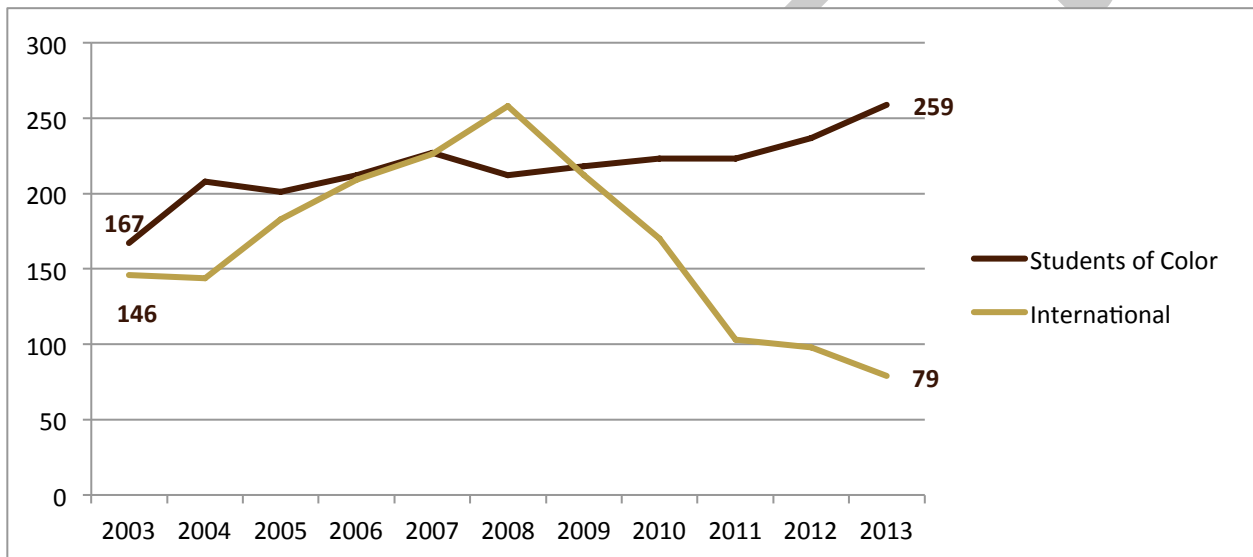
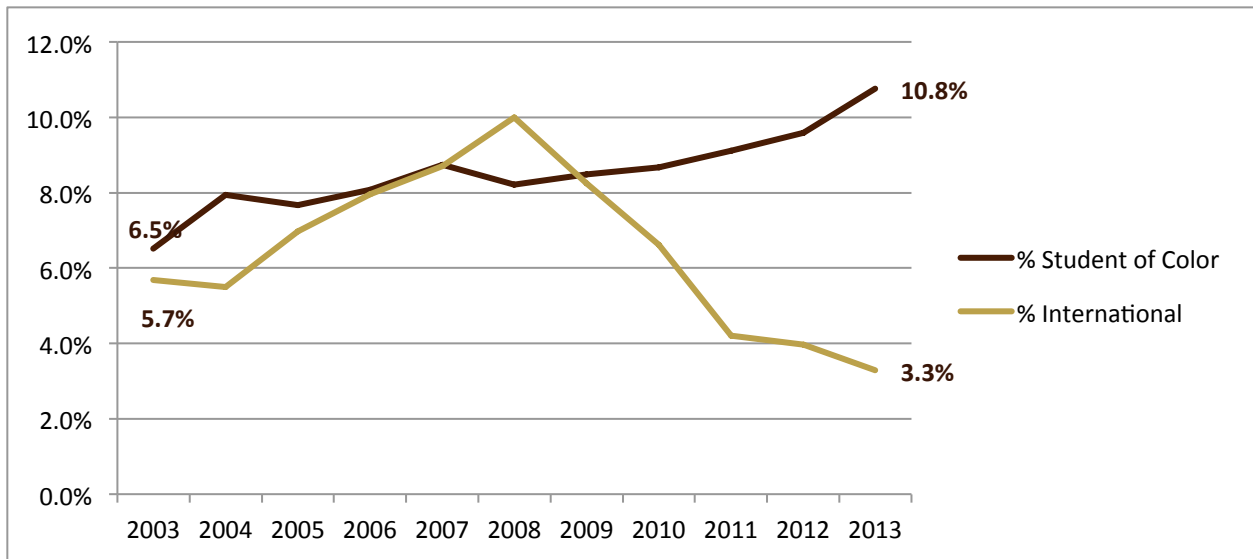


FIGURE 1.14 PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS 2003-2013



As is clear in the images, the number of international students reached a peak in 2008 but has declined. The number of students of color has fairly steadily increased over that same time period. While the same data is represented in Table 1.6 below (international students are labeled as “Non-Resident Alien” in this table), the table provides a description of racial/ethnic categories, showing that the numbers of American Indian and Hispanic students have slowly been rising over the past ten years.

TABLE 1.6 STUDENTS OF COLOR AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Racial/Ethnic Category	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Headcount</b>											
Am Ind/Alask	12	14	13	11	14	15	14	16	19	23	23
Asian	31	41	37	49	57	54	62	52	55	59	62
Black	100	117	108	106	104	94	89	108	101	97	116
Hawaii/Pac		2	1	3	5	6	5	3	1	1	2
Hispanic	24	34	42	43	47	43	48	44	47	57	56
Non-Resident Alien	146	144	183	209	226	258	212	170	103	98	79
Unknown	89	36	15	8	8	8	8	8	3	3	20
White	2,164	2,230	2,224	2,196	2,136	2,101	2,132	2,169	2,119	2,134	2,047
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,566</b>	<b>2,618</b>	<b>2,623</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>2,597</b>	<b>2,579</b>	<b>2,570</b>	<b>2,570</b>	<b>2,448</b>	<b>2,472</b>	<b>2,405</b>
<b>Percentage</b>											
% Student of Color	6.5%	7.9%	7.7%	8.1%	8.7%	8.2%	8.5%	8.7%	9.1%	9.6%	10.8%
% International	5.7%	5.5%	7.0%	8.0%	8.7%	10.0%	8.2%	6.6%	4.2%	4.0%	3.3%

1C2. *The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.*

---

## A BLUE PRINT FOR ACTION IN FOSTERING DIVERSITY

A number of offices on campus work to support the unique needs of students, as well as provide opportunities for university engagement with diversity. These include Disability Services, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and International Student Services.

### *Disability Services*

Since its inception, Southwest Minnesota State University has been recognized as a leader in providing access and opportunity to students with physical disabilities. In particular, the design and structure of the campus accommodates students in wheelchairs, including the tunnels and walkways that connect the academic buildings and the residence halls. While other institutions are now catching up to some of the University's physical accommodations, most still do not provide interconnected access to the buildings.

Several of the University's guiding values refer to the continued focus on enabling persons with disabilities to achieve their higher education goals. In particular, values 9, 10, and 11 cite creating a safe campus for all, "maintaining and enhancing a physical design to provide access to all," and ensuring an "educational environment that fosters interaction among people of all religions, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and ages." In accordance with these values, Southwest Minnesota State University accommodates students with disabilities through the office of Disability Services. Academic support services include accommodations for exams, textbooks/documents in alternate format, scribes, note-taking, interpreters, amplification, assistive technology, and equipment access.

