



The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

NCA

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Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning

February 27, 2004

TO: President Gerald E. Monette, Turtle Mountain Community College

FROM: Karen Solomon, Assistant Director

SUBJECT: Final Team Report

Enclosed is the institution's copy of the final Team Report of a visit to Turtle Mountain Community College. The Commission encourages you to make additional copies to circulate to your constituencies.

You are asked to acknowledge receipt of the report and are requested to file on behalf of your institution a formal written response to the evaluation team's report and recommendation. This response becomes a part of the official record of the evaluation; it serves as an integral part of this current process, and it will be included in the materials sent to the next team to visit your institution. Please send the response to me, send copies to members of the visiting team, and set aside some additional copies for the Commission's review process. (See *Handbook of Accreditation, Second Edition*, Chapter 9.)

You are also asked to let me know which review option you prefer: the Readers' Panel or the Review Committee. A description of these processes appears in Chapter 9 of the *Handbook*. Please review these options and advise me as soon as possible, whether you agree essentially with the team's report and recommendation and therefore choose the Readers' Panel, or whether you wish to have the team's report and your materials examined by a Review Committee. The next Review Committee meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2004, in Chicago.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation team's report or the review option, please let me know.

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Lloyd H. Hammonds, Team Chairperson

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

**Turtle Mountain Community College
Belcourt, North Dakota**

October 20 22, 2003

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission
A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Pamela M. Balch, President, Mayville State University, Mayville, ND 58257

Dr. Donald M. Claycomb, President, Linn State Technical College, Linn, MO 65051

Ms. Ann E. Martin, Assessment Coordinator, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, Hayward, WI 54843

Ms. Barbara J. Ogston, Vice President for Academics, Bay Mills Community College, Brimley, MI 49715

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ASSURANCE SECTION

I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit: To conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation.

B. Institutional Context: Turtle Mountain Community College is one of the six original tribal colleges that were established by various Indian Tribes in the early 1970's. The Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe chartered the College in 1972. The college is located in north central North Dakota in the historical wooded, hilly, and lake-filled area known as the Turtle Mountains and is known for its all-seasons recreational areas. In addition to being the home of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa the area is the home of the world-renowned International Peace Garden.

Since its beginning the college has grown from a fledgling institution serving less than sixty students per year to a two campus college serving more than 650 full time equivalents. The college is a commuter college with no residential facilities.

The college offers a variety of certificate and associate degree programs and one bachelor's program in elementary education. The college is an integral part of the community and its economic development.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit: None

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited: Team members visited the original campus in Belcourt and the new campus 2 ½ miles north of Belcourt.

E. Distance Education Reviewed: The institution offers some courses each semester through (1) an interactive video network of all North Dakota institutions of higher education; (2) a satellite network of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium; and (3) some internet courses. No entire programs are offered through distance education.

F. Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

Individuals/Administration

1. President
2. Vice President of Academic Affairs
3. Comptroller
4. Director of Community/Adult Education
5. Vocational Education Director
6. Chief Information Officer
7. Library Coordinator

8. Registrar
9. Student senate president
10. Institutional development, Title III director

Faculty

- Elementary Education members (3)
2. Biology
3. Art
4. General Education (2)
5. Vocational
6. Business

Formal Meetings by Group

- Assessment Committee (four faculty and the Vice President of Academic Affairs)
2. Academic Affairs Committee (nine members attended)
3. Combined meeting of the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees
4. Open community meeting (twenty-three attended)
5. Open faculty meeting (thirty attended)
6. Open student meeting (forty-five attended)
7. Open supervisor's meeting (twenty-five attended)
8. Open meeting for staff (fifteen attended)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. Self-study Report
2. Basic Institutional Data Forms
3. College catalog
4. Faculty Handbook
5. Audited financial reports, 1997 – 2002
6. Procedures Manual
7. Board of Directors/Trustees Minutes
8. Bank accounting statements
9. Program and other brochures
10. Assessment Committee Minutes
11. Long Range Plan, 2002 – 2007
12. Turtle Mountain Community College Learning Resources/Library Program, Summary Report, October 2003
13. Presidential Newsletters
14. Curriculum and course outlines and syllabi
15. TCUP Self-Evaluation
16. Five Year Student Reports, 2002 -2003, fall term
17. Turtle Mountain Community College Teacher Education Student Handbook

