

**ASSURANCE SECTION**

**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

Northeastern State University  
Tahlequah, OK

March 26 – 28, 2012

FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

**EVALUATION TEAM**

Dr. Linda L. M. Bennett, President, University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN 47712

Dr. Otto Chang, Dean of School of Business, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, IN 46805

Dr. Donald F. Larsson, Professor of English, Minnesota State University Mankato, Mankato, MN 56001

Dr. Sherilyn W. Poole, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Governors State University, University Park, IL 60484

Dr. Joseph Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities, Planning and Technology, Western Illinois University, Moline, IL 61455

Dr. Tom J. Seymour, Professor of Management Information Systems, Minot State University, Minot, ND 58707

Dr. Benjamin F. Young, Vice President for Student Affairs, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Indianapolis, IN 46208 (chairperson)

**Contents**

- I. Context and Nature of Visit .....3
- II. Commitment to Peer Review..... 10
- III. Compliance with Federal Requirements ..... 11
- IV. Fulfillment of the Criteria ..... 11
  - a. Criterion One ..... 11
  - b. Criterion Two ..... 14
  - c. Criterion Three ..... 17
  - d. Criterion Four ..... 19
  - e. Criterion Five ..... 22
- V. Statement of Affiliation Status ..... 24
- VI. Additional Comments and Explanations ..... 25
  - a. Team Review of University’s Distance Education..... 25
  - b. Change Request and Rationale..... 26
- VII. Appendices..... 28
  - a. Federal Compliance Requirements Worksheet..... 28
  - b. Embedded Change Review Template..... 31
  - c. Branch Campus Report-Muskogee..... 34
  - d. Branch Campus Report-Broken Arrow..... 39

## **I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT**

### **A. Purpose of Visit**

The team evaluated Northeastern State University for the purposes of continued accreditation, federal compliance requirements, and distance education as occasioned by an embedded change request in which the institution sought authorization to offer up to 100% of its degree programs via distance education modalities (HLC D.E. Level 3).

### **B. Institutional Context**

To understand and appreciate the university's culture, you have to note it was founded on the rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation. This rich heritage originated in 1846 with the establishment of a National Male Seminary and National Female Seminary to fulfill the stipulation in the Treaty of 1835 with the United States that public and higher education be provided for the Cherokees.

Over the years the institution grew from its original seminary status to its designation in 1909 as the Northeastern State Normal School at Tahlequah to a regional state university offering both the baccalaureate and master's levels, rebranded as Northeastern Oklahoma State University in 1974. The University added the College of Optometry in 1979; its first doctoral graduates received their degrees in 1983. Two years later the official name of the university was changed by an act of the state legislature to Northeastern State University.

It is significant to note that the university's 9,400-plus students, graduate and undergraduate, take courses at its main campus in Tahlequah and two branch campuses. The main campus provides a residential experience and houses the offices of the President and senior administrators. The Muskogee campus opened in 1993 and offers an array of health science related programs. The Broken Arrow campus, opened in 2001, provides a unique educational partnership with Tulsa Community College in which community college students can complete their bachelor's degree onsite without having to travel to Tahlequah. The team took note that some students championed the advantages of their particular campus mainly due to close proximity to their home residence or the offering of a particular academic program. The team heard repeated statements, from the Board of Regents to University students, that showed the University operates with one mission across its campuses and divisions and that the leadership is well organized and sensitive in providing resources where needed most.

### **C. Unique Aspects or Additions to the Visit**

Representatives from the team undertook site visits to the Muskogee and Broken Arrow campuses; additional information will be provided in Section D below. In addition, the team reviewed the University's request to offer programs via distance education at Level 3 where 100% of the academic programs can be offered by distance education modalities. It should also be noted that one member of the team encountered transportation difficulties on the Sunday, March 25, 2012 before the visit officially commenced on Monday, March 26, 2012. As a result, this team member was not onsite for the review and did not participate in any of the onsite activities. However, the team member reviewed the materials, contributed to team preparations before the visit took place, and offered feedback that was helpful in formulating evidentiary statements and the ultimate team recommendation. The team member is listed as a member on the team report with the institution's full knowledge and support.

### **D. Branch Campuses Visited**

The team assigned a team member to visit the Broken Arrow and Muskogee campuses. Both visits occurred on Monday, March 26, 2012, lasting just over four hours. The team member met with students, faculty, staff, local residents, and the administrative dean for the campus. Campus

evaluation forms are appended to the team report.

#### **E. Distance Delivery Reviewed**

At the Commission's direction, the University submitted an embedded change request for an "initiation review" of distance education and approval to offer all of its academic programs via distance education (Level 3). This request became necessary because the University has long offered courses and programs via distance education, but prior Commission review was never required under earlier Commission policies. Beginning in 2010 the Commission's policy for distance education changed and the institution was notified that an initiation review was necessary even though the University's programs were listed already in the Commission's inventory. The review was subsequently embedded into this comprehensive visit. In this section and elsewhere in this report, evidence of the University's effort to continue building a high quality and sustainable distance education initiative is provided.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) distributes information related to research, teaching, and any updates related to technological advances that affect student learning and instructional delivery. CTL also supports faculty by providing resources such as hardware, software, printed material, videos, instructional design consulting, and training for professional development.

The University also provides extensive instructional technology resources to support student learning in the classrooms, residence halls, computer labs, common areas, libraries, and via the Internet. It uses Blackboard Learn 9.1 as its online learning management system (LMS). All courses have a Blackboard course shell automatically created for students who enroll each semester. Professors use Blackboard in a wide variety of ways and to varying degrees to enhance student learning in face-to-face, blended and online courses. In 2010, the University implemented the full suite of Wimba collaboration tools to enhance Blackboard with web-conferencing, podcasting, and instant messaging. Blackboard has since acquired Wimba and transformed it into Blackboard Collaborate.

The University has systematically increased the number of multimedia classrooms as funding became available each year. Most classrooms are multimedia equipped (networked computer, projector, document camera, speakers, and many with DVD/VCR). The Tahlequah campus has 129 multimedia classrooms with 5462 seats; the Broken Arrow campus has 65 multimedia classrooms with seating for 2553; and the Muskogee campus has 15 multimedia classrooms with 652 seats.

Educational technology resources are widely available to students outside of classrooms and labs. The libraries on the Tahlequah, Broken Arrow, and Muskogee campuses respectively provide 61, 50, and five general-access, networked computers. The Webb Educational Technology Building provides 74 networked computers that are available 24/7. The campus continues to upgrade its WiFi (wireless) Internet connectivity to all campus areas. In addition, there are three computer labs available in the residence halls with a total of 15 computers. Instructional technology is being used not only to enhance student learning, but also to provide flexibility in students' schedules. The number of online and blended courses has risen steadily over the past 10 years. The online classes have increased from 23 class offerings in 2002 to 177 class offerings in 2012.

The team reviewed a number of classes located in the NSU Blackboard Learn 9.1 shell. These included the following: NURS 3003: Professional Nursing Role; SCI 5443: Trends/Issues in Science; ELED 4343: Social Studies for Elementary Grades; BIOL 5213: Investigative Biology; CRJ 4253: Juvenile Justice; COMM 1113: Fundamental of Communication; HCA 4952: Health Care Administration Seminar; IS 3063: Principles of Information Systems; and MGMT 4213: Business Policy. Later in this report the patterns of evidence found in the above review are discussed.

Although the CTL team of experts is available by telephone and in-person training, a help desk is staffed 24 hours a day to assist students who have access issues. The only gap in online help desk coverage is from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. In addition, CTL provides access to computer labs in all campus locations. Most computer labs have Dreamweaver Web design software, Fireworks graphic software, and Microsoft Office Suite. CTL provides regular workshops to provide support for faculty related to teaching. In addition to in-person sessions, CTL also offers webinars that allow more flexible scheduling for training. Faculty can view upcoming CTL workshop opportunities listed on the CTL website. The following is a list of training topics: NBC Learn Webinar, Respondus, Checkbox, Creating Podcasts, Smartboards, Copyright in the Classroom, Word, Excel, Photoshop, Skype, Blackboard 9.1, Camtasia, ITV Training, PowerPoint, Faculty Learning Communities, Designing Online Classes, and SPSS.

Quality Matters is the University's chosen program for evaluating the effectiveness of instruction delivered online. The CLT administers the program that offers a structured evaluation format for all online and blended classes using Blackboard. Related to issues of program quality and student learning, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education have developed a comprehensive approval process for all new programs to be delivered electronically. The University is in frequent contact with the Regents' designated contact for online delivery.

To keep students and faculty abreast of state-of-the-art technological innovations, the CTL publishes periodic updates related to changing technology. In addition, the University publishes other technologically related materials, such as information related to MERLOT and TALON. MERLOT is a multimedia educational resource for learning and online teaching, and TALON relates to online access to charge account information. CTL maintains a useful webpage with links to many relevant teaching resources. The page allows for an online 'checkout' of support materials such as books, how to videos, CDs, product manuals, Quick Start guides, and software. In addition, the website hosts an online survey system for NSU faculty. CTL also teaches faculty about various online tools that enhance security and ensure student identity in each class.

As previously discussed, the Center of Teaching and Learning has been the administrative unit for distance delivery programs. However, three new degree completion programs (Criminal Justice, Health Care Administration, and Human and Family Sciences) developed under the College of Extended Learning, have individual recruiter positions. Courses in these programs are delivered entirely in online or blended/hybrid format. In addition, a new position in the College of Extended Learning was approved for marketing in the Tulsa/Broken Arrow area.

## **F. Interactions with Constituencies**

### Executive Administration

Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board of Regents-4

Executive Director, RUSO

President

Assistant to President/Faculty

Higher Learning Commission Tri-Chairs

Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Assistant Vice President & Dean of Graduate Studies & Research

Vice President for Business and Finance

Vice President for Student Affairs

Vice President for Operations

General Counsel

Director for Development & Executive Director of the Foundation

Athletic Director for Intercollegiate Athletics

Dean, Muskogee Campus

Dean, Broken Arrow Campus

Dean, College of Liberal Arts  
 Dean, College of Science & Health Professions  
 Dean, College of Optometry  
 Interim Dean, College of Education  
 Interim Dean, College of Business & Technology  
 Interim Dean, College of Extended Learning  
 Interim Executive Director for University Relations/Director of Community & Governmental Relations

#### Management and Staff

Director of Assessment and Institutional Research  
 Director, Center for Teaching and Learning  
 Coordinator of Health Care Administration and Business Administration  
 Director of Human Resources

Registrar

Associate Dean, Broken Arrow Campus

Financial Services & Business Affairs Personnel:

- Assistant Director, Student Financial Services
- Accounts Receivable & Collection Manager
- Associate Vice President
- Director of Business Affairs

Open Meeting of Technical/Support Staff (28)

Open Meeting with Professional Staff (30)

Computer Lab & Information Technology Personnel:

- Interim Director of Information Technology
- ITS Director
- ITS Director of Client Services
- Network Manager
- Computing & Telecommunications Director

Assistant to the Dean of Extended Learning

Alumni Director

Associate Dean, College of Business & Technology

Executive Director of International Studies

Director of Global Studies

Interim Executive Director University Libraries

Center for Teaching and Learning Staff

Coordinator, Center for Regional & International Partnerships

Director, Center for Tribal Studies

Director, Office of Budget and Planning

Director of Grants and Contracts

Grounds & Facilities Director

Capital Projects & Planning Director

Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Interim Executive Director for Enrollment Management

Interim Assistant Director for Enrollment Management

Assistant Director, First-Year Experience

High School Recruiters (5)

#### Faculty and Faculty Committees

Open Meeting Faculty at Tahlequah (35)

General Education Committee (14)

Academic Affairs Council (14)

Online Learning Committee

Online Development Group (9)

Meeting Online Instructors (6)

HLC Assessment Academy Team (5)  
 College of Extended Learning Staff  
 Faculty & Chairs Council Leadership

Administrative Committees

President's Cabinet (10)  
 Staff Council Leadership (5)  
 University Planning Council  
 Center for Teaching and Learning Staff  
 Diversity Task Force  
 HLC Assessment Academy Team  
 Staff Council Leadership Team

Students

Open meeting at Tahlequah (150)  
 Open meeting at Muskogee (3)  
 Open Meeting at Broken Arrow (50)  
 Northeastern State University Student Government Association (6)

Others

Community & Business Leaders (32)

Broken Arrow Site Visit:

- Provost/CEO Tulsa Community College
- President, Broken Arrow Board of Education
- AVB Bank Officials: Chair of Board & President/CEO
- Owner, Arrow Insurance Group
- Vice President, First National Bank
- Faculty (48)
- Students (50)

Muskogee Site Visit:

- President, Connors State College
- Community Leaders (10)
- Students (3)
- Faculty (6)
- Staff (7)

**G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed**

- Website: [www.nsu.edu](http://www.nsu.edu)
- Campus Intranet: Go NSU
- University's Electronic Submission of HLC Materials:
  - Self-Study Report, Appendices A & B, and January 2012 Federal Compliance Worksheet with Applicable Credit Hour Policies
  - Faculty and Staff Handbooks, Student handbook, University Catalogs(Undergraduate & Graduate), and Financial Statements
  - Substantive Change Request for Distance Learning
- Report of Visit to Northeastern State University, February 11-13, 2002
- NSU Enrollment Report Fall 2011
- "Gather Here, Go Far"—Enrollment Management Strategic Plan 2011-2014
- Faculty Council Meeting Minutes: February 4, 2005 and February 3, 2012
- NSU Fun Facts. HLC Electronic Resource Room
- Voluntary System of Accountability/College Portrait link for NSU
- Annual Report of 2008-2009 Student Assessment Activity. Narrative Questions