Physical support services provided by the University include general physical therapy provided in conjunction with Exercise Science majors. Wheelchair and adapted equipment prescriptions for insurance purposes, and basic mechanical assistance for equipment is arranged through an off-campus provider. The Director of Disability Services collaborates with Admission, Residential Life, the Physical Plant, University Public Safety, Health Services, the Exercise Science department, personal care assistance providers, the Southwestern Center for Independent Living, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that programs, services and activities of state and local governments be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. It also requires public entities to take appropriate steps to insure that communications, with applicants, participants, and members of the public who have disabilities, are as effective as communications with others. The Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator and Section 504 compliance officer, who is also the Dean of Students, manages issues and concerns of students who think they have not been provided reasonable accommodations or who believe that structural accommodations have not been made. The office coordinates with other offices throughout the University in an effort to meet these needs.

### *Offices of Diversity and Inclusion and International Student Services*

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the International Student Services office have been restructured several times over the past decade in response to how to best address student needs while also dealing with diminishing fiscal resources and staffing changes. From the time of the last review in 2004 until 2008, services to support students of color and international students were provided by the Office of Cultural



Diversity. This area had provided support services to students of color and international students as well as programmatic backing for academic departments and student organizations. Regional community input, support and attendance were highlighted.

In 2008, MnSCU encouraged colleges and universities to adopt new programmatic priorities emphasizing first generation, underrepresented and underserved populations and to selectively use the categories of minority, multicultural or students of color. In response, SMSU eliminated the Office of Cultural Diversity as it had been known in the past. International Student Services was separated into its own office reporting to the Dean of Students, and the Office of Cultural Diversity was placed within the Learning Resources department as part of the first generation, underserved and underrepresented umbrella in MnSCU's overall Diversity Plan. Learning Resources, which was the umbrella for a variety of areas, also included TRIO SSS, TRIO Upward Bound, Disability Resources, First Year Experience, and Access Opportunity Success (AOS). When the Office of Cultural Diversity was added, Learning Resources was renamed the Academic and Diversity Resources Department (ADR). The overall director of ADR representing all of these areas reported to the Dean of Business, Education, and Professional Studies.

In 2008, the Director of ADR retired, and in 2009, SMSU's application for the federally-funded TRIO program was not selected to be funded. Both events caused additional restructuring, as did the departure of the director of the Office of Cultural Diversity. For one year, the Associate Dean oversaw the Office of Cultural Diversity. When the position of Associate Dean was eliminated, an *interim* director, now the permanent director, was assigned. The new director proposed the renaming of the Office of Cultural Diversity as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in 2012-2013. The current director is also in charge of the AOS program, although that is its own separate program apart from the responsibilities for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The other areas that had been under the umbrella of Academic and Diversity Resources were split out with separate reporting lines: TRIO Upward Bound now reports to Admissions; First Year Experience reports to the Dean of Arts, Letters, and Sciences; and Disability Resources, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and AOS report to the Dean of Students.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion works to provide an inclusive, quality and comprehensive educational experience for students from all religions, races, ethnicities, genders, ages, sexual orientation and countries by engaging the campus and surrounding communities to promote and advocate for cultural diversity and multiculturalism. The office's staff work with the campus community including academic departments, student organizations, residential life and Athletics to promote diversity through programming and student and academic support. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion involves the university in a host of activities and provides support services addressing the needs of this population as well as the entire student body.

The current director of Diversity and Inclusion has provided stability and direction to the office, in addition to the oversight of AOS. In conjunction with trying to be a more inclusive campus and because of his multiple duties, the director sought a central location where his staff could provide programming for students of color as well as the underrepresented population of the AOS program. In July of 2013, AOS and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion moved to a new location in Commons East. Because many students use both departments, the new location provides easy access to both and is in the pathway of their daily activities. The new location is convenient for the students in the AOS Living and Learning community as well.

As noted above, as part of the 2008 restructuring, International Student Services (ISS), was moved out of the Office of Cultural Diversity and became its own program area. The ISS program provides travel assistance,

orientation support, social and cultural support, programs for international students' adjustment and cultural acclimation, activities for the campus and region, as well as two major festivals: Fall semester's Art and Culture Show and Spring semester's International Food Festival. In addition, all Homeland Security requirements and student regulations are housed in this area. ISS has faced several transitions itself, with the retirement of the long-time coordinator of ISS and fiscal constraint on hiring qualified recruiters. International student enrollment has plummeted as the two primary countries from which SMSU enrolled students, Kenya and Nepal, have both struggled economically and politically. In addition, in both countries, the U.S. State Department has dramatically reduced the number of approved student VISAs. Resources to send admission personnel to recruit internationally have not been available.

Despite many transitions and changes of location, all of the offices involved with working with our diverse student body continue to work with regional agencies, parents, faculty, staff and students to ensure that as many students as possible can achieve a university education and the rich experiences that accompany college life.

#### *Affirmative Action and Faculty/Staff Diversity Profile*

Southwest Minnesota State University maintains an up-to-date Affirmative Action plan (<http://www.smsu.edu/administration/affirmativeaction/?id=604>), and all policies on equal opportunity and affirmative action are consistent with MnSCU board policies, Minnesota Statutes, and applicable Federal laws.

SMSU has a commitment to affirmative action and proactively recruiting, hiring and retaining persons who are in the underrepresented groups. The Affirmative Action Office is responsible for:

- assisting faculty, staff and students who believe they have been harassed or discriminated against because they are a member of a protected group.
- monitoring the recruitment and employment process for faculty and staff to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, as well as compliance with the Southwest Minnesota State University mission and strategic plan regarding diversity and affirmative action.
- development and monitoring of Southwest Minnesota State University Affirmative Action Plan. As part of the affirmative action plan, a utilization analysis of our current workforce is completed to determine whether women and minorities are underutilized within any of the job groupings of the University.

Underutilization is determined by comparing the number and percentage of women, minorities and people with a disability in each job group (Officials & Administrators, Faculty Professionals, Non Faculty Professionals, Technical/Paraprofessional, Office/Clerical, Skilled Craft and Service Maintenance) with their availability (the percentage of women, minorities and people with a disability assumed to be in a pool of qualified persons within an appropriate recruitment area). Underutilization occurs when the percentages of women, minorities and people with a disability in the University's workforce are lower than the availability percentages. The results of this analysis become the basis for establishing hiring goals for the various job groups.

Underutilization in women and minorities in Officials & Administrators, Faculty Professionals, Non Faculty Professionals job groups have fluctuated back and forth over the past 10 years, being underutilized during one 2-year plan and not underutilized the next. There has not been a significant change in the number of

diverse employees on campus. For the first time in the past 10 years, women were not underutilized in the faculty work group in the 2012 workforce analysis.

Southwest Minnesota State University's overall AA goal is to improve its representation of underutilized groups. In order to accomplish this goal, each new hiring opportunity is viewed as an Affirmative Action opportunity, and each hiring unit is expected to make a special effort to recruit applicants in areas where underutilization has been identified. Southwest Minnesota State University is also committed to hiring individuals with disabilities who can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. When full utilization for a specific job group has been met, SMSU will attempt to maintain a workforce that reflects the composition of the available pool of qualified persons within the recruitment area.