18. June, 2003 Preliminary Report—First Cohort Portfolio Feedback Assessment
19. Graduation completion rates
20. Personnel records and files, including credentials
21. Turtle Mountain Community College Assessment Operations Manual
22. Fall, 2003 General Education and Elementary Education Report
23. Reports of the 1993, 1996, and 2000 NCA team reports

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process. Turtle Mountain's self-study process for continued accreditation officially began in January, 2002. The President named the Vice President to serve as self-study coordinator with a number of Committee Chairs who served as the Steering Committee. The self-study process involved representatives from across the college, including faculty, staff, students, and Board members. The institution's NCA liaison also visited the campus to assist in the process. The self-study process was directed at all aspects of the institution's operation and allowed for substantial input across the college.

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report. The self-study report, while largely descriptive in nature, did identify many "strengths" of the institution and a few "weaknesses." One would hope that future self-studies would continue the thoroughness of the present self-study, but be more self-critical. Nevertheless, the report should prove useful to the institution as it develops and implements on-going assessment and planning processes.

C. Capacity to Address Previously Identified Challenges. The team considers the response of the institution to previously identified challenges to be inadequate.

Specific Responses to Challenges that are Inadequate

"Efforts have been made to link assessment to the mission, goals, and objectives of the college, but an institution-wide comprehensive assessment plan which follows the student throughout their educational process needs to be developed." This will be explained in Criterion Three.

"The lack of faculty involvement in top level decisions is a concern, especially in the areas of faculty hiring and evaluation processes." This will be explained in Criterion Two.

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 complaint information.

IV. AFFIRMATION OF THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Based on the self-study review and other documentation, the team confirms that the institution continues to meet each of the twenty-four General Institutional Requirements.

V. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

A. CRITERION ONE

The institution demonstrates that it has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:**
 - a. The institution has clearly articulated its statements of mission and purposes and stated them in the catalog, brochures, and other publications. The Mission Statement was also prominently displayed in hallways.
 - b. The mission and purposes of the institution are supported by faculty, staff, students, trustees and board members and community as evidenced by statements made in group meetings.
2. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:**

None noted.
3. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**

None noted.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; no Commission follow-up recommended.

B. CRITERION TWO

The institution demonstrates that it has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:**
 - a. Balanced budgets have allowed the institution to operate in a financially responsible manner.
 - b. The Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors are comprised of knowledgeable, dedicated individuals who understand and support the mission of the college.
 - c. There is a strong administrative team who are qualified and experienced.
 - d. The facilities of the college's new campus are outstanding and support teaching and learning.
 - e. The institution has a qualified faculty with credentials that attest to the courses they teach.
 - f. Students have access to the academic resources and equipment necessary to support teaching and learning.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:**
 - a. A strategic plan is needed that includes providing for the upkeep, repair, replacement of equipment and physical plant and personnel services that are grant funded.
 - b. There is a lack of formal evaluation processes for administration, faculty, and staff.
 - c. There needs to be a systematic and formal retention program that addresses student retention.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**
 - a. Lack of faculty and staff involvement in decision-making through a formal shared governance process needs to be addressed by the college. This concern was addressed by a prior visiting team, but has not been adequately addressed by the college. No formal structures are in place to involve faculty and staff in decision-making. Consequently, the institution is missing many opportunities to utilize the knowledge, skill, and talents of its employees.

- b. Faculty appear to play little, if any role, in hiring new faculty—even in their own department.
- c. Meetings with faculty and staff indicated that they are seldom involved in decision-making processes at the college.
- d. At present, assessment of student learning outcomes appears more administratively-driven, rather than faculty-owned and driven.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence demonstrated; Commission follow-up recommended.

Focused visit in 2008-2009 on implementing a system of shared governance across the college.