- Noel Levitz. "Develop a Data-Driven Enrollment Program to Increase Enrollment through Improved Recruitment and Retention Initiatives." December 21, 2009
- NSU Fact Book. 2010 – 2011
- NSU Budgets 2008-2012
- Student Compliant Forms—3 Campuses
- Annual Regents' Assessment Reports 2003-2011
- Strategic Plan. Current. HLC Electronic Resource Room link
- Strategic Plan, 2006. HLC Electronic Resource Room link
- Strategic Plan, 2002. HLC Electronic Resource Room link
- NSU Financial Statement. June 30, 2011
- HLC Assessment Academy Document. March 2012. HLC Electronic Resource Room link
- Assessment Plan. 2003-2004
- NSSE 2009 & 2010 Survey Results
- Academic Prioritization Report. July 22, 2009
- Affirmative Action Plan and Expansion of Diversity in Recruitment. January 2012
- Common Data Set 2010-2011. Julie Sawyer, Coordinator of Institutional Research. HLC Electronic Resource Room
- Diversity Task Force link in HLC Electronic Resource Room
- University Planning Council link in HLC Electronic Resource Room
- Oklahoma Demographic Trends by Deidre D. Myers. Policy, Research, and Economic Analysis. Oklahoma Department of Commerce
- Shared Governance link in HLC Electronic Resource Room
- Teachers for Certification in Cherokee Education link in HLC Electronic Resource Room. October 8, 2010
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education – "Academic Program Review" Requirements
- NSU Academic Prioritization Process – UPG – July 22, 2009
- Minutes of Faculty Council Meetings (April 13, 2007; October 7, 2011; November 4, 2011; December 2, 2011)
- Faculty Handbook – Appendix C1 – Professional Portfolio Tenure and Promotion Review
- Degree of Excellence Alignment with NSU Mission and Values, Drafted February 2, 2012
- NSU Strategic Plan 2009-2014
- Center for Teaching & Learning – Distance Learning Policies
- Annual Report of 2009-10 Student Assessment Activity
- General Education Task Force – 2007-08 Task Force Report
- General Education FAQs
- University Planning Council – Action Projects – 2011-2012; October 18, 2011, Summary Notes
- Student Organizations list
- Third Party Comment Request (Sent to Media)
- NSU's HLC Academy on Student Learning Outcomes (PowerPoint Presentation)
- NSU Strategic Planning Survey Results
- Summary of Collegiate Enrollment by Classification Fall Semester 2011
- Degrees of Excellence Alignment NSU Mission, Values – NSU Degree Outcomes matrix
- General Education Comparison – Before Fall 2010 and Fall 2010 and After New General Education Requirements

- Course Description – University Studies 2091: General Education Capstone
- Guidelines for General Education Course Syllabi and Student Learning Outcomes
- University Studies 2091 Syllabus – Spring 2012
- Red Balloon Project--Baccalaureate Degree Outcomes, November 2, 2011
- General Education Capstone Course Grading Rubric
- Northeastern State University/Tulsa Community College Articulation Agreement Inventory
- Outline for Pilot Program – TCC/NSU Concurrent Enrollment Nursing Program
- Fall 2011 Class Schedule – Tulsa Community College classes offered at NSU Broken Arrow
- The Northeastern Student Newspaper, March 13, 2012
- Results of email survey to current College of Extended Learning students – February 2012
- Syllabus for University Studies 2091: General Education Capstone
- Syllabus for HED1113B Personal Health/Technology Enhanced
- Red Balloon Project Baccalaureate Degree Outcomes, November 2, 2011
- Guidelines for General Education Course Syllabi and Student Learning Outcomes
- Comparison of Old and New General Education Curriculum
- Driven to Finish My Degree: Reach Higher
- Email Survey Results from Feb 2012 to Current CEL Students
- Employees, Students, Alumni, Donors, and Relevant Communities, 2006-2007
- NSU International Student Enrollment, Spring 2012
- NSU Quick Facts
- Visa Interview Handbook
- CIBT Education Group, Inc.: Corporate Profile
- Pre-departure Handbook, NSU Office of International Programs
- International Faculty Development Fellowship Program
- King George International College brochure
- Online Course Fee Schedules
- Academic Prioritization Retreat Minutes
- Annual Assessment Reports
- Bachelor of Science Online Degree Program Brochure
- Center for Leadership and Community Engagement
- College of Business and Technology Academic Prioritization
- College of Education Academic Prioritization
- Common Data Set 2010-2011
- Course Design for General Education Capstone Degrees of Excellence Alignment
- February 2012 Email Survey to Current College of Extended Learning Students
- General Education Task Force Minutes
- Graduate Catalog Guidelines for General Education Course Syllabi and Student Learning Outcomes
- Human Resources Website: Making Places Matter
- Master of Science in Nursing Education Online Degree Program Brochure
- Mathematics Clinic
- Muskogee Eastern Region Health Care Coalition Summary
- My Math Lab Noel Levitz Report
- Northeastern State University Template for General Education Classes
- NSU Facilities Management Project Update for the week of November 14, 2011
- NSU Fact Books 2009-2010, 2010-2010
- Oklahoma Research Day Document
- Oklahoma Small Business Development Center Opening Enrollment Report Fall 2011
- Organizational Chart-Muskogee Campus
- Performance Appraisal Form Prioritization List

- PVQ Assessment Determination
- PVQ Matrix Reach Higher Brochure
- Baccalaureate Degree Outcomes
- Smart Choice Partnerships
- Committees Lists: 2011-2012
  - Admission Appeals
  - Affirmative Action
  - American Democracy Project
  - American Indian Heritage
  - Athletics
  - Black Heritage
  - Budget Oversight
  - Sustainability
  - Campus Parking
  - Center for Teaching & Learning Advisory
  - Civic Engagement
  - Commencement
  - Council for Student Improvement
  - Curriculum & Educational Policies
  - Faculty Development
  - Faculty Research
  - Financial Aid
  - General Education
  - Honors Advisory
  - Honors Awards
  - Institutional Animal Care & Use
  - Institutional Review Board
  - Jones-Merson Tract
  - Library
  - Miss Northeastern
  - Publications Board
  - Student Conduct Appeal
  - Student Learning & Assessment
  - Student Success/Enrollment Management Team
  - University Administrative Policies
  - University Bio-Hazards & Lab Safety
  - University Planning Group

## II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

### A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The University had a firm grasp of the Commission's self-study process and devoted ample time for preparations and study before undertaking its work, which started in December 2008. The institution opted to have the process led by tri-chairs who developed a well-reasoned organizational plan for the self-study. Over 400 faculty, staff, and students participated in the process.

### B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The self-study report presents an honest, candid, and accurate picture of the University at this stage of its history. The report was widely shared throughout the University community. The team found considerable evidence that what was presented in the self-study was factual and, again, presented an accurate picture of the University's adherence to its mission, its willingness to closely examine all of its processes and procedures for improvement, and its commitment to

develop and deliver quality educational programs and services for its students and local communities.

**C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges**

The team considers the response of the University to previously identified challenges to be adequate. However, the institution will need to assure that these areas continue to receive ongoing attention as part of the University's overall planning processes. In particular, the institution should continue to find ways to assure that the growth of reliance on student tuition and fees does not become such an undue burden on potential students that it will impede the sustainability of the University and its programs.

**D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment**

Requirements were fulfilled.

**III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student compliant information. The Federal Compliance Worksheet is appended to the team report.

**IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA**

**CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY.** The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

- The University's 2002 Strategic Plan was reexamined through an institution-wide planning process that began in 2006 and resulted, in 2008, in a revised Mission Statement, Focused Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Values Statement. The Focused Mission Statement—"We empower individuals to become socially responsible global citizens by creating and sustaining a culture of learning and discovery"—is concise and well-articulated, with particular emphasis on student learning and discovery.
- Institutional documents and meetings with students, faculty, staff, and community members confirmed the fact that the mission statement is widely known and understood by the University's constituents. Board members and local business leaders offered testimony that it is the mission that drives operations, not individual or personal agendas.
- University documents and meetings with constituent groups confirm that the University's Vision Statement—"We will be the educational partner of choice in eastern Oklahoma, embracing the challenges and opportunities of a global society"—helps to focus the institution's identity as a regional provider of higher education. Several students provided oral statements detailing specific activities undertaken by the University to link them with local employers that extended offers of employment.
- The University is committed to provide "diverse communities a broad array of lifelong learning." It derives this dedication to diversity, in part, from its strong Cherokee heritage.

More than 28 percent of the students are American Indian. This percentage distinguishes Northeastern State University with the highest per capita percent of American Indians of any four-year public educational institution in the United States. This dedication to diversity also includes local, state, national, and international cultures. For example, the University is enriched by a large number of international students, and supports a solid study abroad program. In addition, Hispanic and African-American ratios are in line with demographic breakdowns for northeastern Oklahoma.

- Shared governance at NSU is delegated to the Faculty (Association) Council, the Staff Council, and the Student Government Association. The Staff Council was formed in the fall of 2010 to provide staff members input into University governance. Several other groups also contribute to and support University governance including the University Assembly, Academic Council, Chairs Council, Deans Council, Graduate Council, Teacher Education Council, University Planning Group and other standing committees. To help clarify the roles and purposes of the various groups, the Faculty Council developed a document which focuses on the University's shared governance responsibilities. The document is under review by the President.
- The University Values Statement describes components to demonstrate attention to integrity: "honesty, human dignity, and accountability." Members of the University community are expected to demonstrate these attributes in their behaviors and in their activities. Framed posters are hung in campus buildings which list the University's Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Values to keep these in front of the members of the University community as a reminder of the University's expectations.
- The minutes of meetings of the Faculty Council, Staff Council, and NSU Student Association and other standing committees are disseminated to the campus community through emails and posting on the University website. The University's online newsletter and the student newspaper will also publish highlights of the groups' activities.
- University policies, procedures, and processes that guide University activities are printed in the Faculty, Student, and Employment Handbooks. These include grievance policies, sexual harassment policy, academic dishonesty policy, and appeals processes. The copyright policy is posted on the Library and the Center for Teaching and Learning websites.
- The Institutional Research Board (IRB) ensures that research activities are conducted according to ethical standards. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs is the University's designated research integrity officer and also oversees the University Animal Research Committee. The University Animal Welfare Committee is charged with ensuring the ethical use of animals in research activities. The process for applying for IRB approval is stated in the Faculty Handbook.
- Members of the University community are encouraged to use the program Ethics Point to report incidents or activities that are illegal or unethical or may violate an established policy. The RUSO Board of Regents selected this program for use by members of all the state universities as a confidential way to identify incidents of fraud, abuse, or other inappropriate behaviors.
- The University has promoted inclusion, equity, and multiculturalism through the establishment of various committees. The University President has pledged to establish a new position of a Diversity Coordinator who will more formally oversee University-wide diversity endeavors and provide guidance to the Diversity Task Force.

- The University has touched many aspects of social, economic, health, educational, and cultural well-being of its constituents in Oklahoma and for future generations through initiatives such as Making Place Matter, annual Regional Economic Summit, and American Indian School of Health Professions (AISHP).
- Updating of the *Strategic Plan* in academic year 2009-2010 by the University Planning Group and approved by the President's Cabinet, completing the first review of general education in over 20 years, engaging in the academic prioritization process, and using eight committees involving approximately 500 members of the campus and external communities all demonstrate how the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students understand and support Northeastern State University's mission.
- The December 2010 Academic Prioritization Retreat identifying programs to grow, sustain or revise; achieving/maintaining nine discipline-based accreditation; \$40 million in construction activity to enhance learning environments (with additional \$40 million in planned activities about to begin); increased use of decentralized budget-planning processes; and focused enrollment growth in targeted academic programs and campuses all support the mission of the University.
- The University's constituencies interviewed (students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members in open sessions and individual and group settings) all articulate the mission and the distinct populations of students served on the three campuses of NSU in a consistent manner. In addition to student, faculty, and staff engagement in institutional and accreditation planning, integrated marketing and branding on the Web and social media helped promote awareness of the mission and values of the institution. Giving students coins that have the seal on one-side and the values of the University on the other is a second example. These coins are part of new student orientation and used for admission during selected university events. Prior to commencement these coins also are given to a faculty or staff member who made significant contributions to the student's success.
- Documentation explaining the role of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and discussions with individual Regents confirm an appropriate governing relationship between state-level offices and the University, allowing the institution to operate with sufficient autonomy within the larger state higher education structure. Although he has been in office for only a few months, staff, faculty, student and community member constituent groups demonstrate strong support for the University President.
- The team found evidence of the Administration's commitment to working with faculty, staff, and student groups in a shared governance model. Of note was the realization that curricular and program level decisions begin with faculty members and are processed through the University Curriculum Committee. The University Planning Council and other governance procedures receive guidance from the Academic Council, Chairs' Council, Deans' Council, Faculty Council, and Staff Council. Faculty, staff and students are accorded the opportunity to participate in the University's budget planning and development processes through the Budget Oversight Council. Overall, the principles of shared governance are in place and respected at NSU.
- The University inaugurated a graduate-level Leadership Development Certificate Program for its faculty and staff members. The program was expressly designed to expose targeted future leaders to emerging issues in the areas of University Relations, Finance & Operations, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs. For the past two years, eight to ten faculty or staff members have applied for admission to this professional development experience; they receive time off in order to participate. Participants voiced

their approval for the concept and offered testimonials attesting to its importance to preparing the next group of potential University leaders.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need institutional attention**

- Parts of the University website are difficult to navigate. Entering keywords and search terms into the browser search engine results in lists of items which are in no logical order (i.e., by meeting date). Additionally, the team believes the branch campuses in Broken Arrow and Muskogee should have a more pronounced Web presence. In particular, it would be helpful to identify the programs and services available at these locations and provide other location-specific information as well as what is available at the main campus in Tahlequah.

