



Introduction

Purpose & Organization





NORTHEASTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

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Purpose & Organization

The purpose of this report is threefold: first, to establish that Northeastern State University meets and will continue to meet the Higher Learning Commission's requirements and criteria as an outstanding institution of higher education; second, to promote institutional self-improvement and provide an opportunity for public certification of institutional quality; and third, to examine and assess the university's accomplishments in achieving its mission and vision and implementing its values.

Purpose & Organization of the Report

This report provides evidence that NSU meets the criterion for accreditation as set forth by the Higher Learning Commission and promotes institutional self-improvement. The following goals were identified in the initial self-study plan:

- » Assure that the re-accreditation process is of long-term benefit to the university
- » Provide evidentiary support that the mission, vision, and core values permeate the activities of the institution
- » Demonstrate that Northeastern State University is academically strong and proactively anticipates challenges of the next decade and beyond
- » Ensure broad-based participation by representatives of all university units and stakeholders as the basis for a comprehensive evaluation

The report consists of an introduction, responses to criteria 1-5, a conclusion, and appendices. The introduction contains an institutional overview and provides a context within which to interpret the remainder of the report. The appendices contain evidence of federal compliance, a "Substantive Change Application Related to Distance Learning," and data deemed relevant for immediate reference by the review team.

Historical Background

Northeastern State University is located in a place like no other, where the Ozark Mountains, famous for their beauty, roll gently across the land, offering a panorama of natural scenery filled with pines, oaks, dog-

woods, and redbuds that blossom each spring. Nearby runs the Illinois River, cool and clear, feeding into Lake Tenkiller, a lake of deep crystal green with a shoreline of beautiful forest and spectacular rock bluffs. The countryside, river, and lake create an ideal area for a wide variety of outdoor activities including backpacking, camping, horseback riding, fishing, boating, scuba diving, and water skiing

The city of Tahlequah is located within this natural setting. The Cherokee Nation's headquarters is also located in Tahlequah, where the Trail of Tears ended in 1839. Having rebuilt their civilization after relocation, the Cherokees established a progressive system of tribal government and public education. The Cherokee Nation celebrates this unique history during the Cherokee National Holiday and at the Cherokee Heritage Center.

NSU resides in the midst of this city and surrounding countryside with its 200-acre campus of beautiful lawns and large shade trees. NSU, founded in 1909 on the grounds of the Cherokee National Female Seminary, is a university that not only offers students and townspeople a tradition of excellent teaching, but also offers Broadway productions, concerts, guest lecturers of international fame, serious drama, and fun-filled entertainment at the NSU Playhouse. NSU, Tahlequah, and the Tulsa metropolis just an hour away, offer a little bit of Eden west of the Mississippi.

The roots of NSU began in 1846 when the Cherokee National Council authorized establishment of a National Male Seminary and National Female Seminary to fulfill a stipulation in the Treaty of 1835 between the United States and the Cherokee Nation.



On March 6, 1909, the state legislature of Oklahoma passed an act providing for the creation and location of Northeastern State Normal School at Tahlequah.

*Administration Building, Northeastern State Normal School/Teachers College, Tahlequah, Oklahoma ca. 1909-1924
Photo courtesy of NSU Archives*

That treaty specified public and higher education should be provided for the Cherokees. Construction of the two seminaries began in 1847, and the Cherokee National Male Seminary opened on May 6, 1851. The Cherokee National Female Seminary opened the following day. With the exception of a period between the end of the fall semester 1856 and the beginning of the fall semester 1871, these institutions were in continuous operation until 1909.

On March 6, 1909, the state legislature of Oklahoma passed an act providing for the creation and location of the Northeastern State Normal School at Tahlequah and the purchase from the Cherokee Tribal Government of the building, land, and equipment of the Cherokee Female Seminary. The educational program of the normal school consisted of four years of high school and two years of college level study.

As previously authorized by an act of the legislature, the state board of education took action in 1919 to change the normal school to Northeastern State Teachers College, and provide a four-year curriculum leading to the bachelor's degree. In 1939, the Oklahoma legislature authorized the name of the institution be changed to Northeastern State College.

A constitutional amendment adopted in 1941 created the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, of which NSU and all other state-supported institutions of higher education are integral parts. The system is coordinated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education ([OSRHE](#)).