Despite our efforts, attracting and retaining faculty and staff in our rural location remains a challenge.

### *Diversity in Academic Offerings*

SMSU provides many meaningful opportunities to experience global, American, and regional diversity opportunities through academic coursework. As noted earlier, an extensive examination and revision of the Liberal Education Program (LEP) occurred since the last accreditation. One of the ten Liberal Education Program (LEP) outcomes is focused on diversity; diversity and global perspectives are also themes required in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC). If looking at diversity from a broad perspective, SMSU offers courses relating to multiculturalism, human diversity and the global perspective listed at all levels and across departments, as demonstrated in our academic catalog. Many departments sponsor speakers, presentations, and activities to supplement the work and themes being covered in the courses. (See "Sample List of Speakers and Presentations Regarding Diversity 2004-2014" in e-resources for the review team.)

As noted in Section 1A2, the Global Studies program also offers exposure to diversity for SMSU students who participate in the clusters, seminars, and experiences. In addition to studying a different culture at length in the classroom work, the voyage portion opens students' eyes directly to sights, sounds, and people they might not otherwise have ever encountered. Students who participate in a cluster can return as Student Mentors on subsequent trips, helping their fellow students understand and navigate new territory.

In addition to individual courses or the Global Studies program, SMSU also offers several academic minors related to diversity studies that can be bundled with any major program on campus. Currently SMSU offers three such minors: Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, and Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies (INDS). The Women's Studies minor and Latin American Studies minor are interdisciplinary, with students able to choose courses from a variety of programs.

At the current time, just one course, INDS 100, Introduction to Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies, and the two electives for this minor delivered by other departments on campus are able to be offered for the INDS minor since the retirement of the full-time INDS faculty member in 2008. When the Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies program was implemented, SMSU hosted an annual conference focusing on contemporary American Indian Topics and issues. These multi-day conferences brought in nationally recognized Indigenous scholars and community leaders and offered the campus community as well as region and upper Midwest an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions on diverse world views and educational pedagogy. In addition, the INDS Program, Oyate Club and the Office of Cultural Diversity collaborated with the 4 Dakota communities of Minnesota (Upper Sioux, Lower Sioux, Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Community and the Prairie Island Dakota Community) as well as the Sisseton/Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation and the Flandreau Indian Community of South Dakota in sponsoring an annual Wacipi (Pow-wow). American Indians of all ages would come to campus and for a cultural celebration joining with

the students, faculty and non-Indian community in a day of sharing and learning. With the INDS program no longer operating, the annual INDS conference and wacipi are no longer held. However, there continues to be University faculty and teaching staff involvement in reviewing, revising and advocating for the minor, as well as a campus commitment to American Indian studies. The Oyate Student organization provides leadership in involving academic departments and other student groups in sponsoring activities and speakers including Billy Mills (the 1964 Olympic Gold Medal winner of the 10,000 meter run), Sheldon Wolfchild, Lower Sioux Dancers and American Indian Feasts.

### *Partnering to Promote Diversity*

SMSU works with multiple partners in different formats to increase the diversity profile on campus and to support all forms of diversity among the student body.

One way in which SMSU addresses its role in diverse, multicultural and global learning environments is through the development of partnerships with other international universities. These partnerships are also helping to strengthen the numbers of international students on campus. Three different relationships have been developed within the last two years. In the summer of 2012, Southwest Minnesota State University entered into a relationship with Adeseye Royal College, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. This is a comprehensive secondary school and college (equivalent to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in the USA). [NEED A LINE HERE EXPLAINING THE RELATIONSHIP] Starting Fall semester of 2013, SMSU's first MBA cohort from Minghin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, joined our university. This partnership looks forward to expanding to include a comprehensive exchange of students, faculty and ideas. Also in the Fall of 2013, Taylor's University in Malaysia and SMSU entered into an educational collaboration. Taylor's University has in place an American Degree Transfer Program (ADP) and partners with a number of universities in the U.S. Under the agreement with SMSU, Taylor's students may take their general education courses at Taylor's University, then transfer those credits and earn a degree from SMSU the final two years.

For the past six years, the SMSU Office of International Services and the Education Department has had a partnership with Udon Thani Rajabhat University in Thailand. Each year, a delegation of doctoral students and faculty from Udon Thani visit SMSU for three weeks. While at SMSU, the delegation take one master's level course, as well as tour area schools and meet with administrators, teachers and students to get a better understanding of the educational system in America. In 2013-2014, the exchange included two SMSU students student teaching in Thailand in the spring semester.

Closer to home, SMSU also partners with the Upward Bound Program. The Upward Bound program provides a free college preparatory program for eligible high school students funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored locally by Southwest State University. Interested 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students must meet criteria, which include coming either from a low-income or first generation college family status. SMSU offers a four-year TRIO Upward Bound/Talent Search scholarship for students from the program to continue their education at SMSU.

SMSU has a number of other scholarship partners whose funds are dedicated to students from diverse backgrounds. SMSU offers need-based scholarships as well as scholarships for students who are from specific geographic areas. One scholarship program, the Tolk Scholarship, assists first generation college students who have overcome extraordinary personal, financial or academic challenges to achieve success. There is a very significant scholarship program designed to assist Native American students, as well as a small scholarship to assist international students, who often do not qualify for others. In the past SMSU had an Access and Opportunity Scholarship that was targeted for students from Minneapolis and St. Paul; while that

program was phased out by the donor, over the past decade, a number of students benefitted from it. SMSU also has several scholarships that support students with physical disabilities, to assist them in their transition to college life. The SMSU Foundation works closely with the Office of Financial Aid to ensure that all students have access to scholarship opportunities and to constantly grow the number of scholarships and scholarship dollars that SMSU is able to offer. In FY 2013, the SMSU Foundation alone awarded over \$800,000 in scholarships to SMSU students.

Scholarships with diversity criteria include but are not limited to the following:

Buuck Family Foundation Scholarship – disabled students (preferably wheelchair-bound)  
Oscar & Cora Sather Scholarship – Native American  
LeAnn C. Tolk Scholarship - first generation, financial hardship  
Martin Luther King Memorial Scholarship – minority student  
International Student Success Scholarship – international student  
Bush Memorial Scholarship – need-based, Yellow Medicine county  
Foundation Regional Leadership Scholarship – southwest Minnesota

A variety of other partnership efforts that influence diversity on campus abound. As mentioned above in Section 1C1, SMSU was fortunate to partner with the Ford Foundation in their Difficult Dialogues initiative for four years. Aramark, the campus meal/food vendor, has been and remains a partner with global education and diversity efforts. They are the primary employer of international students, have an active student advisory committee (which seeks out international and multicultural student members) as well as support international and cultural food festivals through the use of their facilities, staff, and expertise. Residential Life has had a commitment to diversity as evident through their house programming. In addition, Residence Life sponsors an Access, Opportunity and Success Living and Learning community (an entire house complex) focused on first generation students. The Women's Center continues to have a strong presence on campus after having been established once the Student Center was rebuilt after the fire (see Chapter 7: Changes Since the Last Review). Gender issues and women's advocacy speakers and events are sponsored by the Center. Finally, the Gold College engages our senior (although senior citizen status is not required for taking the courses) community of learners in structured courses in both fall and spring semester. Courses are taught by faculty, administrative faculty, and community members and are well received by participants from across the region.