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.** The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

- The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's policy includes the requirements that institutions must follow for Academic Program Reviews. The results of these reviews are utilized by the Regents to make decisions regarding "...program initiation, expansion, contraction, consolidation and termination as well as reallocation of resources..." NSU's University Planning Group (UPG) created the Academic Prioritization Process to provide information and data to identify priorities in the University's programs. The process allows the University to make recommendations and decisions about programs' effectiveness and continuation. The UPC has investigated moving NSU to the Higher Learning Commission AQIP Pathways program to help ensure the University's continual focus on assessment and improvement of student learning outcomes.
- Courses, both face-to-face and online, are evaluated using evaluation forms administrated by the Center for Teaching and Learning. The same evaluation forms are used regardless of the mode of delivery. Results of the evaluations are given to faculty members and college administrators in a timely fashion to allow faculty to use the data to make changes or revisions to their courses in time for the next semester.
- Evaluations of student satisfaction include exit interviews, NSSE surveys, and alumni satisfaction surveys. The results of these evaluations are shared with faculty and administrators and used to make revisions to student support and student services programs and activities. Membership in the NSU Alumni Association has grown significantly since the last comprehensive visit in 2002. Evaluations are also conducted which compare student outcomes in face-to-face courses with distance courses. The results of these comparisons are used by faculty and administrators to assess the

effectiveness of each mode of delivery in meeting the goals of student learning. The Center for Teaching and Learning is planning to design and offer more focused professional development activities for faculty to help improve assessment activities.

- Each NSU College has a Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator to supervise and oversee the assessment of programs. NSU participates in the Quality Matters Program which is an assessment review process of online and blended classes. Fifteen NSU faculty members recently completed training to become certified Quality Matters reviewers to ensure continuous assessment and improvement of online courses. Quality Matters reviewers utilize a scoring rubric used to provide feedback and constructive criticism of classes. The rubric was designed using national standards of best practices and research.
- The Office of Academic Affairs leads and coordinates assessment activities and the resulting reports. Members of the University Planning Committee (UPC) are appointed by the Cabinet and are actively engaged with the Cabinet, the Councils, and other groups. The UPC encourages, evaluates and reviews current projects that are connected to the University Strategic Plan. The University Action Projects always include milestones to ensure the goals are met. One action project was the development of a University Strategic Enrollment Plan to guide recruitment and retention activities and set goals for these areas. The University has developed an environment of Improvement which includes program reviews and low productivity reports. These documents provide the rationale for curriculum and program changes.
- The non-academic units are assessing the effectiveness of their programs and services. Under the leadership of the Vice President for Students Affairs, the student affairs units are assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of their services using the CAS Standards to guide their work. The Student Affairs units will make revisions to their programs, processes, and activities as a result of the assessments. The University has issued an RFP to hire a vendor to develop a facilities master plan.
- The Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee meets twice per year to review any curricular issues, on-campus changes, and requests to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Pages 75-86 of the University's *Self-Study* document present data and feedback from this Committee have promoted continuous improvements in addressing discipline-specific certification requirements, new course and program development, and changes in admissions requirements.
- The University participates in state-mandated, five-year reviews of academic programs for quality and viability. Reviews involve internal and external reviewers and contribute to programmatic improvement. Creation of the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, participation in the Commission's Assessment Academy, and revision of graduate education assessment all support evaluation and assessment processes.
- NSU's planning documents demonstrate that attention is being paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. This is most evident in the current planning effort, *Charting the Second Century: 2009-2014*. During the planning process, the University identified two major economic factors that must be considered: A) State support has been declining over the past five years. B) Oklahoma has not recovered from the severe economic recession. As a result, NSU is taking action to increase its voice in state and national forums. The University also engaged in an Academic Prioritization process that focused on resource acquisition, reducing expenditures, and careful alignment of existing resources with recognized needs.

- New leadership at NSU allows more transparency in all processes, especially in the budgeting process, such that a heightened awareness of personal and departmental accountability drives all. This new era in open communication for budgeting creates increased trust and improved involvement across campus and departmental lines.
  - NSU has positioned itself to allow for new and creative revenue streams. External grant funding is a natural source of potential income, and NSU has increased its focus in this area. The University also aligned with tribal governments to pool resources and offer mutually beneficial educational opportunities. In addition, NSU has created and nurtured important partnerships in external and private sector revenue streams.
  - Through the Academic Prioritization effort, all units, colleges and departments periodically review their respective strategic plans, ensuring alignment and progress toward meeting the mission, vision, and goals set forth in the University's strategic plan, "Charting the Second Century: 2009-2014." The UPC, deans, and chairs participated in this process to ensure the alignment of the implementation of the strategic plan with university operations. The University anticipates the varied needs of current and emerging learning groups through programs and resources for its residential and off-campus students at the Tahlequah campus and for more "non-traditional" learning groups through distance education programs and programs at the Broken Arrow and Muskogee campuses. The University also works to meet emerging needs and trends through such activities as articulation agreements with other higher education institutions and degree completion programs for adult learners. In addition, the capital planning process was reviewed in an effort to support the needs of individual colleges and units in meeting their particular strategic plan.
  - Although NSU has the highest enrollment rate of American Indians of any regional comprehensive university in the country, it recognizes the need to anticipate the challenges and opportunities provided by changing state and national demographics and emerging groups of new learners.
  - Planning processes are overseen by a University Planning Council that includes representation from faculty, staff and students. The University gathers input regarding regional and state needs from citizens, business leaders, community leaders and organizations, state-wide organizations, and government entities. The University has employed outside consultants to help it identify its regional identity.
  - Teachers are evaluated through forms provided to students, with data being used by deans to advise faculty members in their development efforts and progress toward tenure or promotion. Administrators are evaluated by forms developed by the Faculty Council. Other internal evaluations are assisted through resources provided by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research.
- 2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need institutional attention**
- None
- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**
- None
- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up**

None

### Recommendation of the Team

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING.** The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

#### 1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The University supports diversity and learning. The *Self-Study* (page 117) states, “Lifelong learning begins with diversity & first contact.” The University’s enrollment includes 28.7 percent American Indian undergraduate enrollment, which is the largest number in the country according to *Winds of Change, 11th Annual College Guide for American Indians*. The University’s average five-year minority enrollment rate is approximately 40 percent and includes students enrolled from 58 countries.
- The commitment to learning and diversity is reflected in the University’s *Focused Mission Statement*, which states, “We empower individuals to become socially responsible global citizens by creating and sustaining a culture of learning and discovery.”
- Academic and student support structures are evident at all levels of the educational experience. The First-Year Experience assists students in the university transition, provides academic advising, shares information related to institutional programs and services, and offers assistance in selecting a major and minor. There are writing laboratories on the Tahlequah and Broken Arrow campuses, and the Tahlequah campus hosts a reading laboratory. The communications studies program supports a Communications Laboratory to assist with speaking assignments. In fall 2010, NSU began using an online tutoring program, Smarthinking, for 17 courses. In Fiscal Year 2011, there were 1674 sessions and over 900 hours of tutorial assistance.
- The “culture of assessment” was clearly presented as NSU demonstrated its student learning outcomes in the annual OSRHE Assessment Report. Its recent admittance to the HLC’s Assessment Academy and the launch of the Red Balloon initiatives also support NSU’s effort to improve student learning.
- The General Education Task Force (GETF), appointed in 2007, held more than 30 meetings during the course of two years, and also reviewed and revamped the NSU general education program. GETF identified seven content areas from which general education requirements are derived. They include written and oral communication, social and behavioral science, global perspectives, life skills, humanities, natural sciences, and quantitative analysis. The GETF also recommended goals to be achieved through learning activities and a refinement of skills.
- The Professional Portfolio Tenure and Promotion Review section in the Faculty Handbook (Appendix C1) describes the requirements faculty members must meet in the retention, promotion, and tenure process. There are four areas of evaluation and assessment to the process but “the primary focus....is teaching” and “...the primary evidence of effective teaching should come from the assessment of learning outcomes/learning gains exhibited by students.” This primary focus is also highlighted in the NSU Strategic Plan 2009-2014 Goal 1: “Provide a quality curricular and co-curricular education in a flexible student-centered environment.”

The Professional Portfolio requirements list specific activities and contributions faculty members must demonstrate as part of the process.

- NSU follows the Boyer Model of effective classroom teaching and the scholarship of teaching. Faculty members must demonstrate the ways in which they adhere to the Boyer Model as they complete their Professional Portfolio and during their evaluation meetings with their college administrators. Mentoring committees have been established in each college to provide support and guidance for non-tenured faculty members to ensure they meet the requirements of the retention, promotion, and tenure process under the Boyer Model. Moreover, the University's priorities for faculty research and service are based on the Boyer model of the "scholarship of teaching and learning," in keeping with the primary mission and goals of the institution. The Center for Teaching & Learning conducts an annual campus conference that allows faculty and staff to share research and practical advice in teaching, learning and other activities. In addition, the Research and Sponsored Programs office offers advice and support to faculty in finding funding for particular projects and in writing and submitting grant requests.
- NSU recognizes effective teaching through the Circle of Excellence Awards and the DaVinci Institute Fellows Programs. Each year three faculty members are selected to receive a Circle of Excellence Award. One faculty member receives the award in one of three areas: teaching, research, and service. Students and other faculty members nominate individuals for the award. Each recipient receives a brick, which is placed in front of Seminary Hall, and may choose either a new computer or \$2,500 to use for professional development activities. The DaVinci Institute is Oklahoma's Creative Think Tank and annually recognizes "creativity in higher education faculty from across Oklahoma." Several NSU faculty members have received a DaVinci Institute award. The NSU Student Government Association recognizes the "Faculty Member Who Made a Difference" based on nominations from students.
- Through the University Curriculum Committee, faculty review and revise the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and review and recommend new academic programs. NSU participates in the Red Balloon Project, sponsored by the AASCU. The Red Balloon Project helps institutions meet the challenges of redesigning undergraduate education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Membership on the Red Balloon Project task force includes faculty, staff, and administrators from NSU's three campuses. The NSU Red Balloon Project includes several initiatives including international opportunities for students; creation of the College of Extended Learning (CEL) on the Broken Arrow campus; providing an online tutoring program and service for students; and creation of service and community engagement opportunities for students.
- The University supports technology and technology-assisted learning. The Tahlequah campus has 129 multimedia classrooms with 5,462 seats; the Broken Arrow campus has 65 multimedia classrooms with 2,553 seats, and the Muskogee campus has 15 multimedia classrooms with 652 seats. Each of these classrooms contains a networked computer, projector, document camera, speakers, and many with DVD/VCR. Libraries on the Tahlequah, Broken Arrow, and Muskogee campuses provide 61, 50, and 5 general access, networked computers, respectively. The Webb Educational Technology Building provides 74 networked computers that are available 24/7. Most academic buildings, the libraries, and the university (student) centers on all three campuses offer wireless Internet connectivity, and three computer labs in the residence halls provide access to 15 computers.