In the 1950s, NSU emerged as a comprehensive state college, broadening its curriculum at the baccalaureate level

to encompass liberal arts subjects and adding a fifth-year program designed to prepare master teachers for elementary and secondary schools. By the early 1970s, the functions of NSU had broadened to include degree options in the field of teacher education at both the baccalaureate and master degree levels, as well as new programs in liberal arts, business, and selected service areas. The approval of several new certificate and degree programs in non-teaching areas added a significant dimension to the role of NSU. In 1974, the Oklahoma legislature authorized that the name of the institution be changed to Northeastern Oklahoma State University. The Northeastern State University College of Optometry opened in 1979 and made history when its first doctoral graduates received their degrees in the spring of 1983. The official name of the university was changed by an act of the legislature in 1985 to Northeastern State University.

Overview of the University

Northeastern State University consists of a main campus located in Tahlequah, with branch campuses at Muskogee and Broken Arrow. The Muskogee campus opened in March 1993, and after a two-decade presence in the Tulsa metro area at the University Center at Tulsa, NSU opened the doors of the Broken Arrow campus in August 2001.

NSU is one of 25 institutions in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. OSRHE is the coordinating board for all state higher education institutions in Oklahoma and is sanctioned with legal authority through the Oklahoma Constitution, Article XIII-A, Section 1. The OSRHE is a constitutional board of nine members appointed by the governor and approved

NSU Administration

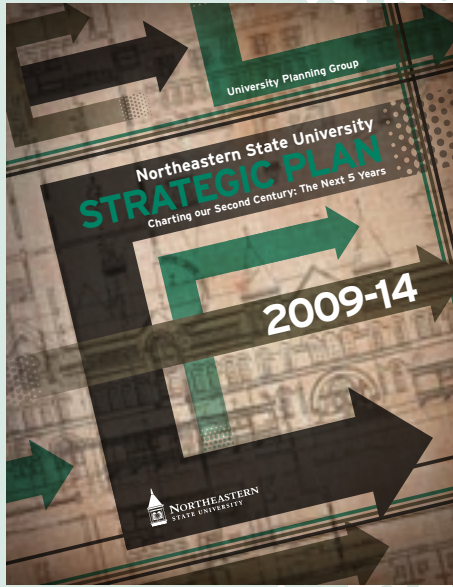
Table I.1

President Dr. Steve Turner (effective 1/1/2012)	Dean - Muskogee Campus Dr. Tim McElroy
Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Martin Tadlock	Interim Dean - College of Business & Technology Dr. Roger Collier
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Janet Bahr	Interim Dean - College of Education Dr. Debbie Landry
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research Dr. Thomas Jackson	Interim Dean - College of Liberal Arts Dr. Mike Chanslor
Interim Assistant Vice President for Teaching and Learning Dr. Pamela Fly	Dean - College of Optometry Dr. Doug Penisten
Interim Executive Director for University Relations Mr. Jerry Cook	Dean - College of Science & Health Professions Dr. Martin Venneman
Vice President for Business and Finance Mr. David Koehn	Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Laura Boren
Vice President for Operations Mr. Tim Foutch	Interim Executive Director of Enrollment Management Mr. Jerrett Phillips
Dean - Broken Arrow Campus and Dean of the College of Extended Learning Dr. Christee Jenlink	Interim Executive Director of Libraries Dr. Paula Settoon
	Executive Director of International Studies Dr. Richard Carhart

by the senate, with one member's term expiring each year. This board issues all degrees earned, determines the curricula and courses of study, prescribes academic standards, establishes student fees, and allocates funds to each institution for operation and maintenance from the legislative appropriations that are made to the board. In addition, NSU is one of six state-supported regional universities governed by the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). The Board of Regents for RUSO is a constitutional board of nine members, eight of whom are appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate. The ninth member is the superintendent of public instruction.

NSU abides by the policies of the RUSO Board of Regents, in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and to the extent required by these and other federal laws and regulations, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, political affiliation, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

The organizational framework for NSU consists of the president, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, vice president for Business and Finance, vice president for Operations, vice president for University Relations, and vice president for Student Affairs. These and other administrative officers are reflected in Table I.1.



NSU's strategic plan addresses the needs of the university's constituencies and reflects the dynamics of new and emerging technology, heightened mobility of today's students, and ever increasing economic competitiveness in a global society.

NSU is organized into five academic colleges, the College of Extended Learning, and the Graduate College. The university's academic organization includes the colleges of Business & Technology, Education, Liberal Arts, Optometry, Science & Health Professions, and the Graduate College. These colleges provide the support structure and degree programs necessary to accomplish the university's mission. A new College of Extended Learning was recently approved to support outreach efforts to adult learners and provide a cost recovery system for funding new and existing programs.