#### *Opportunities with Diverse Student Organizations*

Southwest Minnesota State University also has active student groups whose emphasis and missions are to promote global awareness, multiculturalism and human diversity. These include:

- Black Student Union
- Club Latino
- GLBTA
- Hmong Student Org.
- International Student Org.
- Le Club Francais
- Model UN
- History Club
- Social Work Club
- Nepalese Student Assoc.

- Non-Traditional Student Org.
- Oyate Club
- African Student Organization
- Muslim Student Organization
- Spanish Club
- UGLYS (United Global Leaders Yearning for Success)

These organizations often work collaboratively in presenting major festivals, speakers, community services activities, cultural awareness and social events.

Overall, SMSU sponsors and advocates for diversity and is a hub of and for multiculturalism in the southwestern region of Minnesota. SMSU remains structurally positioned to provide and support diversity but has less than the optimal resources needed to fully fund academic, student support and admission-related services. The loss of the Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies professor and the decision not to rehire obviously falls into this category. The minor is still “on the books” but without faculty to teach, it is essentially dormant. Though our affirmative action plan is proactive, we continue to struggle with the recruiting and retaining faculty of color. Support for these efforts remain broad-based as evident from the above descriptions.

## CORE COMPONENTS 1D: THE INSTITUTION’S MISSION DEMONSTRATES COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC GOOD

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

SMSU demonstrates through its mission, programming and collaborative efforts that it is committed to the public good and committed to meeting the needs of its regional constituencies. As a public institution, SMSU does not generate revenue for investors; however, SMSU is acutely aware of its biography as an institution created to serve the 19 county area of southwest Minnesota. Indeed, this commitment is nested within SMSU’s mission, as it states that “Southwest Minnesota University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities.” Moreover, several of the guiding values relate directly to the imperative to connect learning with the community. Value 7 states, “[w]e believe in the integration of campus and community. We are committed to being responsive to the needs of southwestern Minnesota and recognize that partnerships with community entities provide us with valuable talents and expertise.” Value 13 emphasizes the deep learning that can occur outside of traditional classroom settings. Specifically it states “We believe that the southwestern Minnesota region provides rich opportunities for learning that go beyond the traditional classroom and lab setting to community-based learning

experiences. Therefore, we are committed to creating a variety of applied learning experiences that enhance students' practical problem-solving and strengthen their commitment to civic engagement." As an educational center of gravity for the region, SMSU seeks to channel its efforts with these values in mind.

Consequently, SMSU strives to merge campus and classroom learning with community involvement. The results of the survey conducted by the HLC Steering Committee indicate that the public strongly agree that SMSU's three largest contributions to the public good relate to educating students for the community and beyond to the global community. Through its efforts to make higher education accessible across the region and in its commitment to civic engagement in all of its forms, SMSU has developed or partnered with numerous organizations to enhance the social fabric of our communities and region.

SMSU's educational impact on the region is pronounced, and the institution itself through its programming and partnerships directly engages in activities that promote the public good. Examples of SMSU's continuing commitment to the communities it serves are described in the following section of this chapter. While this list is not all-inclusive, this section highlights the great efforts undertaken by SMSU to promote the public good.

---

### SMSU'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ACCESSIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the ways that SMSU demonstrates its commitment to the public good is through its distance-based academic programming. In providing access to higher education to the region and beyond, SMSU serves the needs of the public. The two primary means in which SMSU provides this access are through its distance learning opportunities and the College Now program.

#### *SMSU Distance Learning*

The Undergraduate Distance Learning Program, or 2+2 program, provides geographically place-bound students the opportunity to turn associate degrees into bachelor degrees. For the past 30 years, SMSU has used cutting edge technology of the times to deliver quality academic opportunities to students around the region and across the state.

Currently, the 2+2 program provides degree completion programs of distinction in Management and Early Childhood Education. Graduates of partnering community and technical colleges who have completed an A.A.S., A.S., or A.A. need only to apply for the corresponding bachelor degree in either Management or Early Childhood Education. SMSU is the only Early Childhood online option within the MnSCU system. The associate degree is transferred and the student embarks on an online degree program with a complement of online student services and amenities through the Office of Distance Learning and the pertinent academic department. The commitment to student service includes a dedication to academic advising and periodic on-site presence by faculty at distance site locations. Faculty teaching in the distance learning programs pursue ongoing professional development in online teaching. Student comments and testimonials have given evidence to the 2+2 programs' commitment to high quality student service and dedication to academic advising. (Please see 2+2 assessment data in e-resources for further detail.) By providing the opportunities of baccalaureate education to students at their home locations, SMSU is engaging students, providing access to quality academics and exemplifying its mission.

Graduate programs are also offered online. In 2011, SMSU successfully submitted a substantive change request to increase the percentage of distance programming. The change application included approval not only of the 2+2 online programs listed above but also for the Master of Science in Education, Management, Special Education, and Master of Business Administration. In 2008, SMSU adopted a simplified mission

statement: “Southwest Minnesota State University is a university of choice.” This statement reflects SMSU’s commitment to delivering degree programs to underserved populations in the region as well as to constituents in southwestern Minnesota. Employed, place-bound adults in rural Minnesota and adjacent areas continue to be underserved, and the degree programs included in the change request were designed specifically for them. Most students who enroll in these degree programs are located too far away from a four-year or graduate program to allow travel to a site. Most of the students are already employed and thus have time restrictions as well and need to enroll in programs that accommodate their work schedules.

### *College Now*

Although the College Now dual credit program is thoroughly described in several other areas of the self-study (see the Introduction and Chapter 3: Criterion 3), it deserves mention in this core component. College Now, through which SMSU offers college-level courses in high school settings with the high school teacher delivering the SMSU curriculum and being mentored by an SMSU faculty member, has provided access to higher education to thousands of students throughout the state (see Figure 1.9 College Now Enrollments by High School since 2004 in Section 1A2). Created to serve the state statute when the Minnesota Legislature created the Post Secondary Enrollment Options program, College Now (formerly called the Challenge Program when the University was last reviewed by HLC) has grown to satisfy the high demand from high schools and parents. SMSU’s College Now program was the first in many areas of the state; although now other universities and colleges are developing their own dual credit programs, College Now has a strong presence throughout the state. SMSU ensures that the College Now courses meet higher education standards, and the program is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP).

---

## AN EMPHASIS ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Since the last HLC review in 2004, much has changed regarding the integration of civic engagement throughout campus. Shortly before the 2004 visit, explicit civic engagement efforts were just beginning. In 2002, SMSU became a member of the Minnesota Campus Compact. In 2003, SMSU was a founding member campus of the American Democracy Project (ADP), sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACU). Involvement with ADP ran through 2009, during which time an active interdisciplinary group of faculty committed to thoughtful integration of civic engagement in course instruction. The partnership with MN Campus Compact, which also extended through 2009 and was renewed in 2013, has likewise had an extensive impact on the University, ranging from assistance with setting up infrastructure of support for civic and community engagement, to development of a broad conceptualization of civic engagement, to providing a structure for ongoing assessment of process and outcomes related to civic engagement programming in academic and student service spheres. SMSU has been a lead campus member in MN Campus Compact with respect to being awarded grant funding for two comprehensive campus-wide assessments of civic and community engagement programming, in 2004 and 2009. SMSU has also been a participating campus from 2007-2013 in the AACU – *Core Commitments: Education for Personal and Social Responsibility* initiative.