- The University uses technology to enhance educational access (courses) to students at branch campuses and partner with community colleges. The number of courses offered and enrollment in these courses has remained relatively constant since the last on-site visit at 37 courses and over 200 enrollments each fall. However, the 23 distance courses and 270 enrollments in fall 2002 increased to 177 courses and 3,859 enrollments in fall 2011. Moreover, the introduction of blended courses in fall 2008 has grown to 116 courses with 1,741 enrollments in fall 2011. Implementation of the Quality Matters faculty-based peer review system certifies the quality of the University's online and blended courses. There are 25 certified Quality Matters experts at NSU. The University also enhanced its on-line learning management system by adding web-conferencing, voice/ podcasting, and instant messaging in fall 2010.
- The University has an Early Alert System to support institutional efforts to assist students not attending classes and/or who have poor grades at mid-semester. The University's portal, "Go NSU," allows students to view class schedules, make changes, and access the NSU catalogs, their grades and transcripts.
- The University's online access to electronic documents and databases is available to all students and faculty at all campuses. Conversations with the Interim Director of Libraries and other staff, faculty members and students confirm that the University has a vigorous system for inter-library loan and for delivering free copies of journal articles that are otherwise unavailable. Library staff prepare online tutorials, conduct classes and offer online and face-to-face assistance for students and faculty members seeking help with their research. Faculty and student learning are supported by the physical holdings of the main campus library at Tahlequah and the branch libraries at Broken Arrow and Muskogee.
- Organizational charts and meetings with university ITS staff confirm that the primary focus for technology services has shifted to support teaching and learning. ITS staff members are trained to back each other up to avoid potential disruptions in service if one person should become unavailable.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need institutional attention**

None

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.** The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

## 1. Evidence that Core Components are met

- The University has a well-grounded culture of learning that is embedded through its mission, vision and values statements. Interviews with faculty, staff and students repeatedly confirmed that university constituents understand the centrality of learning to the university's operations and culture. The University has well-administered offices and processes that assist faculty members in securing internal and external grants for their research. Undergraduate student research presented at annual state-wide conferences has a higher proportion from NSU than from any other public university in the state. Faculty members understand that the measures for their evaluation are based on the Boyer model of the "scholarship of teaching and learning." Such measures include acceptance of and support for the creation and presentation of artistic works as well as more traditional forms of academic scholarship. Tuition waivers are available for employees pursuing higher degrees while employed at NSU.
- The *Faculty Handbook* has statements supporting academic freedom (freedom of inquiry) and academic responsibility. The University celebrates scholarly accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff. NSU annually recognizes three faculty members with the Circle of Excellence Awards for service, teaching, and research. The library recognizes NSU Authors and supports the Honor Your Authors Reception as a forum for authors and artists to showcase their work. The annual Honors Awards Assembly for students (approximately 340 annually) recognizes Academic Achievement, Student Activity, Honor Society, and Who's Who award recipients. It was reported by several staff that there is interest on behalf of the University to combine these events "to make for an even grander event to celebrate individual accomplishments."
- NSU supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all of its employees. Supporting opportunities include access to tuition waivers, faculty research grants, teaching and learning grants, service learning grants, professional development workshops, Fulbright Scholarships, and sabbaticals. The University also has offices committed to supporting professional activities, including the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects.
- Faculty members actively produce scholarship at NSU. Twenty-eight current examples of externally funded research and 25 representative publications were presented in the University's *Self-Study* (Core Component 4a). The *Self-Study* also notes a seven percent increase in external grant funding during the last year and a 51 percent increase in the number of submissions during this time.
- Faculty are engaged in student research. The annual Student Research Day had 263 students and 133 mentors in 2011, growing from 22 students and 12 mentors in 2003. Additional traditions of supporting student scholarship include annual participation the State of Oklahoma Research Day and Student Juried Art Exhibits on-campus. The *Self-Study* (Page 138) notes that NSU sponsored 827 student research projects and presentations between 1999 and 2008, making its student body population ratio of attendance at Oklahoma Research Day higher than other participating institutions.
- The University integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs. As part of the University's Academic Prioritization Process (initiated in 2009), desired outcomes for general education were identified. These outcomes were designed to provide the foundation for advanced undergraduate and graduate coursework by focusing on basic communication skills; mathematic ability; application

of scientific knowledge; appreciation of the fine arts; and understanding of society, culture, health, wellness, and diversity. In fall 2010, NSU began a new general education curriculum based on these outcomes. The specific general education requirements for bachelor's degrees are displayed on pages 38-40 in the *2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog*.

- The University demonstrates the linkages between curricular and co-curricular activities that support inquiry, practice, creativity, and social responsibility. This includes internships, portfolios, capstone experiences, high school mentoring opportunities, mentored research, honors programs, and service-learning. It also includes community service activities (such as the Special Olympics, Gear-Up, regional summit meetings, summer academies, National Day of Service, and Rookie Bridge Camp) and civic events (such as Service Sunday and the Food Basket Frenzy). In both 2009 and 2010, the University was selected for inclusion in President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.
- The NSU General Education Task Force was created in the fall of 2007 to review the general education program which had been in place for over 20 years and to recommend revisions. The group included faculty members, staff members, and students. The Committee solicited ideas from the University community about revisions that should be made to the general education program. The group completed its work and submitted a report in May 2008. The report identified the skills NSU graduates should have developed and identified seven content areas to be included in the general education program. The revised general education program was implemented with the fall 2010 freshman class. NSU is using the ETS Proficiency Profile to assess students' acquisition of the general education goals and objectives. The Regents also require institutions to assess their general education programs.
- NSU is participating in the HLC Assessment Academy and is focusing on the assessment of general education and students' achievement as it relates to the University values. The General Education Committee was originally established to review and revise the University's general education program which had not been done in 20 years. The committee has become a permanent, standing committee of the University and continues to guide and oversee the implementation and assessment of the redesigned and newly implemented general education program.
- A Coordinator of the General Education Capstone course has been appointed and has developed a syllabus for the course. The Coordinator is teaching the course which "should be a transition/link between general education and the student's major." The Coordinator is currently the only faculty member teaching the course which has 125 students enrolled during the spring 2012 semester.
- The document "Guidelines for General Education Course Syllabi and Student Learning Outcomes" provides a template "...to assist in the continuing implementation of the new General Education requirements which became effective in the fall 2010 semester." Additionally, course syllabi templates have been developed for each of the seven general education content areas: Written and Oral Communication; Social & Behavioral Science; Global Perspectives; Life Skills; Humanities; Natural Sciences; and Quantitative Analysis. Faculty members are expected to use these templates as they develop the syllabi for their general education courses. A review of several course syllabi demonstrated that the general education learning objectives are identified and highlighted.

- The Academic Prioritization Process starting 2009 entails comprehensive reviews of all programs on campus. This process led to a revision of not only general education offerings, but also other program and curriculum offerings at NSU. It also evaluated whether the university's offerings cultivate a culture of diversity, providing courses that engage all students in scholarly activity.
- The University conducts surveys of students who graduate from the institution. The surveys ask graduates to share their perceptions of the quality of their academic experience and overall satisfaction with their preparation. A gauge of success in a global economy is placement of graduates in the market place. According to the Employment Outcomes Report 2008, 82 percent of the 2005-2006 bachelor's degree recipients were employed in Oklahoma one year following graduation. The employment rate for NSU graduates for this same period was 91.5 percent (i.e., NSU was nine percent above the norm).
- To increase competitiveness in a global and culturally diverse economy, the University offers classes in Spanish, French, Chinese, Cherokee, and other languages. In addition, NSU supplements language classes with cultural studies courses that further prepare students for newly emerging and highly competitive global economies. The University also offers several international study abroad opportunities enlightening students and faculty to the diversity of cultures contained in a global economy.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need institutional attention**

None

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE.** As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

**1. Evidence that Core Components are met**

- The University's office of Assessment & Institutional Research uses a variety of instruments, including state census and population data, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and other surveys to gauge how well the University is serving its internal and external constituents and to understand what future needs may arise. In addition to its internal processes for communication with and among administrators, staff, faculty members and students, the University works with state and regional groups and leaders to identify particular needs that it might fulfill. Members of such external groups, including state Regents, business community leaders and members of the university's Foundation Board all testified to the

importance of the University to the local and regional communities and the university's responsiveness to specific requests and needs.

- The University's connections with and service to the Cherokee Nation and other regional American Indian communities are virtually unique in the nation.
- NSU frequently solicits input and feedback from all constituencies to accurately assess changing demands, both internal and external. This is evidenced by the successful partnerships NSU has built with vital stakeholders, including community colleges, OSRHE, and community-based organizations at local, regional, national, and international levels.
- Internally, learning the needs of its constituencies was through activities, such as brown bag lunch with faculty, staff and students, university-wide forums, and sounding boards such as NSGA (student government body), Faculty Council, and Staff Council. Externally, various town hall meetings and community forums, annual Regional Economic Summits, advisory boards of colleges and schools contribute inputs to the University.
- Service programs and student, faculty, and staff volunteer activities are well-received by the communities served. There is high demand for the community service project offered by the University, as mentioned in the staff open forum, at the Muskogee Campus, and at the community leaders' dinner. For example, over 1,000 low income and elderly people utilized the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) service provided by accounting students in 2010. Additionally, over 1,700 individuals received free eye screening by optometry students in just one year. To coordinate the high demand for community services, the University established the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement.
- University facilities are available and used by their host communities. Data in *Self-Study* (Page 197) show that the Muskogee campus hosted 167 events with 6,727 attendees during Fiscal Year 2009; the Broken Arrow Campus hosted 153 events with 14,342 attendees during the first six months of 2009, and in Tahlequah, the University Center serves as a conference center for the community throughout the year. Members of the Kiwanis, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Tahlequah City Hospital Foundation, and NRA all use the University Center.
- Through the Office of Continuing Education, the University publishes a regular catalog of noncredit professional development educational opportunities. NSU offers workshops that are accredited by the Oklahoma Bar Association for Multistate Continuing Legal Education Credits, and qualify for Continuing Education Units under law enforcement, human resources professionals, and CPA requirements and/or regulations.

**2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need institutional attention**

None

**3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up**

None

**4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up**

None

**Recommendation of the Team**

Criterion is met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

**V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS**

**A. Affiliation Status**

**Recommendation:**

No Change

**Rationale for recommendation:**

The institution presented satisfactory evidence in support of its request for continued accreditation.

**B. Nature of Institution**

**1. Legal status**

No Change

**2. Degrees awarded**

No Change

**C. Conditions of Affiliation**

**1. Stipulation on affiliation status**

No Change

**2. Approval of additional locations**

No Change

**3. Approval of distance delivery**

Approval to offer distance learning up to 100% of degree programs (HLC Level 3 for distance education).

See separate embedded change report

**4. Reports required**

None

**5. Other visits scheduled**

None

**6. Other embedded change request**

See attached embedded change report

## 7. Campus Evaluation Visit

Overall, the pattern of the institution's operations at its Muskogee and Broken Arrow sites appears to be adequate, and no further review of monitoring by The Higher Learning Commission is necessary.

See attached Campus Evaluation Visit reports

## E. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

## E. Summary of Commission Review

**Timing for next comprehensive visit (AY 2021-2022)**

### **Rationale for recommendation:**

Based on the team's thorough reading of the self-study report, its review of hundreds of documents, and numerous interviews during the comprehensive visit, the team concludes that Northeastern State University fulfills all of the Criteria for Accreditation. Further, the team believes the University has the appropriate resources to address its mission and sufficient finances to meet the challenges ahead. It shows an ability to plan, involve its students, faculty, and staff in shared governance, and advance the institutional mission in three campus locations, each with distinct student populations. There is competent leadership in place and a governing board that understands its role and function. The team does wish to caution the University that it needs to address its large number of interim appointments in key faculty and management roles.

## VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

The team undertook the University's request to review the distance-delivered programs embedded in its curriculum. The University had never undergone an initiation review of its distance education offerings and also requested blanket approval to offer additional programs via distance deliver without HLC approval. Because of recent policy changes, the Commission no longer conducts program-by-program reviews of distance education, thus rendering "blanket approval" obsolete. Instead, institutions are placed into one of three levels of distance education depending upon their overall amount of distance education activity and reviews occur when an institution is poised to move from one level to the next. In the case of Northeastern State, distance education activity is substantial. Thus this review to initiate distance education was also for placement into the HLC's highest level (Level 3) wherein the institution may offer up to 100% of its programs through distance education modalities. Also in accordance with its new policy, future Commission reviews of distance education will occur at the time of reaffirmation of accreditation and at other times, if warranted, by factors such as significant institutional change or rapid growth as determined by HLC staff.

### Team Review of University's Distance Education:

NSU has been teaching online courses since 1999 when the nursing program received approval from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to offer most of their program by distance delivery (a combination of interactive video and online). Since that time, several programs developed online courses to support program needs of students. However, none of these programs was delivered 100 percent by distance modalities. Therefore a request for offering distance programs was unnecessary under the Commission's prior policy.

When The Higher Learning definition of distance delivery was changed in July 2010 to 50 percent or more courses may be taken as distance-delivered courses, this made more than 20 percent of NSU programs under the new definition. These programs were added to the list of distance delivered programs on the SAS for NSU when the Annual Report was updated in 2010. Essentially, these programs were grandfathered under distance delivered programs. Even though NSU was in the top tier (3<sup>rd</sup>), the HLC staff liaison recommended at the HLC annual meeting in April 2011, to include a change request for distance delivery within the comprehensive self-study report. Distance delivery is important to NSU in meeting student needs for high quality, flexible, adult-friendly courses and programs. Distance delivery is consistent with the NSU mission, vision and values of focusing on a culture of learning and discovery and being the educational partner of choice in eastern Oklahoma.

In 1997, NSU contracted with 4003 Consultants (a consulting agency) to study and make recommendations regarding initiating distance learning on the campus beyond offering a few interactive videoconference classes each semester. The report dated May 8, 1997 was very supportive of this effort and outlined the technical infrastructure necessary for the implementation. Northeastern State University first began offering online courses in the fall 1999 semester. The nursing program taught two online web based courses that semester using a free course management system, which was a precursor of Blackboard. The Center for Teaching and Learning was established in 1999 to support the development of distance learning. The first director was hired in October 1999. In March 2000, NSU sought approval from OSRHE to allow the nursing program to offer the nursing major via distance delivery. Since this involved just the nursing major (30 hours) and the distance delivery courses did not comprise 100 percent of the degree program, the university did not seek HLC approval. For the first several years, NSU offered both traditional classroom based courses and online courses in nursing. However, after a couple of years the demand for online courses far exceeded the demand for face-to-face courses and the traditional option was discontinued. The Department of Nursing conducted a careful study of student learning outcomes of both groups during the time that both the face-to-face option and online option were available. They found that the online students did as well or better than the students in the face-to-face classes.