Evolution of the NSU Strategic Plan

Understandably, any strategic plan has to be dynamic and reflect changes in society, technology, and the student population. In 2009, a task force, representative of faculty and staff, worked to update the strategic plan developed in 2001, revised in 2004, and last updated in 2006. This comprehensive planning effort resulted in our current strategic plan, [Charting the Second Century: 2009-2014](#). Although this new plan crafted the university's current mission, focused mission, vision statement, and core values, it is a working document that is progressive and will assist NSU in a data-driven decision-making for the next three years.

This strategic plan addresses the needs of the university's constituencies and reflects the dynamics of new and emerging technology, heightened mobility of NSU's students, and ever increasing economic competitiveness in a global society. The updated [mission statement](#) further reflects this changing environment:

Founded on the rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation, the campuses of NSU provide our diverse communities a broad array of lifelong learning, undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs. Through quality teaching, research and scholarly activities, service to local and professional communities, and high expectations, our dedicated faculty and staff provide a friendly learning environment where students are prepared for success in a challenging global society.

NSU's commitment to lifelong learning is supplemented by the [focused mission statement](#): "We empower students to be socially responsible global citizens by creating and sustaining a culture of learning and discovery." The [vision statement](#) supplements that concept, stating "We will be the educational partner of choice in eastern Oklahoma, embracing the educational, cultural, and economic challenges and opportunities of our global society." The university's commitment to quality of education and a lifelong learning process is reflected in NSU's [values statements](#):

- » **Integrity** - We model ethical and intellectual development by advancing honesty, human dignity, and accountability.
- » **Collaboration** - We build partnerships to create learning opportunities and promote educational and economic success.
- » **Creativity** - We advance knowledge by exploring new possibilities through critical inquiry and intellectual freedom.
- » **Leadership** - We have a compelling commitment to serve, inspiring and preparing others to do the same.
- » **Excellence** - We pursue continuous improvement individually and as a community.

Degrees Granted by NSU

Table I.2

Bachelor of Arts
Bachelor of Arts in Education
Bachelor of Business
Bachelor of General Studies
Bachelor of Music Education
Bachelor of Science
Bachelor of Science in Education
Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Bachelor of Science in Science Education
Bachelor of Social Work
Bachelor of Technology
Master of Arts
Master of Business Administration
Master of Education
Master of Science
Doctor of Optometry

In total, NSU offers degree programs in 55 undergraduate and 23 graduate areas, due to specialty options, plus a professional Doctorate of Optometry.

Source: Undergraduate Catalog: Degree Conferred

Accreditation & Degrees Granted

The university first became affiliated with the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (formerly NCA and now HLC) in 1922 as a “teacher training institution” and continued for 12 years. In 1934, Northeastern State Teachers College resigned from the NCA teacher-training list when the list was discontinued by the NCA. College accreditation was granted in 1949. Since that time, the university has maintained accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools), with the last re-accreditation occurring in 2002.

In addition to regional accreditation, NSU has specialty professional accreditation in eight academic programs: business, dietetics, music, nursing, optometry, social work, speech-language pathology, and teacher education. These, as well as a complete listing of all accredited programs, are published in the [Undergraduate Catalog: Programs](#) and the [Graduate Catalog: Programs](#). In total, NSU offers degree programs in 55 undergraduate and 23 graduate areas, plus a professional Doctorate of Optometry (see Table I.2).

Overview of the Self-Study Process

NSU’s request for continued accreditation officially began in December 2008 when Vice President for Academic Affairs Dalton Bigbee, with approval of President Don Betz and the executive cabinet, appointed Dr. Joe Dillsaver, Dr. Janet Bahr, and Dr. Tom Jackson as tri-chairs of the self-study team. In January 2009, the Steering Committee was named, eight team chairs were

designated, and Dr Don. Betz delivered the charge on April 3, 2009. Early on, the tri-chairs established the focus for the re-accreditation effort by developing an organizational structure, a timeline, a self-study plan, and goals for using the self-study process to advance the institution and met with the Steering Committee to discuss implementation. Dr. Kathy Reese replaced Dr. Joe Dillsaver as the primary self-study coordinator in January 2010. In July 2011, Dr. Reese took another administrative position and was replaced by Dr. Mike Wilds. In July 2011, Dr. Janet Bahr was replaced as a tri-chair because she was promoted to interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. She was replaced as a tri-chair by Dr. Martin Venneman.