Civic and community engagement have risen to prominence through influential changes in the mission and values and the University’s response to national best practices, including several of the high impact practices described by the AAC&U. Specifically, the new mission and values statements approved in 2008 include explicit statements related to the promotion of civic engagement, with the mission invoking the University’s mandate to help students become “engaged citizens” and with references to civic and community engagement in guiding values 5 (“responsible citizens and good stewards”), 7 (“integration of campus and community”),



and 13 (“learning beyond the traditional classroom”). The LEP transformation further underscored the importance of civic engagement by including “practice of responsible citizenship in (their) local and global communities” as one of the ten LEP learning outcomes. And finally, the latest Strategic Plan includes an explicit focus on engagement in the “Community Partnership” Strategic Direction, Value 3: “Identify community-based projects and prioritize projects annually that can be completed in partnership between the identified community and SMSU through Service Learning or other campus based programs.”

All of these efforts are supported by the SMSU Center for Civic Engagement, which is co-coordinated by two faculty members. A small group of graduate and undergraduate students staff the Center on a day-to-day basis. All work at the Center is guided by an interdisciplinary Faculty Advisory Committee for Civic Engagement, and through regularly affiliating with Student Affairs staff and community partners in the development of programs and delivery of services. The Center for Civic Engagement is structurally accountable to the Provost and thus serves interests of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Full details about the Center for Civic Engagement can be found on the Center’s web site, which includes a link to a summary report of all civic engagement activities at the University since 2002.

The Center for Civic Engagement promotes a broad conceptualization of civic and community engagement, which is in sync with national trends. On the web site is a full list of examples from both academic and student affairs, which run the gamut from helping students be informed, such as the *NYTimes* Readership Program on campus, service projects through campus organizations, voting, and volunteering, to sustainability initiatives.

Civic and community engagement are at the heart of how SMSU demonstrates its commitment to public good. All of the examples that follow tie back to the themes of engagement found in the University mission and values, and exemplify how SMSU serves its region and constituents through myriad ways. Many are supported directly by the Center for Civic Engagement or indirectly through the groundwork that the Center has done.

---

## SERVICE-LEARNING THAT IMPACTS COMMUNITY LIFE

The Center for Student Engagement provides a service-learning packet for faculty and for students, along with a sample student contract form and student reflection instructions that faculty can use. Service-learning occurs across the disciplines in courses at SMSU. Several prime examples are described below.

### *Environmental Science: The Redwood River Mentoring and Monitoring Project*

The Redwood River Monitoring Project is an ongoing and unique collaboration between SMSU and local secondary schools that began fall 2004 with a grant that allowed SMSU to purchase equipment and water test kits. The goals of the project are to: (1) provide hands-on, field-based experiences for college students, as well as local 7th-12th graders; (2) demonstrate how cutting-edge technologies are an integral part of data collection and analysis in the natural sciences; (3) incorporate service-learning into the SMSU curriculum as an ongoing part of programs at SMSU; (4) instill a stewardship ethic in those participating in the project; and (5) contribute data to the World Water Monitoring Database and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

SMSU students take a 2-credit course (ENVS 115) in which they learn about water quality and how to analyze a variety of water quality parameters. SMSU students then travel to Marshall High School where they mentor three classes of high school Biology students. In turn, the high school students, upon mastery of the information, mentor three classes of 7th grade students (with guidance and oversight by the SMSU mentors). The following week all groups of students meet at the Redwood River to demonstrate what they have learned

as they collect data at three sites on the Redwood River. As of spring 2013, a total of 2313 students and 9 different teachers have been involved in the project since it started in 2004.

This project supports public education at the K-12 level by providing an alternative learning experience for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and high school students. SMSU students gain valuable mentoring experience, and the high school and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students learn the material well when involved in this project. Typically, students' average understanding increased in post-assessment tests compared to pre-assessment tests by 37-46% so that all students tested but one scored above 80% on the post-test evaluation. Individual students gain an understanding of local water resources and water related issues.

Another benefit of the project is that SMSU students become more invested in the local community. After working with this Redwood River project, several students have signed up for the Citizen's Stream-Monitoring Program (CSMP), a volunteer program through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The Value of instilling a stewardship ethic has been met when our students realize, and act on, the shared responsibility for protection of Minnesota waters. An additional benefit to the community is the development of a database of information on the local Redwood River, information that is shared with the state regulatory agencies and which can be used in management of state water resources. Data are available on the SMSU website for interested community members to access and the data are also entered into the World Water Monitoring Challenge website, an "international education and outreach program that builds public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world by engaging citizens to conduct basic monitoring of their local water bodies." Participation in the WWM site allows students to expand their discussion of water quality to include global water issues. Good water quality sustains ecological processes that support fish, vegetation, wetlands and birds. In addition, people depend on healthy water systems for irrigation, drinking, recreation and cultural and spiritual needs. The Redwood River Monitoring Project works to educate local citizens of all ages about the importance of water quality, to provide useful data for the management of water resources and to make a connection between SMSU students and the community. The Redwood River Mentoring and Monitoring Project is an example of SMSU operationalizing the public aspect of its mission, fostering the public good, and promoting a stewardship ethic that impacts the quality of life in southwestern Minnesota.

#### *Exercise Science: Schwan's Wellness Project*

The SMSU Wellness and Human Performance Center recently completed a pilot fitness program with The Schwan Food Company during the fall 2012 semester. The program matched Schwan employees with SMSU Exercise Science majors to achieve individual fitness goals. The purpose of the program was to help employees reach their individual wellness goals while giving SMSU Exercise Science students practical experience. This service-learning program provides students with an opportunity to put into practice some of what they have learned prior to entering into their internships. It is also an opportunity for The Schwan Food Company employees to improve their health as part of the company's health and wellness program.

The students met one-on-one with the employees at the start of the program to establish personal goals, which included increased flexibility, strength and endurance. After establishing formal goals and meeting with the employees during the week, post-testing was conducted. A student and an employee then evaluated the data to see what gains were made over the eight-week program. Most of the students participated in the program as part of their Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription class. The Schwan Food Company has had a highly active employee health and wellness program and saw the partnership with SMSU as a way to enhance current activities.

### *Service-Learning throughout the Curriculum*

In addition to examples described above, numerous faculty from a variety of disciplines regularly incorporate service into one or more of their courses. Following is a list of example service-learning projects recently taught:

*Accounting* – Students in an advanced accounting class are trained and supervised to provide Free Tax Assistance service as part of a United Way-sponsored tax clinic

*Psychology* – Students enrolled in Developmental Psychology may opt to volunteer at area sites for 20 hours as a means of adding depth to their understanding of developmental constructs, while addressing area needs. Students enrolled in General Psychology and Psychology Seminar may, for extra credit, become involved in 15-20 hours of Election 2012 processes (e.g., assisting with voter registration, canvassing, assisting with coordination of public forums for local candidates) as a means of gaining a better understanding of "efficacy/motivation for social change."

*Health and Wellness* (department title prior to the restructuring of academic unit) – Students helped organize and run the Mustang Rodeo Special Olympics events.