NSU has offered web-enhanced courses since 2000. However, it was not until 2008 that NSU began tracking courses taught specifically in a blended/hybrid format. NSU implemented Blackboard course management system in 2000 and has upgraded from version 4.0, 5.5, 6.1, 8.0 and finally Blackboard 9.1 with Wimba Suite in July 2011. Starting with just five online courses in FY 1999-2000, the growth of online and blended (hybrid) courses has grown exponentially to 395 course sections in FY 2010-11.

#### Change Request:

The team recommends that the Northeastern State University be approved at Level 3 for distance education—i.e., up to 100% of its programs. This recommendation is based on the institution's record of successful online program implementation in all formats, a committed and skilled faculty, a solid financial plan to support distance delivery, innovative new degree completion programs, a solid planning process, and its alignment with best practices in e-learning.

#### Rationale:

Northeastern State University has successfully shown evidence to offer distance education programs at Level 3. This rationale is based on NSU's experience in various facets of online education and thoughtful strategic goals. This distance learning request was well planned, exhibits faculty leadership, and is well designed and financed properly. NSU has developed a robust technology infrastructure, hired experienced online design staff and acquired the Blackboard Learn 9.1 learning management system. In addition, it has a long history of having faculty members using an online learning system in their regular classes. This has created a state of readiness on campus to continue to develop and implement additional completely online programs.

Specific points noted by the team during its review and visit include the following:

1. The institution's budget and policy statements reflect its commitment to the delivery of distance education.
2. NSU has a program for Blackboard Learn support through its College of Teaching and Learning and has a well-qualified technical staff.
3. Online students and residential (on-ground) students receive appropriate services from the bookstore and the library.
4. Through its process of curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each new program and the online student achieves collegiate and/or graduate level learning outcomes.
5. This institution provides those responsible for program development, and the orientation and training to help faculty become more proficient in their regular classroom and when teaching various online program technologies.
6. Faculty are routinely and frequently evaluated based on student feedback and administrative mentoring, and appear to be pleased with the level of feedback they receive regarding their work.
7. The institution's program development process includes faculty involvement and is guided by the Center for Teaching and Learning.
8. As a component of the institution's overall assessment activities, documented assessment of online student achievement is conducted in each online course.
9. The institution is using the Banner system to provide online student access to registration, advising, transcripts, degree audits and other similar functions.
10. Blackboard Learn 9.1 shells have been created for all faculty members. NSU has to be commended for its policies in the area of awarding the proper academic credit for the outcomes achieved in the various online course length formats.
11. Faculty members are aware of academic integrity issues and use a range of techniques to provide a robust learning outcome environment that is less prone to plagiarism exploits.
12. Student recruitment is a priority and they have hired several additional recruiters to target markets in their area.
13. NSU has been methodical and strategic as they developed the distance programs and this should positively impact retention and lead to measured, sustainable growth.
14. The institution has a student identification system that ensures that the student is actually the participating student in the class.

**FEDERAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS WORKSHEET**

Northeastern State University

**INSTITUTIONAL MATERIALS RELATED TO FEDERAL COMPLIANCE REVIEWED BY THE TEAM:**

- **Northeastern State University Website ([www.nsu.edu](http://www.nsu.edu))**
- **Self-Study Report (Appendix A—Credits and Program Lengths & Appendix B-Federal Compliance)**
- **Student Complaint Logs**
- **University Catalog**
- **Student Handbook**

**EVALUATION OF FEDERAL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

**1. Credits, Program Length, and Tuition:** *The institution has documented that it has credit hour assignments and degree program lengths within the range of good practice in higher education and that tuition is consistent across degree programs (or that there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition). New for 2012: The Commission has a new policy on the Credit Hour. Complete the Worksheet in Appendix A and then complete the following responses. Attach the Worksheet to this form.*

  X   The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: The institution provided a completed worksheet showing the credit hour assignments to courses; course length (terms) and formats; number of courses offered in each format; number of credit hours generated for the Fall 2011 and Spring 2011 semesters; and the number of students earning more than 18 undergraduate and more than 15 graduate credits during the Fall 2011 and Spring 2011 semesters.

**2. Student Complaints:** *The institution has documented a process in place for addressing student complaints and appears to be systematically processing such complaints as evidenced by the data on student complaints for the three years prior to the visit.*

  X   The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: The student complaint files from the Tahlequah and Broken Arrow campuses were reviewed onsite. There were no student complaints filed at the Muskogee campus. The student complaint files included a spreadsheet listing the names of the student filing the complaint and the date the complaint was filed; the administrator who addressed the complaint/concern; and the resolution. The files also included the original complaint forms that were submitted and correspondence from appropriate staff/administrators. The review of the files demonstrated that student complaints are addressed promptly, students receive communications regarding the status of the investigation and the resolution of the complaint.

**3. Transfer Policies:** *The institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.*

  X   The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: Transfer policies are printed in the graduate and undergraduate catalogs and on the NSU website. Articulations agreements between NSU and other institutions are clear and identify how students' prior work and/or degrees will transfer to NSU programs. The articulation agreements are posted on the NSU website.

**4. Verification of Student Identity:** *The institution has demonstrated that it verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance or correspondence education and has appropriate protocols to disclose additional fees related to verification to students and to protect their privacy.*

  X   The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: NSU students receive unique identification numbers which are used to access students' online classes and student records. The student identification numbers are randomly generated and not connected to student social security numbers or other identifiable numbers.

**5. Title IV Program and Related Responsibilities:** *The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program.*

- **General Program Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*
- **Financial Responsibility Requirements:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion Two if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)*
- **Default Rates.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about three years of default rates. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area.*
- **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures:** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.*
- **Student Right to Know.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion One if the team determines that disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)*
- **Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance.** *The institution has provided the Commission with information about policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is appropriately applying these policies and practices to students.*
- **Contractual Relationships:** *The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships (The institution should review the Contractual Change Application on the Commission's Web site for more information. If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require Commission approval*

*and has not completed the appropriate Commission Contractual Change Application the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible.)*

- **Consortial Relationships:** *The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic program and evidence of its compliance with Commission policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships (The institution should review the Consortial Change Application on the Commission's Web site for more information. If the team learns that the institution has such a consortial relationship that may require Commission approval and has not completed the appropriate Commission Consortial Change Application the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible.)*

The team has reviewed these components of federal compliance and have found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

**6. Institutional Disclosures and Advertising and Recruitment Materials:** *The institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with the Commission and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: The University's relationship with the Higher Learning Commission is appropriately noted in the institution's catalogs and marketing materials.

**7. Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and with State Regulatory Boards:** *The institution has documented that it discloses accurately to the public and the Commission its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditor and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: Northeastern University's relationship with the Higher Learning Commission and other professional associations (e.g. NCATE) are identified in the University catalogs and program marketing materials.

**8. Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment:** *The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comments. The team has evaluated any comments received and completed any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.*

The team has reviewed this component of federal compliance and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.

Comments: NSU appropriately advertised the upcoming visit by the team to conduct a review in response to the institution's request for continued accreditation and solicited comments from the public. No comments were received by the Higher Learning Commission.

Substantive Change Recommendation Form:  
**Embedded Change Review**

After the team achieves consensus, the team leader completes this form and includes it with the report for the visit. Notes and evidence should be essential and concise — a bullet or two, 50 words maximum.

Institution: Northeastern State University City, State: Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Change requested: Distance Delivery

**Part A: Analysis** (See Part 1, General Questions in change application)

| Item                        | Accurate, clear, complete | Inaccurate, vague, incomplete | Notes |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Requested Change            | X                         |                               |       |
| Classification of Change(s) | X                         |                               |       |
| Institutional Context       | X                         |                               |       |
| Special Conditions          | N/A                       |                               |       |
| Required Approvals          | N/A                       |                               |       |

| Essential Elements<br>The categories below relate to the evidence expected across subsections of Part 2 of the change application.  | Acceptable | Acceptable if modified | Not acceptable | Evidence  |
|---|------------|------------------------|----------------|---|
| <b>Commitment to, preparation for, and fit</b> of the proposed change(s) to the institution (characteristics, history, planning, design)<br><i>(Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 1, 2, 3, 4.)</i> | X          |                        |                | The program fits with the University mission and responds to the needs of an existing market. The institution has planned well for these distance programs and has a history of operating these programs. The curriculum and design is exceptional and the Center for Teaching and Learning is responsible for providing oversight and faculty development for the online programs. |
| <b>Capacity</b> (people, structures, and resources) for implementing and sustaining the change(s)<br><i>(Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 1, 3, 5, 6.)</i>  | X          |                        |                | Need for distance programming is determined by surveys and various student inquires. The Center for Teaching and Learning provides excellent faculty support which  |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
|   |   |  | includes faculty stipends for course creation. Student support services are excellent including the Blackboard Learn 9.1 learning management system.  |
| <b>Strategies for systematically monitoring and evaluating</b> the effects, performance, and/or quality of the change(s) ( <i>Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 1, 7.</i> )  | X |  | NSU presented an online assessment framework with details regarding levels of student performance and alignment with the curriculum. The Center for Teaching and Learning staff are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the online learning experiences along with the department administrators. Unique student passwords and logins also monitor the student validity of each online program. |
| <b>Strategies for addressing strengths, challenges, or strategic issues</b> (especially those previously identified by the Commission) related to the change(s) ( <i>Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 3, 7.</i> ) | X |  | There were no previous issues with the commission. NSU does have to review its online program policies and make sure that they are online and available to everyone. Also NSU has to monitor the governance of the online programs as currently they are housed in two areas.   |
| <b>Potential positive or negative effects</b> of the change(s) on other institutional operations ( <i>Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.</i> )   | X |  | This expansion and new online development fits very well with the institution's mission. These online programs respond to community need.   |
| <b>Quality standards</b> incorporated that would make successful implementation likely ( <i>Reference Institution's Change Application Parts 1, 7.</i> )  | X |  | NSU has implemented an online quality standards program called "Quality Matters." This program gives the faculty online skills to ensure that every Blackboard Learn shell has quality and the program is monitored by the Center for Teaching and Learning.  |

**Part B: Recommendation and Rationale**

**Recommendation:**  Approve Request  Approve Request with Modifications  Deny Request

**Rationale for the reviewers' recommendation (100 words maximum).** *If the reviewers are recommending a modification of the institution's original change request, identify the modification here.*

Northeastern State University has successfully shown evidence to offer distance education programs at Level 3. This recommendation is based on the institution's record of successful online program implementation in all formats, a committed and skilled online faculty, a solid financial plan to support distance delivery, innovative new degree completion programs, a solid planning process, and NSU's alignment with best practices in e-learning.

**Clarification of information.** *If applicable, identify the date and topics of any inquires the reviewers made to the institution for clarification or other communication and the results of those inquires.*

None

**Organizational Profile.** *If the institution's change request requires an addition or modification to the institution's Organizational Profile, identify it here.*

None required. All current distance education programs are currently listed in the institution's OP. (The institution's SAS should reflect placement in D.E. Level 3.)

**Stipulations or limitations on the institution's future accreditation relationship.** *If a team is considering a stipulation, contact the Commission's change team at [changerequests@hlcommission.org](mailto:changerequests@hlcommission.org).*

*In limited situations, reviewers may choose to recommend that the Commission monitor the institution's implementation of the change through a variety of methods. Examples of monitoring include:*

- Progress report*
- Monitoring report*
- Focused visit*
- Cover in detail in next PEAQ Comprehensive Self-Study Report*
- Cover in detail in next AQIP Systems Portfolio*

*If monitoring is recommended by all parties, specify the schedule or deadline for the monitoring and briefly describe the concerns and the goals and expectations of the monitoring in relation to these concerns.*

**Additional comments related to denial of the change request:** *Provide the institution with any additional explanation for the denial of the request.*

### **Branch Campus Report**

**Name of Institution:** Northeastern (Oklahoma) State University

**Name/Address of Branch Campus:** Northeastern State University-Muskogee Campus. 2400 W Shawnee Ave; Muskogee, OK 74401

**Date and Duration of Visit:** March 26, 2012. Four hour visit.

**Reviewer:** Dr. Joseph Rives

#### **Campus Overview**

Northeastern (Oklahoma) State University's main campus is located in Tahlequah, with branch campuses at Muskogee and Broken Arrow. Tahlequah attracts traditional students seeking residence halls, athletics, and the campus environment. Muskogee and Broken Arrow encourage the development of academic programs that focus on the differing needs of older, nontraditional students and those of its host communities/regions. State of Oklahoma policy limits the Muskogee and Broken Arrow Campuses service to junior, senior, and graduate students since there are community colleges in their host counties. Freshman admission is permissible at the Tahlequah Campus.

There are four undergraduate degree programs, the undergraduate professional education core, six graduate degrees, one certificate, and graduate professional education courses offered at Muskogee. This is in addition to offering professional and personal development continuing education classes. In accordance with Oklahoma educational policy, the Muskogee Campus does not duplicate the programs and services of the adjacent Connors Community College and NSU-Muskogee serves juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

#### **History, Planning, and Oversight**

Since fall 2006, enrollment has been increasing at Muskogee. Unduplicated headcount enrollment (students only taking courses at the Muskogee Campus) increased from 276 in fall 2006 to 394 in fall 2011. Duplicated head count enrollment (students taking courses at the Muskogee Campus and other NSU campuses/locations) increased from 651 to 723 during this time. Full-time enrollment increased from 179.2 in fall 2006 to 192.1 in fall 2011. More students are taking more classes at Muskogee.