Each working HLC team consisted of a team captain and a broad cross-section of the campus, including faculty, staff, students, and in some instances, community representatives. These teams began their work during the spring 2009 semester. Each team addressed a specific criterion and accompanying components. Initial drafts were due from team leaders in December 2010. The tri-chairs, team captains, and various committee members provided feedback and located supporting evidence for the document. Overall, more than 400 faculty, staff, students, and community constituents combined efforts to create the self-study report. NSU published notice for third-party comment and placed the [electronic version of the self-study report](#) on the NSU HLC website with a dialog box for public feedback in December 2011. In addition, a list of the Steering Committee chairs and members of the eight HLC teams are posted on the [NSU HLC website](#).



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Summary of Responses to the Last HLC Visit

The following provides a brief response to the concerns and observations from the 2002 accreditation review. Additional information regarding these areas can be found throughout the narrative of this Self-Study Report under the appropriate criteria. The 2002 HLC Evaluation Team identified five areas of concern. Each appears below with a summary of the university's response and progress since that visit.

1. The level of fiscal support from the state of Oklahoma is inadequate for an institution of the size and complexity of Northeastern State University.

Like most other states and institutions of higher education, Oklahoma and NSU experienced difficult financial times due to the economy and funding cutbacks. Following the recession of recent years, fiscal support for no institution in Oklahoma, and few institutions across the United States, could be considered adequate.

The economic conditions gripping the nation and state continue to reshape the university's financial picture. State allocations comprise only 48 percent of the fiscal year 2011 budget as compared to 72 percent in fiscal year 2002. The reduction in state allocations caused NSU to look to other funding sources. Students have absorbed the brunt of these reductions, as the student share of support increased from 26 percent in fiscal year 2002 to 47 percent in fiscal year 2011. Additionally, NSU strategically developed collaborative opportunities allowing the university to expand educational services across much of northeastern Oklahoma.

There are two trends to note regarding increased student support of budgets: 1) A change in the way tuition and fee rates are established, and 2) An increase in enrollment. Understandably, the above concern was written 10 years ago, during a time when tuition rates were controlled by the Oklahoma Legislature.

Tuition & Fee Changes

Due to legislative control, tuition increase requests were frequently denied when considered. To avoid political fallout, requests were usually considered in non-election years. This changed with the passage of new statutory provisions by the 2003 legislature. Tuition increases and requested fees are now approved by OSRHE. Revised state statutes require that tuition and mandatory fees at public institutions in Oklahoma be compared to tuition at peer institutions in surrounding and other states. This peer-funding model is published annually by the state regents and authorizes each university to increase tuition within these limits. In fiscal year 2011, NSU's tuition rate was 82.4 percent of the peer group tuition amount used by the [OSRHE](#) for comparative tuition purposes.

Peer-funding can be compared with a variety of measures. The Budget Needs Peer Data reveal the percentage at which individual institutions are funded by state appropriations as compared to peer groups. In fiscal year 2011, Budget Needs Peer Data reflected in peer funding per student FTE of \$5,536 compared to NSU at \$5,180 per student FTE or 94 percent. This reflects that NSU's position has markedly improved over several years.

Enrollment Increases

The second trend is the increase in enrollment NSU experienced in recent years. These new students added



Private donors and tax payers in Broken Arrow and Tulsa provided the funds to create the NSU Broken Arrow Campus in 2003.

to NSU's revenue through payment of tuition and an increasing number of course-specific fees. The class schedule for fiscal year 2001 lists 18 specific fees compared to 66 listed in the fiscal year 2011 class schedule. However, enrollment growth also brings both new opportunities and challenges as already thin resources are strained to meet growing demand. It is now, more than ever, very important that the university be good stewards of the resources provided.

The years of low state appropriations and legislatively controlled tuition resulted in a lean institutional structure, reducing the overall impact of the recent recession. However, NSU implemented a number of cost-saving initiatives over recent years, further allowing the university to manage growing student enrollment with only student tuition dollars to offset reduced state appropriations.

NSU continues to refine the academic review process and examine operations in an effort to increase overall efficiencies. There were many program and process modifications directed toward reduction of expenses. One such example is pooling and marketing of employee benefits in order to reduce annual benefit cost expansion.

During the past 10 years, NSU was fortunate to receive significant capital funding from a variety of external sources. For example, the city of Broken Arrow approved a sales tax initiative that funded the construction of the first three buildings (Phase I) on the Broken Arrow campus. The city of Broken Arrow followed with a [donation of 199 acres](#) of land, thereby allowing ample opportunity for expansion of the campus. In September 2003, Tulsa County voters approved three sales tax propositions known collectively as

[Vision 2025](#) that provided \$26 million for three additional buildings on the Broken Arrow campus (Phase II).