*Political Science* – Students assist with electoral processes during election years and conduct exit polling.

*Sociology*– Students enrolled in an online Social Problems course may opt to locate service opportunities in the Marshall area or broader SW Minnesota region as a means of increasing their understanding of factors that contribute to a variety of social problems covered in this course.

*Social Work* — Students assist with get out the vote efforts and homelessness awareness.

---

### ENRICHING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

SMSU provides for the public good through the many cultural enrichment opportunities it offers the region. In addition to the separate activities described below, each spring the departments collaborate to host a Fine Arts Celebration, which includes end-of-the-year productions but also involves additional readings and events to highlight the fine arts.

#### *SMSU Theater Program*

The SMSU Theatre Program provides a range of benefits to various community constituencies in Southwest Minnesota. First and foremost, the Theatre Program produces an annual season of three main stage productions and assists the Drama Club student organization with two student productions each year. There are six performances of each main stage production, and four of each Drama Club production, along with several performances by the Take 2 Improv Troupe, in conjunction with events like Homecoming and the Fine Arts Celebration. Community members also occasionally participate in SMSU Theatre productions as actors, directors, and musicians. All told, between 1,500 and 2,500 community members attend and are involved in these performances each year.

In addition to those who attend and participate in performances, the SMSU Theatre Program and Drama Club provide services and outreach to a number of other organizations including the following: area K-12 schools; various Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops; Wee Care Preschool; SMSU Child Care Center; nonprofit service and performing arts organizations, such as New Horizons Crisis Center, the Land Stewardship Project, MASC (Marshall Area Stage Company), Prairie Dance Alliance; and area churches. In an average school year, the

Theatre Program and Drama Club work with 10-20 such community partners, representing anywhere from 200 to 700 individuals, depending on the specific activities involved in the given year. The types of services provided to these groups include workshops on various areas of theatre; special school matinee performances of appropriate productions; behind-the-scenes tours of the Theatre facilities, master classes with guest artists that are open to the public; a rental/loan program for costumes, sets, props, and equipment; use of the Theatre facilities; and assistance with productions and special events, including directing, dialect coaching, and consultation on sets, costumes, makeup, props, etc. In a typical academic year, the Theatre Program offers services such as these 10-20 times, averaging one to two a month.

Through these community partnerships and activities, the SMSU Theatre Program contributes to the public good by enriching the cultural options in the region, building arts-related skills and knowledge among citizens, and providing support and resources for community members to undertake their own artistic expression.

### *Music*

The SMSU Music Program is committed to enhancing the musical opportunities of the students of SMSU as well as citizens of Southwest Minnesota and the tri-state region. The Music Program demonstrates this commitment in ways that allow these stakeholders to participate in music, enjoy performances, support music education, and learn more about music in their lives.

The SMSU Music Program provides opportunities for the SMSU Community and the Marshall area community to attend numerous concerts free of charge each year. These include no fewer than six choral concerts, four jazz ensemble performances, and three concert/symphonic band concerts each year. In addition, the ensembles at SMSU regularly perform outreach performances outside the Marshall area. Recent performances have been staged in Tracy, Montevideo, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, Litchfield, Pipestone, Wadena, Alexandria, and International Falls in Minnesota. Furthermore, concerts in Huron, Brookings, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota have also been performed.

The music program is committed to enhancing music education in the schools and communities in the region. The Southwest Minnesota Orchestra has presented children's concerts for elementary and middle school students around the region for the past four years. The band program has hosted numerous guest artists who, in addition to working with SMSU ensembles, have worked with band students around the area in clinics in Marshall, Pipestone, Montevideo, Redwood Falls, Granite Falls, and Litchfield. The music faculty regularly visit school music programs around the tri-state region and work with their musicians and directors to share rehearsal, practice, and teaching strategies while lending their objective opinions on areas in which they may continue to improve. For the past seven years, the music program has also hosted the Minnesota Area Conducting Workshop. This unique event is a three-day intensive workshop in conducting technique, peer evaluation, and discussion on topics relevant to music educators. The workshop is offered free of charge to any and all music educators including public and private school music teachers of all levels, community ensemble directors, church choir directors, etc. Over the past seven years, approximately 120 conductors and teachers have participated in these workshops.

The music faculty strongly believe that music making is a life-long pursuit. They encourage and model life-long music learning and participation by inviting community members to participate in ensembles at SMSU. By virtue of their rehearsing outside the traditional school day, the Southwest Minnesota Orchestra, the SMSU/Community Concert Band, and the Men's Glee Club have strong community participation.

The SMSU Music Program supports the mission of the university in reaching out to the community and continuing to seek ways in which music can enhance the lives of the citizens of Southwest Minnesota. The faculty see themselves not only as musicians and educators, but also as resources for the community, and they are always ready to make themselves available for the university's and the community's growth.

DRAFT

## *English*

The English Department sponsors a variety of programs that invite the public's participation. The largest of these is Marshall Festival, a three-to-five day celebration of writing that pulls in authors from around the state and country, with multiple readings and presentations going on each day and keynote readers in the evening. The Festival began in 1986 and takes place approximately every three to five years; the last Festivals took place in 2005 and 2010. Originally scheduled for 2014, the next Festival has been pushed back to October 2015, as it otherwise would have conflicted with the HLC site visit. (More information can be found at <https://www.smsu.edu/marshallfestival/index.html>.)

The English Department also hosts a series of Visiting Writers, who give public readings and meet with workshop classes. In 2013, the visiting authors also began giving readings at the Marshall-Lyon County Public Library over the noon hour, to involve community members who are unable to attend an evening event.

One of the projects taken on in collaboration with the SW/WC Service Cooperative is the annual Creative Writing Contest for students in grades 3-12 from their 18-county service region. Students submit creative work in three categories (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction). The first round of judging is completed by creative writing students from SMSU. They select the top tier of entries, and SMSU creative writing professors then judge those and select the top three places in each grade cluster. Students and their families are invited to a banquet hosted on the SMSU campus for the award-winners, and receive medals and gift certificates as prizes. The first place winners in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade division are also awarded \$2,000 scholarships to attend SMSU.

## *Astronomy*

SMSU has a long tradition of public outreach as well as service to our students through the use of a well-equipped planetarium facility. The planetarium was installed in 1974 and has been utilized well since then. The 60-seat facility underwent an extensive upgrade in 2009. The greatest numbers of visitors are K-12 students on field trips. Approximately 4,000 K-12 students visit each year. K-12 teachers seek to bring their students to the planetarium in an effort to supplement their science curriculum in a way that is not possible in a traditional classroom. Topics covered normally center around stars, planets, constellations, and night sky observing.

The planetarium also serves other groups as well. Throughout the year there is a series of public planetarium shows that attract people from all ages and draws people from 90 mile radius. Community groups also enjoy scheduling private visits to the planetarium. Of course, SMSU students are impacted by the facility as well. One of our LEP courses "Introductory Astronomy" is offered each year and shows itself to be a popular choice in the curriculum. Students learn aspects of the night sky such as seasons, celestial motion, constellations, celestial coordinate systems, stars, planets, galaxies, among other topics. The immersive nature of the planetarium lends itself well to this unique, high-impact learning environment. Approximately 1000 public visitors come to the planetarium each year.