Through both institutional strategic planning and the academic prioritization process, the University is implementing plans to make the Muskogee Campus NSU's location for allied health professions. It will be a unique niche location for the three campuses of NSU and builds upon the current academic portfolio of the Muskogee Campus. The nursing program and traditional MBA program are housed on the Muskogee Campus. NSU has built an Eastern Region Health Care Coalition with 14 partners from higher education (community colleges and four-year institutions), Cherokee and Creek Nations, and the health care industry. Partnerships are in place for dietetics/nutrition, rehabilitative services, nursing, health business, and laboratory sciences. Plans are also being development for radiological sciences, clinical psychologists, medical technicians, social work, and other mid-level providers.

In a dual role for the campus, and in advancing state priorities, Dr. Tim McElroy, Dean of the Muskogee campus, has served as the state and institutional Director of the Reach Higher program since 2006. The program is targeted at the over 65,000 residents of Oklahoma who have earned at least 72 semester hours with a 2.0 grade point average, but did not earn a baccalaureate degree. Through Reach Higher, a student can complete a degree in organizational leadership within two years.

Fiscal planning is centralized at NSU. The Muskogee Campus receives its annual funding from the Tahlequah Campus. Set budgets prevent overspending at Muskogee. The growth of the Muskogee Campus supports increased revenue in a manner that is affordable to students. NSU tuition and fees are less than 85 percent of its defined peer group.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one):

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Facilities and Technology**

Located on 22-acres, a 27,000 square foot accessible building contains 12 classrooms, Speech Pathology Clinic, library/media center, bookstore, computer lab, faculty/administrative offices, vending lounge, commons, and conference center with seating capacity in excess of 150. The 40,000 square foot accessible Mike Synar Center has classrooms, conference rooms, vending, exhibit areas, and a gathering place for students and community. Departmental offices housed in the Synar Center include the Master of Business Administration, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and the Center for the Study of Literacy. Within these facilities, there is a highly visible administrative office, faculty offices, and conference rooms supporting access and privacy for meetings and nursing laboratory space.

The campus has a strong commitment to technology. There are three videoconferencing classrooms (Room 209, Synar 220, and Synar 141) and 15 multimedia classrooms with 652 seats. Each of these classrooms contains a networked computer, projector, document camera, speakers, and many with DVD/VCR. There is wireless connectivity on campus.

The library/media center supports interlibrary loan, document delivery (including delivery service from the Tahlequah collection) and access to electronic library resources, in addition to hard copy of reference, reserve, and current periodicals. Textbook, apparel, and other purchases can be made through an on-line bookstore. There is on-site security and parking shared with the on-site community college. Additional officers for police and parking services are available through 24-hour dispatch. Emergency telephone numbers for Tahlequah, Muskogee, and Broken Arrow campuses are printed on the inside front cover of the University Phone Directory. Safety and security is also addressed via the computer broadcast system for computers connected to the NSU computer network, and there is immediate access to critical information from E-mail/voice messaging systems.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one):

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Human Resources**

The *NSU Faculty Handbook* states that the rank of assistant professor and higher requires an earned doctorate degree awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. An instructor designation requires a masters degree from a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. The University follows standards of the Carnegie Classification System, requiring candidates to demonstrate that the earned degrees or graduate work (referenced above) should be in a field related to the individual's assignment. A review of vitae shows that these appointment and promotion standards are being followed. Staff qualifications are determined and verified by Human Resources. There was no evidence provided in the *Self-Study* or during the University's on-site visit to suggest there was an insufficient number of faculty or staff employed at the Muskogee Campus.

NSU supports professional development opportunities and makes them available to all employees. This includes access to tuition waivers, faculty research grants, teaching and learning grants, service learning grants, professional development workshops, Fulbright Scholarships, and sabbaticals. The University also has offices committed to supporting professional activities, including the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects.

All non-tenured faculty are evaluated annually. Beginning in fall 2011, the University requires new faculty to engage with mentors who guide faculty through promotion, tenure, and evaluation cycles. Program participation is optional for non-tenured faculty hired before this time. The *Faculty Handbook* defines policies and procedures for academic rank and promotion, employment of graduate assistants, academic tenure, review procedures, and rights of tenured faculty. With regards to staff, Human Resources requires the performance of new staff or staff in a new assignment to be evaluated within the first five months. All

other staff are evaluated annually. There is no differentiation in personnel policies for all categories of employees at the main campus and the Muskogee campus.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one):

- X The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.  
 □ The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Student and Faculty Resources and Support**

There are on-line admissions. The application can be found under the “Future Students” section of the Web ([www.nsuok.edu/FutureStudents.aspx](http://www.nsuok.edu/FutureStudents.aspx)). The Admissions section on the University’s home page ([www.nsuok.edu](http://www.nsuok.edu)) also directs students to the on-line application. The University has a campus portal described earlier in this report that gives students access to their registration and academic records.

There is on-site student, faculty, and staff support. The Dean of the campus has direct reports and coordinates in dotted line supervisory reporting relationships to oversee the daily operations, maintenance, and technology of the campus.

There is on-site and electronic advisement. Through the campus portal (go NSU) students can view academic profile, advisor, and degree audit system information. Likewise, faculty and advisors can access registration overrides, wait lists, advisee information, office hours, and course transfer guides. Career and financial aid services are available online, via telephone, or at any NSU campus location. The campus portal gives students access to financial aid requirements and awards. The Office of Student Financial Services Website provides comprehensive information for students. The Office of Scholarships has a similar page.

Evaluation of service quality is the responsibility of the Dean and areas for which there are dotted line reporting relationships. There is an established procedure for non-trivial student complaints. The students at the Muskogee Campus have made no such complaints.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one):

- X The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.  
 □ The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Educational Programs and Instructional Oversight**

The University has committed to making degrees fully achievable on the Muskogee Campus via in-person and/or on-line delivery. Students are advised when a department is offering courses that complement degree plans and/or regional need, but will not lead to a completed degree.

Focusing on upper division students, Muskogee Campus relies on successful partnerships with community colleges to recruit students. The Smart Choice program provides curriculum guides that show students how to begin working on major requirements while fulfilling general education requirements at the community college. The unique blended-color logo and the Smart Choice slogan represent commitment on the part of the University and participating two-year colleges to help students make a seamless transition from earning an associate’s degree to attaining a four-year degree. Institutional web tools also support seamless transfer. U.Select enables students to view course equivalencies through the University’s Degree Audit Reporting System. The transfer admissions web site includes State Regional Course Transfer Guides to show which courses are transferable among Oklahoma public colleges and universities.

There are many checks and balances to ensure that information presented to students is adequate and accurate. The Associate Vice President coordinates various academic functions including *Undergraduate Catalogs*. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate College has the same function for *Graduate Catalogs*. The *Northeastern State Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs* are official publications of the University. Both describe instructional programs and are the authority for academic requirements and regulations. Each Dean is responsible for ensuring that college instructional

programs conform to the catalog specifications. Catalog policy changes require university administration approvals and curricular changes require approvals by the Regional University System of Oklahoma Board of Regents and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

The Director of University Relations, Branch Campuses is responsible for supervising university relations functions at the Muskogee Campus. These functions include communications and marketing; media relations; state, federal and community relations; and internal marketing. Official NSU web pages must follow University *Policies for World Wide Web Home Pages* and are approved by the appropriate administrative unit.

Faculty office hours are maintained in accordance with policies and procedures of the *NSU Faculty Handbook*. Attention to the students and their concerns is demonstrated by the fact that there were no non-trivial student complaints expressed in the *Student Complaint Log* for the Muskogee Campus.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one):

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.  
 The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Evaluation and Assessment**

The University's academic prioritization planning and program review process determines which educational programs will be offered at each of the three NSU campuses. These processes are also used to determine the ongoing quality, feasibility, and viability of programs offered at their respective locations.

Course based assessment by the instructor of record determines the student's academic grade in a given course. This is how the University and each individual faculty member measures, documents, and analyzes student academic performance. Assessment at NSU is programmatically/departmental based and not locationally based. Assessment occurs at the program/departmental level as a whole. There is no differentiation between campuses for measurable learning objectives, measurement of performance, and analysis/use of assessment data to maintain/improve quality. The program, not the campus, is the unit of analysis.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.  
 The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Continuous Improvement**

Extending educational opportunities to the Muskogee region; strong partnerships with the community colleges, businesses, and health care industry; and engagement in the academic prioritization process is consistent with the *Vision Statement* of the University: "To be a partner of choice in eastern Oklahoma, embracing the educational, cultural and economic challenges and opportunities of our global society." The University has further advanced this goal by planning for the Muskogee Campus to be the location for Allied Health programs at NSU.

Because assessment of student learning outcomes and evaluation of programmatic effectiveness is departmentally rather than locationally based, the Muskogee Campus is actively involved in the continuous improvement processes of NSU. This includes participating in the academic prioritization process, maintaining/achieving discipline-based accreditations, and engaging state-mandated five-year program reviews and annual assessments for the Regents.

Furthermore, The Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee meets twice per year to review any curricular issues, on-campus changes, and requests to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Pages 75-86 of the University's *Self-Study* document present data and feedback from this Committee has promoted continuous improvements in addressing discipline-specific certification requirements, new course and program development, and changes in admission requirements. The Muskogee Campus is actively involved in continuous process improvement.

**Judgment of reviewer(s)** (check one)

The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.

The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

## Branch Campus Report

**Name of Institution: Northeastern State University**

**Name/Address of Branch Campus: Northeastern State University – Broken Arrow Campus  
3100 East New Orleans, Broken Arrow, OK 74014**

**Date of Visit: Monday, March 26, 2012**

**Reviewer: Dr. Sherilyn W. Poole**

### Overview

Northeastern State University (NSU) is a public, regional university, one of six regional universities governed by the Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). NSU's main campus is located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and there are two branch campuses at Broken Arrow and Muskogee. NSU offers 55 undergraduate degrees, 23 graduate degrees and the professional Doctor of Optometry degree. The NSU total student enrollment is just over 9400. The NSU Broken Arrow campus opened in 2001 with 1050 students. During the Fall 2011 semester, the Broken Arrow campus enrolled 3261 students.

The city of Broken Arrow includes 100,000 residents and the NSU Broken Arrow campus serves upper division students, mostly working adults, in undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs. The average age of the students who attend classes at the Broken Arrow campus is 29 and most students live in the Tulsa metropolitan region and north, west and southwest of Tulsa. There are no 4-year public institutions in the Tulsa area. Initially, there was concern that the Broken Arrow campus would "pull" students from the Tahlequah campus but this has not happened. Some students take courses at 2 or 3 of the NSU campuses and online depending on their schedules and course needs.

The three initial classroom buildings and administration building on the Broken Arrow campus were funded by a sales tax approved by the residents of Broken Arrow. The Tulsa County's Vision 2025 sales tax initiative funded additional campus classroom buildings and the library.

### History, Planning, and Oversight

#### **Evidentiary Statements**

**1.d.** The Dean of the Broken Arrow campus provides leadership and is responsible for the operation of the campus. The Dean has six direct reports. During the opening session of the visit, the role of the branch campus deans was described as a coordinating function. The Dean has limited autonomy in fulfilling the budgetary and supervisory responsibilities of the role. The title "Dean" sometimes creates confusion among the University internal and external constituencies.

**2.b.** The Broken Arrow campus does not have a separate budget. Budget allocations at NSU are done centrally. The Dean of the Broken Arrow campus receives allocations from the University's central budget to support faculty travel and supplies, some campus operations, and to run the Dean's office. The 90 resident faculty members at the Broken Arrow campus are supported by faculty lines assigned to the Academic Affairs Division. College administrators provide supervision and support to the faculty members through regular visits to the Broken Arrow campus. Campus enrollment goals are established by the President's Office as part of the University's goal-setting activities.

**2.d.** A meeting with representatives from the community demonstrated the high level of support for the University and for the Broken Arrow campus. The community members appreciate the way that NSU faculty and administrators "listen to the business community." The community members are hoping for more technology and health-related degrees to be offered on the Broken Arrow campus and the creation

of a Research Park. Also under discussion is the development of an Arts Center through a public-private partnership.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

The University might consider changing the title of the branch campus administrators from Dean to one that clarifies the level of authority and autonomy the individuals have in their role.

### **Concerns**

#### **Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

### **Facilities and Technology**

#### **Evidentiary Statements**

**2.b.** There are six buildings and 400,000 square feet of space on the Broken Arrow campus. The six buildings are Administrative Services; Business and Technology; Education; College of Science and Health Professions; College of Liberal Arts; and the Library. Four parking lots are available with designated ADA parking spots in each. The campus houses 13 computer labs, one writing lab, a reading clinic, a low vision clinic, a speech-language clinic, 65 multimedia rooms and 50 general access, networked computers for student use. The Oklahoma Small Business Development Center and the Center for Regional and International Partnerships are also housed on the Broken Arrow campus. There are also 10 safe rooms on the Broken Arrow campus which are available to campus constituents and members of the community during disasters (e.g. tornados).