Other facility improvements were made possible from the 2005 State Higher Education Capital Bond issue. This bond issue provided almost \$24 million, which:

- » Provided for much needed renovations to the existing Science building in Tahlequah
- » Allowed for renovations to create a “one-stop” site for enrollment and student support services
- » Allowed funds to facilitate completion of our Broken Arrow Phase I construction project

A private donor provided the funds to construct an athletic practice facility on the main campus, and a partnership with the city of Tahlequah provided \$2.1 million from a city sales tax for renovation and expansion of our football stadium. NSU's first-ever gift of \$1 million provided renovations and expansion of our reading clinics at Tahlequah and Broken Arrow. These external sources of financial support, coupled with strong extramural funding efforts, have further added to NSU's better-than-average financial condition during tough economic times.

In fact, these strong partnerships and greater control over tuition revenue allowed NSU's financial picture to strengthen. They also allowed NSU to take significant steps toward providing additional higher educational opportunities to a larger geographical area and a more diverse student body. This is evidenced by the physical locations of campuses in Tahlequah, Muskogee, and Broken Arrow. In particular, Tahlequah attracts traditional students seeking residence halls,



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athletics, and the campus environment, while Muskogee and Broken Arrow encourage the development of academic programs that focus on the differing needs of older, nontraditional students.

During these difficult economic times, NSU is developing a greater number of self-sufficient programs, implementing incentive-based budget models, and creating innovative class offerings. One such example is the [College of Extended Learning](#), a newly created program that allows the university to enhance and market class curricula to students who previously would not have considered taking college classes. Another example is NSU's investments in regional stewardship or [Making Place Matter](#) (see Core Component 1a). These and other such initiatives aim toward significantly improving the economic and overall well-being of the area served by the university.

As a result of the HLC visit in 2002, NSU was required to submit a progress report on financial conditions of the institution on February 12, 2007. This report was submitted on time with the following conclusions indicated in the staff analysis:

Northeastern State University continues to deal with some of the same issues as at the time of the comprehensive visit, i.e. lower-than-needed state appropriations and a fairly even record in grants and contracts. NSU has made progress, however, in the percentage of state appropriations as compared to its peers, in its development activities and programs and in its facility improvements.

HLC commended NSU for “an excellent report and data.” The university received notice on March 20, 2007 that the

commission had accepted the report on financial conditions of the institution and no further reports were required.

2. The condition of the physical plant on the Tahlequah campus negatively impacts the quality of the educational environment.

Preparations for addressing major facility needs began in the 2004 academic year. The university formulated a deferred maintenance plan and new construction schedule for academic, auxiliary service, and athletic buildings to strategically direct renovating and updating efforts. Beginning in 2005, NSU contracted with Semptra/Honeywell to implement a \$7.7 million energy management program. This energy management program included heating/cooling, plumbing, and lighting system upgrades for administrative, academic, and athletic facilities. Also, in 2005, the university began construction of a new \$10 million science lab facility, and a \$5.4 million renovation of the existing science classroom building.

In 2006, a Construction Management Consulting Agreement was established to address the deferred maintenance concerns of four high-need academic facilities. Business and Technology, Haskell Hall, Haskell Hall Annex, Bagley Hall (College of Education), and the Fine Arts and Fine Arts Annex each received major renovation work. This included roof replacement, exterior masonry repair, window-replacement, heating and cooling upgrades, flooring, and interior paint. The total cost of the renovation work for these facilities was \$11.5 million.

NSU dedicated \$4.7 million to renovation of an existing building to create the Center for Admission and Student



The 2010 NSSE, administered to 655 randomly selected NSU students, revealed that 93 percent of first-year students report a favorable image of this institution, and 89 percent of seniors would choose this school again if they could start their college career over.

Enrollment between 2007 and 2010. The university also invested \$2 million in renovation of the University Center Food Court, and \$3 million towards completion of various residence halls during this same time period.

The total capital investment for the facility renovations and new construction projects for this time period exceed \$40 million in cost. Each of these projects represents NSU's commitment to ensuring the educational environment has a positive impact on the total student learning experience.

3. General education and graduate program assessments lack consistency in assessment procedures and use inappropriate measures. In many cases, the assessment instruments used by departments do not adequately address or measure student learning outcomes.

Since 1988, assessment activities and discussions across the NSU campuses have focused on the four areas identified in the assessment plan presented to OSRHE. These areas are Entry Level, Mid-Level (General Education), Program Outcomes (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels), and Student Satisfaction (Institutional Effectiveness). A fifth area has been added to the Annual Student Assessment Report specifically addressing Graduate Student Assessment.