---

## *CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: LEVERAGING ACADEMIC SUCCESS*

SMSU offers an array of co-curricular opportunities that support the public good while also enabling students to further enhance their skills and experiences. While other aspects of the co-curriculum are described in Chapter X Criterion 3, the focus in this section is on the contributions made to the campus and region. Much of the co-curricular experience is related to student clubs. Over 90 different clubs and activities are offered at SMSU. Each club, when filling out its annual renewal application and appeal for funding, must report on the

service activities they conducted the previous year. Club service can take on many forms, for example, hosting fundraisers for Relay for Life or collecting items for the local food shelf. In addition to student clubs, other student organizations and University entities promote the public good, not only through community service but through other forms of service they provide. Below are examples of these different types of organizations; these are but a few of the many ways in which the co-curricular programming contributes to the public good.

### *Enactus*

Enactus deserves particular mention in regard to the commitment to public good. Enactus, formally known as Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE), is one of the largest clubs on campus and the beneficiary of a one million dollar endowment from the Schwan Food Corporation. The mission of Enactus as stated on their website:

“A community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a better more sustainable world. Entrepreneurial—having the perspective to see an opportunity and the talent to create value from that opportunity; action—the willingness to do something and the commitment to see it through even when the outcome is not guaranteed; us—a group of people who see themselves connected in some important way; individuals that are part of a greater whole.”

Every year 30-50 students participate in a variety of local and international projects to gain hands-on experience and to create sustainable improvements in the welfare of others. Despite the focus on business, the club is quite diverse, providing excellent educational opportunities for graphic arts, sports management, education, theatre, and of course business majors with both local and international student participation. This richness of diversity contributes to the value of the club to the university. This past year, Enactus had several projects that took a substantial amount of time, money and energy to complete. As a result of their efforts, these students from SMSU placed among the top 8 clubs in the United States out of the 500+ clubs that participate in a national Enactus-sponsored competition.

Enactus has a local and global reach. For instance, in the Marshall, Minnesota, area the students set up a store for the alternative high school (MECLA) students. They tutored these students daily and assisted them in building up the business which included used books and a coffee shop. A dozen SMSU students were involved in the tutoring and marketing efforts. Enactus also cleans a 3 mile stretch of highway and about 20 students participate twice a year in this project. The club members also have an arrangement with the Hy-Vee Gas Station to pump up vehicle tires and to inform owners about proper inflation. Many members have volunteered at the local Food Shelf and in 2012 donated over 3,000 pounds of food.

For its global reach, the SMSU Enactus club has had many international projects over the years in countries that included Nepal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Nigeria, Germany and others. In the 2012-13 school year, 27 members of the club participated in at least one of the 3 trips to Jamaica. In Jamaica, the club helped restore a roadside rest stop which employs about 90 very poor people in the mountains. The club also worked with two orphanages, purchasing software and laptops to create computer labs with at least 10 computers in each location loaded with educational software. While in Jamaica, club members taught both workers and students how to use the educational software on the computers.

Enactus is a talented, student-led organization. Its commitment to channeling the skills of students to the welfare of others is inspiring. The service they provide supports SMSU's mission, and more importantly, the impact on the lives of others is enduring.

### *SMSU Veterans' Club*

The SMSU Veterans' Club helps make veterans' issues better known to the campus community and the community at large. The Veterans Club works to promote relationships with veterans in providing leadership, supporting diverse projects and fundraisers. The club has focused on supporting currently-deployed troops and older veterans in nursing home care.

The Veterans' Club works closely with the Veterans' Resource Center on campus, which provides information such as benefits for veterans and their families. The Resource Center offers a place for veterans, their family and friends to gather for camaraderie and friendship. However, the SMSU Veterans' Center is for anyone who supports or wishes to hang out with SMSU veterans.

### *Southwest Marketing Advisory Center (SMAC)*

The Southwest Marketing Advisory Center (SMAC) is not a student club but, according to its web site, is "a self-funded entity within the academic marketing program at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU). Its mission is to service the marketing and research needs of Southwest Minnesota, while giving 'real-world' experience to undergraduate and graduate-level student employees." Directed by an SMSU Marketing professor, SMAC employs students to conduct a variety of marketing research for businesses who hire them.

SMAC's mission statement complements the university's mission statement:

"The Southwest Marketing Advisory Center connects the demand for sound marketing strategies of America's rural heartland with the proven skills of our finest marketing majors."

SMAC engages students in their local and global communities by addressing projects both in the greater Marshall area and throughout southwest Minnesota and adjacent states. SMAC has successfully completed projects for organizations in Marshall, such as the Marshall High School, the Amateur Sports Complex, Marshall Community Transit, Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative, the Agricultural Research Utilization Institute, LifeWall Inc. and Papa Johns. On a broader scale, SMAC has worked on projects for the Agricultural Committee of the United States Senate, a pilot study for the Department Housing and Urban Development, the State of Minnesota on a competitive bid, TruMod based in South Dakota, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and the Mountain Lake School District in Mountain Lake, MN, to name a few of the 450 completed projects to date.

SMAC connects students with professional experiences on a daily basis; in doing so, SMAC also fills a need in the region for marketing research.

### *Athletics Commitment to Serving Region*

The SMSU Athletic Department and its associated teams recognize and prioritize their commitment to the public good. Several of the Athletic Department's goals directly address the importance of the community:

- Continue to provide successful programs presenting a positive image, while connecting with the local communities.
- Provide quality, championship-caliber athletic facilities for training and competition for the benefit and enjoyment of student-athletes, fans and regional communities.

The department accomplishes its goals not only by providing entertainment for fans and spectators but through the many service projects that the staff and athletes lead. The following are just some of the yearly civic engagement projects SMSU student-athletes are involved with:



- SMSU student-athletes correspond with more than 600 local elementary students as part of “Mustang Mail,” a pen-pal program
- Work-a-Thon -- Raking leaves for elderly individuals in the community
- Host the annual “Smokefest” -- Regional cooking competition
- Host the annual “AgBowl” -- Celebrating Minnesota agriculture
- Host the annual “Mustang Stampede” -- 5 & 10K walk/run
- Adopt-a-Highway program
- Teams read to elementary schools in Marshall and surrounding communities

The extent of SMSU Athletics’ efforts has not gone unnoticed. SMSU Athletics has been awarded the NCAA Division II Community Engagement Award of Excellence four of the past five years for the top civic engagement event of the year in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference.

In addition to the service work, Athletics also supports the region through its involvement with young athletes through numerous camps held at the college for kindergarten through twelfth grade students and through its partnerships with local schools and the Minnesota State High School League. SMSU lends its facilities to high school athletic events and is partnering with the local high school in the development of a track and field complex. The collaboration between SMSU Athletics with regional partners is a key element in the establishment of the Southwest Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission (<http://smascmarshall.com/main/>).

---

### *GOLD COLLEGE OF SMSU*

SMSU’s Gold College, formerly known as Senior College, reaches out to fill the intellectual, cultural and social needs of adults of all ages in Southwest Minnesota. Senior College provides lifelong learning opportunities to adults of all educational backgrounds.