**2.b.** Most classes at the Broken Arrow campus are held in the evening and on weekends. The schedule for the evening classes allows students to take two classes on one day to meet their schedules. The Broken Arrow campus chapter of the Student Government Association and the Student Advisory Board had input into the class schedule. There are approximately 3000 students enrolled at the Broken Arrow campus.

**2.b.** The University's food service provider, Sodexo, has a Sip 'n' Surf facility on the Broken Arrow campus which provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner options and snacks to students, faculty, and staff. There are many areas available for individuals and groups to study, meet, and socialize. Faculty and administrative offices are furnished appropriately with computers and network capabilities.

**3.c.** The academic programs and student learning outcomes of courses offered on the Broken Arrow campus are part of the University's assessment activities. Currently it is difficult to disaggregate the results from the Broken Arrow campus from the overall assessment results, however the University's conversion to the Banner administrative system will make it possible to separate assessment results by campus.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

The branch campuses are not well-represented on the University website. The web pages for the Broken Arrow and Muskogee branch campuses include a limited amount of data and information.

### **Concerns**

#### **Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Human Resources****Evidentiary Statements**

**2.b.** The 90 resident faculty members at the Broken Arrow campus are supervised by the appropriate College administrators. The faculty members at the Broken Arrow participate in governance activities through membership in the Faculty Associate and on the Faculty Council. The Broken Arrow faculty members participate in the University's assessment activities through membership on the assessment committees and on the University's program and curriculum review and revision groups.

**2.c.** The conversion to the Banner administrative system will allow faculty and administrators to review assessment data and student achievement by campus. Faculty members at the Broken Arrow campus stated that they teach "a different type of student" from those students on the main campus and that this is not always recognized by their colleagues and administrators. The students at the Broken Arrow campus are older, typically working adults who are taking mostly upper division courses, and are in degree completion or certificate programs.

**3.b.** Faculty members on the Broken Arrow campus are actively involved in professional organizations such as the American Bar Association and the American Library Association as they develop and revise academic programs and courses. Faculty members on the Broken Arrow campus are also active participants in University-wide committees and planning groups.

**Opportunities for Improvement****Concerns****Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Student and Faculty Resources and Support****Evidentiary Statements**

**1.d.** The mission of the Broken Arrow campus is clear: to meet the needs of students whose goal is to complete a degree program or to earn a certificate. The course schedule on the Broken Arrow campus recognizes the time constraints of students and classes, workshops, and seminars are offered in the late afternoon and evening and on the weekend. College Deans are responsible for ensuring that the programs and course offerings at the Broken Arrow campus meet the University's established goals and objectives. College Deans provide supervision of faculty members on the Broken Arrow campus.

**3.c.** Students on the Broken Arrow campus have access to enrollment and intake advising services, financial aid and business office processes, career services, and a bookstore run by Barnes & Noble. Students are able to access services in-person, online, or by telephone as their schedules allow. The library on the Broken Arrow provides resources and support to students in their research and class assignments. Computer labs are available for students' use on days and times most convenient for them.

**3.c.** During a meeting with a group of students at the Broken Arrow campus, they spoke highly of the support services available to them. The students gave kudos to the financial aid services they receive but also stated the campus needs more financial aid staff. The students identified the reasons they chose to attend the Broken Arrow campus as location, affordability, and how accommodating the campus staff members are to non-traditional students and to TCC transfer students.

**3.d.** The library on the Broken Arrow campus provides a variety of services to the campus community including on-site and remote access to resources. Inter-library loan service is available to access materials not available on campus. The Library hours of operation (M-Th, 8:30 am-10:00 pm; Fri & Sat – 8:30 am – 5:00 pm) provide access to students and faculty significant opportunities to access the resources and utilize the available services. The staff at the library on the Broken Arrow campus has

developed a strategic plan and goals covering the period 2009-2014 including increased services, developing external funding sources, and improved technology.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

Students at the Broken Arrow campus have expressed their desire for a Wellness Center and for Child Care.

Students at the Broken Arrow campus expressed the need for science-based tutoring and for tutoring for science and math courses.

Students at the Broken Arrow campus mentioned that some of the ITV classes are “sloppy” and that the technology is not up-to-date.

Students at the Broken Arrow campus expressed the desire to have more day classes available.

Students at the Broken Arrow campus would like to have more co-curricular activities available such as an Honor Society chapter and the Delta Mu Delta group.

### **Concerns**

#### **Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

### **Educational Programs and Instructional Oversight**

#### **Evidentiary Statements**

**1.d.** College Deans, department chairs, and assessment coordinators share responsibility for ensuring that the courses offered on the Broken Arrow campus meet the University’s established goals. Administrators from the Tahlequah campus regularly visit and observe the instructional activities and review the student learning outcomes on the Broken Arrow campus.

**1.e.** A review of the Student Complaint file for the Broken Arrow campus showed that such complaints are addressed promptly. Complaints are reviewed and investigated by the appropriate administrator. Students are kept informed of the status of their complaint or grievance and are informed of the resolution. There is also an appeal process in place if a student disagrees with the resolution of the complaint.

**4.c.** NSU Broken Arrow benefits from the articulation agreements between the University and two-year colleges through Smart Choice partnerships. The Broken Arrow campus has a strong relationship with Tulsa Community College (TCC) which has four campuses and 30,000 students. The TCC south campus serves 10,000 students with 24 programs. The articulation agreements allow TCC students to transfer seamlessly to NSU. TCC offers courses on the NSUBA campus and many TCC graduates complete their programs at the NSU Broken Arrow campus. The TCC and NSU counselors meet regularly to review processes and procedures. TCC and NSU have established one-stop shops for admissions, enrollment, and financial aid to facilitate the transfer process. There are also dual enrollment opportunities for TCC students which allow them to take courses at NSU. There is a strong relationship between the administrators of the TCC south campus and those at the NSU Broken Arrow campus. These groups meet at least twice a year to discuss common goals and mutual plans. NSU faculty, staff, and students have access to the TCC fitness centers by showing their NSU ID cards.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

### **Concerns**

#### **Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Evaluation and Assessment****Evidentiary Statements**

**2.c.** The programs offered at the Broken Arrow campus are reviewed as part of the University's assessment procedures and processes. Broken Arrow faculty members actively participate on the various college and University committees and groups that are charged with evaluating program effectiveness. The new Banner administrative system will allow assessment data to be identified by campus and by the students on each campus to determine any variance in program/course effectiveness.

**3.b.** Requirements that faculty members must meet as part of the retention, promotion, and tenure process are listed in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty at the Broken Arrow campus must meet these requirements and the appropriate College administrators use the requirements in their evaluations of the faculty. Guidelines to ensure ethics and integrity in conducting research activities are also described in the Faculty Handbook and are designed to ensure that research activities meet ethical standards.

**3.d.** The University's Academic Prioritization process is used to determine the continuation of academic programs and to decide which campus or campuses will offer specific programs. The Academic Prioritization process is conducted by faculty and the results are reviewed by the College Deans and used by the Provost and Deans to determine resource allocations to programs.

**Opportunities for Improvement****Concerns****Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**Continuous Improvement****Evidentiary Statements**

**2.d.** To more effectively address the needs of nontraditional and working adults, NSU has created the College for Extended Learning (CEL) which is housed on the Broken Arrow campus and is under the leadership of the Dean. CEL courses are offered online, in hybrid format, or in an accelerated format.

**2.d.** Under the direction of the Director, Office of Institutional Research, undergraduate and graduate program coordinators are required to prepare annual program assessment of the major. These reports are reviewed by the Deans and department chairs to determine low producing programs which are submitted to the Provost for review and decisions about program continuation.

**Opportunities for Improvement****Concerns****Judgment of reviewer** (check one)

- The evidence indicates that the institution fulfills the expectations of the category.
- The evidence indicates that there are concerns related to the expectations of the category.

**ADVANCEMENT SECTION**

**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT**

TO

Northeastern State University  
Tahlequah, OK

March 26 – 28, 2012

FOR

**The Higher Learning Commission**

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

**EVALUATION TEAM**

Dr. Linda L. M. Bennett, President, University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN 47712

Dr. Otto Chang, Dean of School of Business, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, IN 46805

Dr. Donald F. Larsson, Professor of English, Minnesota State University Mankato, Mankato, MN 56001

Dr. Sherilyn W. Poole, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Governors State University, University Park, IL 60484

Dr. Joseph Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities, Planning and Technology, Western Illinois University, Moline, IL 61455

Dr. Tom J. Seymour, Professor of Management Information Systems, Minot State University, Minot, ND 58707

Dr. Benjamin F. Young, Vice President for Student Affairs, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Indianapolis, IN 46208 (chairperson)

**Contents**

I. Overall Observations about the Organization.....3

II. Consultations of the Team .....3

III. Recognition of Significant Accomplishments, Progress, and/or Practices.....6

## I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Northeastern State University (NSU) has a rich heritage that originated in 1846 when the Cherokee National Council authorized the establishment of a National Male Seminary and Female Seminary to fulfill the stipulation in the Treaty of 1835 with the United States that public and higher education be provided for the Cherokee Nation. There is a strong culture of and commitment to assessment at NSU. Attention to assessment pervades the University community through standing committees (e.g. University Planning Committee), college positions (e.g. Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator), and ample resource allocations. Ongoing conversations with University senior administrators and faculty members focused on ensuring that student learning goals are identified, assessed, and revised as necessary. Results of the assessment activities are widely disseminated to the campus community and submitted to the Regents as required.

Meetings with community members, business owners, political leaders, and NSU alumni demonstrated the various ways the University solicits information and suggestions and identifies residents' needs. Examples of the community support of NSU include the sales tax the residents of Broken Arrow levied on themselves to support the development of the NSU Broken Arrow campus and the sales tax levy by the residents of Tulsa County to support NSU's growth.

Overall, the team observed that the University is true to its mission, purposes, and core values and targets its resources to meet educational mandates. We found evidence that the University adjusts its curriculum to produce the quality of graduates demanded by local business and candidates for graduate and professional schools beyond the undergraduate level. Moreover, students expressed satisfaction with the quality of instruction they are receiving and applauded the University for offering an array of student support services that helps them succeed inside and outside the classroom. The team's consultations are aimed at assisting the University in meeting its future goals; areas highlighted for recognition identify standout University practices.

## II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

- Administrative Structure  
As all three campuses continue to grow and thrive, the University may wish to evaluate administrative titles and functions at its two branch campuses. Both are led by strong deans, who engage in leadership at their sites, interacting with NSU Deans and faculty on academic matters, staff on operational matters, and other sections of higher education, and business and community leaders. Many of these external interactions are with institutional presidents, CEOs, vice presidents, economic development agencies, and other key individuals. Using higher titles in these key leadership positions recognizes the level of work currently being done and supports the prominence and stature of NSU as it grows and thrives. Growth may also facilitate the need for conversation on whether the branch campus leadership is part of the division of Academic Affairs or new Cabinet-level positions that directly represent/report to the President, speak for the institution, and institutionally plan for the continued growth and prosperity of NSU at the branch locations, each serving unique student populations with distinct niche programming.
- Muskogee Student Support  
The University may wish to consider the presence of in-person financial aid and career counseling at the Muskogee Campus. These are in-person services requested by students, identified as need areas by employees, and often involve confidential and/or sensitive situations in which individuals (staff and/or students) are not comfortable discussing on the phone, on-line, or having to drive to another NSU campus to get the personal attention that is desired.

- Web Presence

The University should consider expanding the Web presence of both branch campuses. Preparation for the on-site visit could only yield one page for each site. There is limited information on the branch campuses at Muskogee and Broken Arrow about the programs and services offered there. Perhaps separate websites for each branch campus would make it easier for students, prospective students, and other constituents to find specific information. More information about the programs and services offered at each branch campus will help prospective students and the external public learn about the unique campus and its distinct programs. As the number of Webpages grows on the branch campuses, it would also be beneficial to have variations in display to make it more readily apparent which campus is being referenced.
  
- Advice for Strengthening Online Education
  - NSU should continue to evaluate the separate academic units (The Center for Teaching and Learning and The College of Extended Learning) that support faculty members offering online instruction in order to ensure the best way to provide quality online services to students.
  
  - The new federal mandate to require authorization by individual states to allow distance learning has to be pursued by NSU for the 2014 deadline.
  
  - NSU has to carefully monitor the online class teaching loads of regular faculty members, adjuncts, administrators, and key staff personnel as these online classes are developed. Along with this effort, the administration has to continue to develop ways to find and hire qualified faculty as either full-time or adjunct online teachers.
  
  - As the online programs grow, it is extremely important that all online policies and procedures are placed online and kept current for the ease of use for faculty, students, and administrators. Support services and inquiries should be easy to find and readily accessible for the online student.
  
  - A considerable percentage of the students in the student open forum indicated that considering their learning styles, distance-learning courses were not the most effective instructional format for them. As the University continues to expand its distance-learning programs, the University may like to strike an optimal balance between the face-to-face and the online courses to satisfy the different learning modes of its diverse student body.
  
  - All online Blackboard Learn shells should be complete before the semester begins and the Center of Teaching and Learning staff should verify the readiness of every shell before the semester begins.
  
- Physical Plant Issue

Open staff and student sessions at Tahlequah and restated in Muskogee expressed concern over insufficient lighting at main campus parking lots to campus facilities. The Vice President of Operations and his area have completed lighting audits and plans. Inclusion of these plans in current and planned construction/renovation will help to address expressed concerns. Students and other affected constituent groups should be regularly updated on the progress of these changes.