Following the previous comprehensive HLC visit, NSU hired a highly recommended assessment consultant to provide direction and focus to the assessment plan. Dr. Susan Hatfield spent two days on campus in spring 2004, meeting with various groups and individuals to assist in improving NSU's assessment activities. As Dr. Hatfield's report indicated, NSU wanted to take a "proactive"

approach to assessment of student learning. Dr. Hatfield's report emphasized the need to:

- » Have clearly stated student learning outcomes
- » Use a systematic approach to implementing assessment plans in programs involving addressing two or three outcomes each year
- » Use standardized exams as well as additional methods to assess general education
- » Assess graduate programs in the capstone experience
- » Transition from "assessment as exercise" to "assessment as opportunity" in getting faculty involved with how assessment can improve programs

The following occurred in relationship to general education and graduate assessment:

- » The forms for collecting program assessment data have been revised several times to emphasize student-learning outcomes.
- » In fall 2007, a [General Education Task Force](#) (GETF) was assembled by the vice president for Academic Affairs to evaluate and consider the purpose and requirements of the general education program at NSU. The general education requirements at NSU had not been formally reviewed in nearly 20 years.
- » The GETF assessed student, faculty, and alumni knowledge and opinions of general education in a survey conducted at the beginning of the spring 2008 semester. The [GETF report](#) offered a positive evaluation of the university's general education, with 64 percent of the 663 students surveyed giving the core curriculum a grade of "B" or better. The GETF reviewed the regents' requirements, looked at the requirements of other Oklahoma regional universities, and discussed the skills and/



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- or knowledge any student graduating from NSU should ideally possess. From these, the recommendations of the task force were generated with categories of knowledge identified. Faculty focus groups and open forums were conducted campus-wide for input on the task force recommendations. Comments and recommendations were solicited from both internal and external constituencies. In the end, the changes recommended were not dramatic; however, they provided increased flexibility for our students as well as more emphasis on global perspectives while still meeting the requirements of OSRHE.
- » The general education curriculum changes were approved by the NSU Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee in October 2009 and were approved by OSRHE in March 2010. The new general education curriculum went into effect for first-time entering freshmen students in fall 2010.
 - » A recommendation from the GETF was to change the assessment of general education outcomes from the College Base to MAPPS – now the Educational Testing Service – Proficiency Profile. In addition, a capstone component for general education is being developed to gauge competency in specific learning outcomes. Another recommendation of the GETF was for the task force to become a standing committee of the university. This began in fall 2010.
 - » A new director of general education capstone position was approved by the NSU administration, and that position is now filled. One focus for the General Education Committee in the future is to assist faculty in making the general education curriculum congruent, especially in the development of common learning outcomes across multiple sections of the same course.
 - » NSU was selected in 2010 to participate in the HLC Academy on Student Learning Outcomes. One focus of the four years in the academy is to strengthen general education assessments. NSU administered the ETS Proficiency Profile to students currently completing the old general education curriculum and will compare the results to students completing the new general education curriculum. In addition, NSU will administer the College Base to students completing the new general education curriculum and compare results to previous assessment.
 - » There was considerable emphasis on developing measurable “student learning outcomes” in all courses and programs. The Assessment Committee met with groups of faculty to discuss assessment and student learning outcomes. Student learning coordinators for each college were identified and put into place beginning with the fall 2010 semester. Their role is to assist colleagues in developing assessment measures utilizing student-learning outcomes. The name of the committee was changed to the Student Learning and Assessment Committee in 2010.
 - » NSU was involved at the state level attending assessment workshops, as part of the Council on Instruction Assessment Committee; and is reviewing current OSRHE policy.
- During the previous HLC comprehensive visit, the Graduate College had an interim director, with a permanent dean named in 2002. That person resigned in 2004, and a new graduate dean was hired after a national search. Following the employment of the new graduate dean in 2004, new processes and procedures were developed in which graduate level assessment is reported to the Graduate College. The dean, Dr. Tom Jackson, is now assistant vice president for Academic Affairs and dean of Graduate Studies and Research, and is currently team leader for the HLC Academy.