Serving as an outreach program of the university, Gold College brings 300-350 adults of the region a series of classes, educational trips and social events that enrich their lives within the stimulating atmosphere of the SMSU campus. Participants attend from a 60 mile radius. Each Fall and Spring term, 12-14 courses are presented with a variety of topics in history, computer, music, science, literature, writing, art and various other topics. Gold College helps individuals to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing society by providing opportunities for students to improve their knowledge, and skills and by providing the intellectual stimulation necessary for good mental health. Adults and seniors benefit from these intellectual and cultural resources not often found in rural environments.

---

### *COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

SMSU continues to demonstrate its commitment to the region by providing space and services to external constituencies that work to meet the needs of region. In many cases the University has been innovative in organizing new groups to meet unmet needs in the community, or to enhance the well-being of the area population. Continued support is provided by the university as it serves as fiscal agent, provides human resources, technology services and supervisory services.

*Southwest Small Business Development Center*

The Southwest Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is a comprehensive small business assistance network serving the 18 county region of southwest Minnesota. The mission of the network is to assist new entrepreneurs as they realize their dream of business ownership, and to support existing businesses so they may remain competitive in the complex marketplace of an ever-changing economy. Hosted by Southwest Minnesota State University, the SBDC has assisted businesses in our region start, grow and prosper for more than thirty years. Housed on the SMSU campus, the SBDC works closely with the Marketing Department, specifically the Southwest Marketing Advisory Center (SMAC). SMSU marketing students are given the opportunity to obtain real world job experience working with the business clients of the SBDC. Small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs can contact the Southwest SBDC for face-to-face business consulting at no cost to the recipient.

The SBDC is one of nine regional Small Business Development Centers in Minnesota and is an accredited affiliate of the national network of Small Business Development Centers. More than two hundred and fifty businesses and potential businesses are assisted by the Southwest SBDC program on an annual basis. Over the past five years some of our accomplishments include training seminars (sponsored or co-sponsored) reaching over 1,455 participants; loan Packaging, with \$76.8 million in approved business loans; and a success rate of 83% of SBDC business client start-ups still in business after five years. The Southwest SBDC strives to reach the ethnic minority populations in the region. Clients that have benefited from their services include, but are not limited to Hispanic, Hmong, Native American and Somali business concerns. Given a special emphasis on veterans and the youth of the region, seminars specifically targeted at both groups were held in 2012. Scholarships for ten veterans were presented for the Profit Mastery in-depth training program. Additionally, the SBDC also presented credit/business classes to over sixty middle school students.

#### *Upward Bound*

Upward Bound, described earlier in Section 1C2 as an example of a partnership focused on diversity, is a federally-funded TRiO program funded through the U.S. Department of Education and hosted by SMSU. The program serves students whose parents have not received a four-year degree and students from a low-income background. Upward Bound's primary objective is postsecondary enrollment and degree completion. Program participants join Upward Bound during their early high school years and remain in the program until high school graduation. The program provides academic workshops, cultural activities, academic advising, personal support, tutoring, mentoring, college tours, and assistance with applying to college.

The 6-week summer residential program engages local high school Upward Bound participants in a college experience. The program provides rigorous curriculum to develop student academic skills along with recreational, social, and cultural activities. Students not only progress academically, but gain independent living skills and confidence to make the transition to college after high school graduation.

Upward Bound serves the communities of Marshall and Granite Falls. Across the nation, programs that meet objectives set by the U.S. Department of Education and write successful grant applications are rewarded by being re-funded for 5 years. Southwest Minnesota State University's Upward Bound Program was re-funded in June of 2012. So far, the Upward Bound program has had 45 graduates and 40 have gone on to post-secondary education.

#### *History Center*

The Southwest Minnesota Regional Research Center began in 1972 as a joint venture of the Minnesota Historical Society and members of the History Department of Southwest Minnesota State University. As an official public records repository established to serve the 19 counties of southwestern Minnesota, it is one of eight regional research centers in the state of Minnesota. The mission of the center is to preserve historical documents and encourage research and knowledge gathering on southwestern Minnesota. The Southwest History Center has reason to be proud of its activity level and involvement in outreach, publications, and research. The History Center is often referred to as a model organization and the coordinator is often asked to provide information and guidance to other archival and historical organizations.

Recognized as an official public records repository, one of the major responsibilities of the archives is to preserve various types of documents and manuscript collections. The types of documents housed in the History Center vary greatly, but the broad categories are as follows - Government Records (including state, county, town and township records), Legislative Records (collections from past legislators) Church Records, Business Records, Oral History Interviews, Newspapers, Photographs, Census Records, and Naturalization Records.

The Southwest Minnesota Regional Research Center provides many service-related outreach activities. The Center responds to over 500 reference requests each year. Tours are provided to various community organizations and elementary and junior high students. Researchers and scholars are welcome to conduct research on site. Various public officials receive guidance and assistance in the preservation of documents. The History Center also provides staff to conduct programs and provide speakers for various historical organizations. The Center has also sponsored several successful grant projects that have resulted in conferences and speakers series on the campus of Southwest Minnesota State University.

#### *Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership (MARL)*

The MARL Program is a public/private partnership. The program is a dynamic leadership development program for active and engaged adult agricultural and rural leaders in Minnesota. Organized within the Southwest Minnesota State University Foundation, the program has a board of directors. While it is privately funded, two public institutions in Minnesota are making a generous investment in the program. Southwest Minnesota State University administers the program, and the University of Minnesota Extension develops and coordinates the delivery of the curriculum.

Every two years, a class of approximately 30 participants is selected following an open application and interview process. Generally two-thirds of the participants are involved in production agriculture. The other one-third of the participants are business, civic, government, and organization leaders in agriculture and rural Minnesota. These leaders participate in a series of nine in-state seminars, a national study tour, and an international study tour. The in-state seminars are three days in length and are held in nine different locations across the state of Minnesota. The national study tour is up to a week long and is held in Washington, DC. The international study tour is up to two weeks long and is held in a different country or more than one country abroad.

The MARL experience is designed to deliver leadership development in context. It features personal skill-building and leadership study delivered in academic, business, and community settings. This approach allows the group the opportunity to apply the concepts they are receiving to the unique attributes, successes, challenges, and current issues of the region where sessions are held, as well as their own communities. The values are immediate applicability of seminar content in the leadership roles they already play and

preparation for future leadership roles. Many MARL graduates return to their communities and organizations to make a positive difference and to take on new leadership roles.

The MARL Program is privately funded. Participants pay a fee, which covers approximately one-third of the cost of operating the program. The other two-thirds are raised through generous investments from individuals, businesses, and foundations.

## CRITERION 1: STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Strengths*

- SMSU exhibits an exceptionally strong commitment to the public good.
- SMSU is a hub for regional activities and develops programs appropriate for its mission and service region.
- Departmental and unit missions are in alignment with the University mission.
- Strategic planning is well organized to operationalize the University mission.
- The design of the Liberal Education Program supports the mission.
- SMSU's dedication to enacting the mission creates numerous leadership and professional development opportunities for students and staff.
- The University mission has been maintained consistently through organizational and administrative changes.
- The University maintains a strong tradition of supporting students with disabilities.

### *Recommendations*

- Plan to mitigate possible effects of other institutions increasing their concurrent enrollment offerings.
- Renew awareness of and investment in strategic planning by broader university community.
- Continue to refine and enact diversity-related measures.