- Student Assessment

While NSU has made long strides in student learning assessment and is currently moving full speed with major initiatives involving HLC Academy and Red Balloon Projects, the University may like to consider taking a less comprehensive approach and zero-in on a few more manageable learning outcomes for its assessment efforts. The aim-high approach for its mission and goals, though aspirational, creates challenges for effective measuring of some of those outcomes.
- Evidence Supporting Distance Education Change Request
  - The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) ensures effective oversight, implementation, and management of the institution's distance-delivered program. The director has excellent vision and expertise in the distance education program. The technician hired is quite capable to support the program until the second technician is required after considerable growth of the distance-delivered program.
  - The College of Extended Learning has recruiters participating in the marketing of the degree completion programs. However, they are coordinated with other academic and administrative units across the institution to ensure the consistency and quality of offerings.
  - Northeastern State University has managed the growth of distance education appropriately up to this point and does not anticipate any logistical, resource, or support service concerns in the future. Although the distance learning program is expected to continue to grow, the financial resources are available to cope with the expansion in enrollment. Students completing courses by interactive videoconferencing, online, or in a blended format pay additional electronic media fees for each credit hour. The fees for these distance education courses are utilized to upgrade equipment and room facilities, pay faculty for developing distance delivered courses, and provide faculty development regarding distance delivery. A new funding model for the College of Extended Learning will provide revenue back to colleges and departments once the net revenue is determined. This allows for expansion of programming to meet the needs of our diverse populations who might not otherwise come to campus.
  - The planning of the distance-learning program involves all levels of constituencies. For program development purposes, it usually begins at the department by surveying the demand of the students. It then proceeds through the various colleges and University Curriculum Committee, and finally approved by the OSRHE.
  - Currently NSU has conducted little promotion or marketing of distance delivered programs other than those in the College of Extended Learning. Enrollment in online course sections is usually capped at 25-30 students (depending upon the subject area) and there is not a problem with online courses having sufficient enrollment. NSU added additional sections of courses when the waiting list for online sections reached a critical mass. At these enrollment limits the course more than pays for itself and does not become a financial liability.
  - CTL has provided a \$1,800 distance education course development stipend to faculty members who are interested in developing online courses. CTL has provided significant selection, orientation and support for faculty choosing distance delivery methods. This training and support takes the forms of individual and group training and consultation as well as regularly scheduled workshops. Overall, this process is working quite well to enhance distance delivery education for both novice and seasoned faculty.

- NSU has adopted a rigorous authentication system that includes proof of enrollment. Blackboard password protection and Blackboard Collaborate provides both voice and face-to-face consultation and identification. In a January 13, 2009 presentation by the Instructional Technology Council, representatives from the Department of Education indicated that this meets the requirement of the HLC regarding authentication.
- In a 2007 survey of online students, 76 percent of the respondents believed that they learned as much in the online courses as they generally do in face to face classes; 94 percent would take another NSU online course; and 77 percent reported that effective procedures were in place for acquiring appropriate resources to support the online experience.
- Budget Process Communication  
Although the new leadership is allowing more transparency in the budgeting process, feedback from faculty, deans and chairs indicated that the allocation of financial resources could be more in line with the strategic planning process. The University may want to discuss this internally for possible clarification of communication concerns.
- Community Outreach  
The University has reached out to the community in finding out the needs of its constituencies and their expectations in various ad hoc methods and media. However, systematic formal survey of the perceptions of the community regarding the value of the services provided by the University has not been conducted in recent years. The University may like to consider employing a formal survey to collect this data.
- External Funding  
The University should increase its efforts to secure additional external funding. The new academic prioritization/reallocation process is useful in helping craft the message to potential donors that all academic programs for seed areas to grow, sustain, and otherwise change to meet industry or personal needs. The process, as stated in the *Spring 2011 Strategic Plan*, “supports growth, achieves internal efficiencies, and strategically invests for optimal use of new resources.”
- Student Support at Non-Traditional Times  
Although technical support was considered as adequate during the weekdays including the evening hours by the faculty and students, faculty at the open forum suggested that the technical assistance during the weekends is not as convenient, reliable, and timely as faculty expected. The University may like to consider enhancing its technical assistance during the weekend hours.

### III. RECOGNITIONS OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS AND/OR PRACTICES

- Office of Assessment and Institutional Research  
Since the last on-site visit, the University established an Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. The mission of the Office is to “facilitate the generation, compilation, interpretation, and distribution of institutional data to enhance decision-making.” Consistent with this mission, the Office supports many surveys and initiatives, including the *Remediation Surveys*, discipline-specific and institutional accreditations, *Regent's Assessment Reports*, *Freshman Surveys*, *Freshman Inventories*, *Senior Surveys*, *Mid-Level Assessments*, assessment in the major data, *Alumni Surveys*, *College Student Experience Questionnaires*, college assessment activities, and faculty projects.

The Office addressed previous concerns/needs for a comprehensive database. Extracting data from the university's legacy system is accomplished with analytic tools, including DataNow, SPSS, and Monarch. The University's new Banner ERP system provides access to student, financial, and human resource reporting systems. Here are some targeted achievements that the team recognized:

- In 2004, the University hired a consultant to help address assessment concerns noted above. By 2007, a General Education Assessment Task Force (now a standing committee) was formed to evaluate and consider the purpose and requirements of the general education program. The general education curriculum changes were approved by the Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee in fall 2009 and were approved by Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in spring 2010. The new general education curriculum went into effect for first-time freshmen that fall.
  - The assessment of general education outcomes was changed from the College Base to the Educational Testing Service – Proficiency Profile. A capstone component (course) for general education to assess competencies has been implemented. Additionally, a new director of general education capstone position was created. A planned focus for the General Education Committee is to assist faculty in making general education assessment consistent across multiple sections of the same course.
  - In 2010, NSU was selected to participate in the HLC Commission's Assessment Academy. The University has focused on developing measurable student learning outcomes in all courses and programs. Student learning coordinators for each college support these efforts. Their role is to assist colleagues in developing assessment measures.
- Reversing Declining Student Enrollment  
The decline in graduate enrollments has been reversed. Since 2002, graduate enrollment increased by 53 percent, from 748 students in fall 2001 to 1,141 students in fall 2011. The University now offers 18 graduate programs and certificates on the Tahlequah Campus, 20 at Broken Arrow, and four at Muskogee. In order to grow graduate (and undergraduate) programs that are consistent with the mission of the University and its three campuses, NSU initiated an academic prioritization process, added new programs that reflect market responsiveness, and continued to engage in capacity analyses to determine if the infrastructure can support additional graduate student enrollments.
  - Increased External Funding  
The University obtained external funding (sales tax initiatives, donations, 2005 State Higher Education Capital Bond issuance) to support several capital initiatives, including Broken Arrow campus construction, renovation of the Science building in Tahlequah, creation of a "one-stop" site for enrollment and student services, a new athletic practice facility, renovation and expansion of the football stadium, and reading clinics at Tahlequah and Broken Arrow
  - Global Education Focus  
NSU adopts an aim-high approach to its mission and goals. It commits itself to cultivate lifelong learning experience for students to compete in a dynamic global society. Its vision statements are highly aspirational, reflecting the required traits for productive citizens in the 21st century. To support this broad mission, it has very active and effective international programs for a regional comprehensive university. Its collaboration with CIBT Educational Group Inc. and the establishment of Global Learning Center in far-Eastern countries and in the Broken Arrow campus will give NSU a significant advantage in the crowded international education market.

- Entrepreneurial Programs  
The University introduced entrepreneurial programs to attract students who may otherwise not attend a college or university. The new College of Extended Learning provides degree completion programs created to meet the needs of working adults. The University also experienced increases in total credit hours from 102,095 in fall 2008 to 109,857 in fall 2010, resulting in additional tuition and fee income.
- Financial Stability  
NSU has enhanced its fiscal strength and reserves during the last five-years. One standard measure of financial health for an organization is the primary reserve ratio, which measures the amount of time during which an institution could pay its expenses without relying on additional revenues. An institution increasing its primary reserve ratio is viewed positively, while one with a decreasing trend is facing financial difficulty. A ratio of .40X or better is necessary to give the financial flexibility necessary for positive transformation. For NSU, this ratio was a healthy 0.475X as of June 30, 2010, which means NSU can cover about six months of expenses (50 percent of 12 months). Over the past five year period (2006-2010) the ratio has increased from 0.235X to 0.475X.

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Northeastern State University, OK

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation

**DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Visit will include an evaluation of the institution's request to offer programs via distance education.

**DATES OF REVIEW:** 3/26/12 - 3/28/12

---

**Nature of Organization**

---

**LEGAL STATUS:** Public

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

---

**DEGREES AWARDED:** B, M, D

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

---

**Conditions of Affiliation**

---

**STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:** Accreditation at the First Professional level is limited to the Doctor of Optometry; no other degrees beyond the Master's level may be offered without a comprehensive evaluation

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** Accreditation at the First Professional level is limited to the Doctor of Optometry; no other degrees beyond the Master's level may be offered without a comprehensive evaluation **substantive change review.**

---

**APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:** Prior Commission approval required.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

---

**APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:** The Commission's policies and definitions for distance and correspondence education recently underwent significant change. Some institutions are currently under review to ensure conformity with the revised policies. This entry will be updated in the coming months following completion of that review.

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** The institution has been approved under Commission policy to offer up to 100% of its total degree programs through distance education. The processes for expanding distance education are defined in other Commission documents.

---

**REPORTS REQUIRED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

---

**OTHER VISITS SCHEDULED:** None

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION:** No Change

---

**Summary of Commission Review**

*Team Recommendations for the  
STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS*

---

**YEAR OF LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2001 - 2002**

---

**YEAR FOR NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: 2011 - 2012**

---

**TEAM RECOMMENDATION: 2021-2022**

---

## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

**INSTITUTION and STATE:** Northeastern State University, OK

**TYPE OF REVIEW (from ESS):** Continued Accreditation \_X\_ No change to Organization Profile

### Educational Programs

|                                   | Program<br>Distribution | Recommended<br>Change (+ or -) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Programs leading to Undergraduate |                         |                                |
| Associate                         | 0                       |                                |
| Bachelors                         | 54                      |                                |
| Programs leading to Graduate      |                         |                                |
| Masters                           | 23                      |                                |
| Specialist                        | 0                       |                                |
| First Professional                |                         |                                |
| Doctoral                          | 1                       |                                |

### Off-Campus Activities

|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| In-State:             | Present Activity:   | <b>Recommended Change:<br/>(+ or -)</b> |
| Campuses:             | Broken Arrow (NSU at Broken Arrow) ; Muskogee (NSU at Muskogee)   |   |
| Additional Locations: | Miami (Northeastern Oklahoma A & M College) ; Muskogee (Connors State College) ; Poteau (Kiamichi Technology Center) ; Tulsa (Tulsa Community College) ; Wilburton (Eastern Oklahoma State College) |   |
| Out-of-State:         | Present Wording:  | <b>Recommended Change:<br/>(+ or -)</b> |
| Campuses:             | None  |   |
| Additional Locations: | None  |   |
| Course Locations:     | None  |   |
| Out-of-USA:           | Present Wording:  | <b>Recommended Change:<br/>(+ or -)</b> |
| Campuses:             | None  |   |
| Additional Locations: | None  |   |
| Course Locations:     | None  |   |

## **Distance Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

Bachelor - 15.0703 Industrial Safety Technology/Technician (BT Technology) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 19.0101 Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences, General (BS Human and Family Sciences) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 23.0101 English Language and Literature, General (BA in English) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 26.0101 Biology/Biological Sciences, General (BS in Biology) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 30.9999 Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other (BS Organizational Leadership) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 43.0103 Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration (BS Criminal Justice) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 51.1005 Clinical Laboratory Science/Medical Technology/Technologist (BS Medical Laboratory Science) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 51.2211 Health Services Administration (BS Health Care Administration) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 51.3801 Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse (BSN in Nursing) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 52.0903 Tourism and Travel Services Management (BBA Hotel & Tourism Management) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 52.1201 Management Information Systems, General (BBA Information Systems) offered via Internet; Bachelor - 52.1401 Marketing/Marketing Management, General (BBA Marketing) offered via Internet; Certificate - 43.0302 Crisis/Emergency/Disaster Management (Certificate in Emergency Management & Planning) offered via Internet; Master - 13.0301 Curriculum and Instruction (MEd Teaching) offered via Internet; Master - 13.0406 Higher Education/Higher Education Administration (MS Higher Education Leadership) offered via Internet; Master - 13.1315 Reading Teacher Education (MEd Reading Education) offered via Internet; Master - 13.1316 Science Teacher Education/General Science Teacher Education (MEd Science Education) offered via Internet; Master - 15.1501 Engineering/Industrial Management (MS Environmental Health & Safety Management) offered via Internet; Master - 23.0101 English Language and Literature, General (MA English) offered via Internet; Master - 43.0103 Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration (MS Criminal Justice) offered via Internet; Master - 51.3817 Nursing Education (MSN Nursing) offered via Internet; Master - 52.0201 Business Administration and Management, General (MBA Business Administration) offered via Internet; Master - 52.0304 Accounting and Finance (MS Accounting and Financial Analysis) offered via Internet

## **Recommended Change:**

(+ or -)

## **Correspondence Education Programs:**

Present Offerings:

None