Graduate Programs Offered by NSU

Table I.3

<p>Tahlequah Campus</p> <p>M.A., Communication</p> <p>M.A., English</p> <p>M.B.A., Master of Business Administration</p> <p>M.Ed., Mathematics Education</p> <p>M.Ed., School Administration</p> <p>M.Ed., School Counseling</p> <p>M.Ed., Science Education</p> <p>M.Ed., Teaching</p> <p>M.S., Counseling Psychology</p> <p>M.S., Environmental, Health and Safety Management</p> <p>M.S., Health and Kinesiology</p> <p>M.S., Higher Education Leadership</p> <p>M.S., Library Media and Information Technology</p> <p>M.S., Natural Science</p> <p>M.S., Speech-Language Pathology</p> <p>M.S., Substance Abuse Counseling</p> <p><i>Graduate Certificate Programs - Tahlequah</i></p> <p>School Administrators Certificate</p> <p>School Counselor</p> <p>School Library Media Specialist</p> <p>Visually Impaired</p> <p>Writing Program Administration</p> <p>Broken Arrow Campus</p> <p>M.A., American Studies</p> <p>M.A., English</p> <p>M.B.A., Professional Master of Business Administration</p> <p>M.Ed., Early Childhood</p>	<p>Broken Arrow Campus (continued)</p> <p>M.Ed., Mathematics Education</p> <p>M.Ed., Reading</p> <p>M.S., Higher Education Leadership</p> <p>M.Ed., School Administration</p> <p>M.Ed., School Counseling</p> <p>M.Ed., Science Education</p> <p>M.Ed., Teaching</p> <p>M.S., Accounting and Financial Analysis</p> <p>M.S., Counseling Psychology</p> <p>M.S., Criminal Justice</p> <p>M.S., Environmental, Health and Safety Management</p> <p>M.S., Library Media and Information Technology</p> <p>M.S., Natural Science</p> <p>M.S., Substance Abuse Counseling</p> <p><i>Graduate Certificate Programs - Broken Arrow</i></p> <p>School Administrators Certificate</p> <p>School Counselor</p> <p>School Library Media Specialist</p> <p>Reading Specialist</p> <p>Muskogee Campus</p> <p>M.B.A., Master of Business Administration</p> <p>M.Ed., School Administration</p> <p>M.S., Library Media and Information Technology</p> <p>M.S., Occupational Therapy (fall 2013 implementation)</p> <p><i>Graduate Certificate Programs -Muskogee</i></p> <p>Visually Impaired</p>
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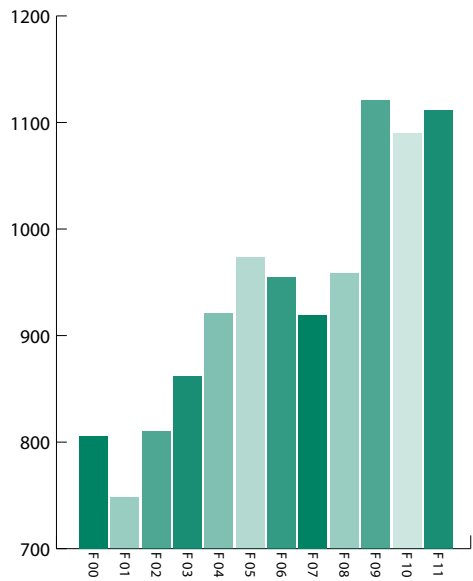
As such, many conversations and actions occurred regarding assessment of student outcomes.

Since 2004, graduate programs have stressed the importance of learning outcomes. Many programs attempted to implement departmental evaluation surveys and exit exams; however, departmental individuality and lack of uniformity prevented meaningful assessment. With the recent implementation of Sunguard Higher Education Banner software, NSU is now positioned to administer a more uniform graduate survey to replace ineffective, fractured surveys. With administration of Banner in the fall 2011 semester, NSU is able to more uniformly gauge the perceived student value and quality of graduate programs. Additionally, NSU continues to retain the five-year program reviews, Annual Assessments for the Regents, and individual program capstone classes, assessments, and portfolio requirements. This accomplishment is a benchmark NSU could not have achieved without implementation of the Banner system. Once implemented, the university will be able to accurately gauge quality and effectiveness in terms of achieving NSU's mission statement.

Through the graduate survey and the ongoing academic prioritization process, NSU is more accurately assessing the needs of all our constituencies. For example NSU is approved to offer a Master of Science in Natural Sciences in 2012 and a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy in 2013. Program offerings are stronger and graduate student enrollment is increasing. Some recently implemented programs destined to be growth stars include the Master of Science in Science Education and the Master of Arts in English. The university's current graduate offerings are displayed in Table I.3.

Graduate Enrollment Headcount

Chart I.1



Since 2002, graduate enrollment has steadily increased from a fall 2001 enrollment of 748 to a fall 2011 enrollment of 1,141 (i.e., an increase of 53 percent)

In terms of assessment, the university's next task is to track students post-graduation to assess employability, educational quality, value, and overall satisfaction with the graduate learning experience.

4. A demonstrated need exists for a centralized institutional research, planning, and analysis office, using a comprehensive, integrated database.

This need was known internally before the previous HLC visit and means to address it were being developed. In 2003-04, a faculty member from the mathematics department with a strong background in statistics was tapped to work one-fourth time (.25 FTE) as coordinator of institutional analysis. This was changed to a three-fourths (.75 FTE) time position the following year. In 2008-09, the position was changed to a permanent full-time position as coordinator of institutional research in the [Office of Assessment and Institutional Research](#). In addition, research staff include a data analyst and graduate assistant. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research provides assistance to faculty, staff, and administration for assessment and research activities related to assessment plans, assessment reports, survey designs, and data analysis and interpretation. Through the expertise of the coordinator of institutional analysis, extracting data from the university's legacy system has greatly improved through use of data tools such as DataNow, SPSS, Monarch, and others.

The [Office of Assessment and Institutional Research](#) maintains a centralized [repository](#) for research, planning,

and assessment. Surveys, analyses, and other reports are maintained on the NSU website for the entire community to view, thereby ensuring public transparency. In addition, the university implemented Sungard Higher Education Banner, an integrated system that enhances student, financial, and human resource reporting systems.

5. The decline in graduate enrollment warrants careful review.

At the time of the previous HLC visit, an apparent decrease in graduate student enrollment was raised as an issue in need of explanation. Since 2002, graduate enrollment has steadily increased from a fall 2001 enrollment of 748 to a fall 2011 enrollment of 1,141 (i.e., an increase of 53 percent) (See Chart I.1).

As new class offerings and programs are added or modified to reflect best practices and market responsiveness, the university believes that enrollment will continue to increase. A current capacity-based analysis of graduate program offerings directed NSU toward a handful of programs that can increase in capacity, as well as many programs that, given current infrastructure, are operating at capacity. The Master of Science in Science Education, Master of Science in Criminal Justice, and Master of Arts in English reflect potential for significant future growth. In addition, the university will offer a Master of Science in Natural Sciences and a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy in the next two years. These new class offerings and other such programs are calculated to increase enrollment at NSU for future years.



Seminary Halls clock-tower serves as an ever present reminder of NSU's culture and history inherited from the Cherokee Nation

Summary

NSU addressed the challenges raised during the 2002 HLC site visit, and converted many, if not all, into strengths. As evidenced in the introduction and the following criterion:

- » NSU is financially strong and maintains excellent academic standards despite a reduction in the level of state allocations. This is primarily due to increased extramural funding, passage of city and tax initiatives, private donations, increased foundation support, positive student growth, academic prioritization, and a refined student fee structure.
- » The condition of the Tahlequah Physical Plant and NSU building infrastructure radically improved due to additional planning, resulting in the infusion of \$40 million in the past eight years, a new city and state funded Broken Arrow campus, and recent construction efforts on the Muskogee campus.
- » NSU underwent an extensive academic prioritization process that more accurately identifies and aligns student needs, especially in terms of general education skills and knowledge, in preparation for a competitive global society.
- » NSU benefits from a centralized Office of Assessment and Institutional Research that provides assistance for assessment endeavors, collates data, and maintains a repository of assessment reports for future horizontal and vertical assessment analysis.
- » The NSU graduate program experienced a 52 percent increase in student headcount since 2002, and will continue to experience significant growth by aligning program and curricular offerings more closely with emerging needs of both internal and external constituencies.

Such positive growth often leads to promotion of qualified personnel. It also leads to pirating of personnel by other institutions. As a consequence, NSU has undergone significant leadership changes in the past 10 years. Even with these changes, NSU has remained vigilant in accomplishing the mission statement and accompanying goals. In fact, leadership changes led to a renewed examination of the mission statement, vision statement, and accompanying goals, thereby creating a stable, yet dynamic strategic plan that best fits the needs of NSU's constituencies.

This dynamic adjustment of the mission statement, vision statement, and accompanying goals permeates each college and academic unit. Through academic prioritization, colleges and academic units periodically refine individual mission statements and goals to align with the overall mission statement, vision statement, and accompanying goals of NSU. Consequently, these changes in leadership have led to significant enhancement of NSU's [mission statement](#). Due to this dynamic strategic plan, NSU is and always will be "the educational partner of choice in eastern Oklahoma, embracing the challenges and opportunities of an ever emerging global society."