C. CRITERION THREE

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:

- a. There are courses of study in the academic programs that are clearly defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous.
- b. There is evidence that students are conducting scientific research projects.
- c. Programs are requiring intellectual interaction between student and faculty and student and student. Examples include: entrepreneurship, service learning, building trades, as well as sponsoring business plans for ventures that could be offered locally. One example is a future coffee shop within the new facility.
- d. Faculty have exercised responsibility for determining the institution's award for academic credit.
- e. The Student Services personnel effectively support the institution's purposes.
- f. It appeared through statements by students and observations of classroom and labs that there was effective teaching taking place even though data were not available to support this.
- g. The Turtle Mountain Elementary Education program has designed and successfully implemented portfolio assessment.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:**
 - a. There is lack of correlation between the courses in the general education program and the general education goals.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**
 - a. There is no *institutional effectiveness* plan.
 - b. The current assessment plan is in such an infancy stage that it is difficult to determine its effectiveness.
 - c. There appears to be confusion as to the ownership of assessment of student learning. This is compounded by having both a faculty co-chair and an administrative co-chair with unclear roles and responsibilities. Faculty must have the authority and responsibility for assessment of student learning.
 - d. Outcomes of the assessment of student learning and assessment of institutional effectiveness should drive the budget and the strategic plan. Substantial data and measures are essential. However, at present there is little evidence that the budget and strategic plan are driven by data collected from assessment processes.
 - e. The team believes further consideration is needed to verify that the assessment instruments are measuring fulfillment of the stated learning objectives.

Recommendation of the Team

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; Commission follow-up recommended. The 1993 team identified assessment as an area in need of special attention. The 2000 team also identified assessment as a challenge for the institution. This team was disappointed to find that the institution still had not fulfilled the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission regarding assessment. Hence, the following Commission follow-up is recommended:

A progress report due on July 1, 2005 that consists of a plan for assessing institutional effectiveness;

A focused visit in 2008-2009 on assessment of student learning; assessment of institutional effectiveness; and implementation of a strategic planning process linked to assessment.

D. CRITERION FOUR

The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:**
 - a. The institution has a good track record in acquiring and managing multiple grants.
 - b. There is a solid history of financial management as evidenced in balanced budgets and positive audit findings.
 - c. The new building positions the college for a future that did not exist prior to the construction of the new facility.
 - d. There is strong community support for the college.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:**
 - a. There should be more attention to building the endowment through private donations.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**
 - a. There do not appear to be structured assessment processes that are continuous, that involve a variety of institutional constituencies and that provide meaningful and useful information to the planning processes as well as to students.
 - b. There do not appear to be plans as well as on-going effective planning processes necessary to the institution's continuance.
 - c. There is no institutional technology plan which addresses future technology issues and also includes dates, timelines, and budgetary detail.
 - d. The purported technology plan is not a plan, but rather an inventory of technology on campus and does not discuss future needs and replacement of existing technology.

Recommendation of the Team:

Pattern of evidence sufficiently demonstrated; Commission follow-up recommended.

A progress report due October 1, 2006 that includes an institution-wide strategic plan. The strategic plan should incorporate the institution's plan for the use, implementation, and replacement of technology.

E. CRITERION FIVE

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.

Salient Evidence of Fulfillment of Criterion

1. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion is met:**
 - a. The student, faculty, and staff handbooks contain appropriate grievance procedures.
 - b. The evidence indicates that the grant managers are cognizant of their compliance requirements.
 - c. Publications reflect accurately the quality of activities conducted by the college.
 - d. Elements of Ojibwa culture are contained in many aspects of the college including the design of the building, student activities, and curriculum.

2. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion needs institutional attention:**
 - a. The following notes in personnel policy manuals are inconsistent with other college policies and practices: Note # 2, "Turtle Mountain Community College can deviate from any of the described policies at any time at its sole discretion." Note # 3, "Turtle Mountain is free to modify, revise or revoke this series of documents at any time without notice to the employee." Such notes should be consistent with other college policies and practices.

3. **Evidence that demonstrates the criterion requires institutional attention and Commission follow-up:**

None noted.

VI. ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIP

A. Continued Accreditation.

Next Comprehensive Visit: 2013-2014

Rationale for accreditation decision: During the past decade, Turtle Mountain Community College has continued to strengthen its ability to achieve its educational and other purposes. The institution has dedicated, well-qualified Boards and administrative personnel. The new 145,000 sq. ft. facility should serve the institution well for many years to come. The college has an excellent faculty dedicated to student growth and development. Students, employers, and the community are all very satisfied with the college. With the exception of two areas—assessment and shared governance—the institution has adequately addressed the concerns of the previous comprehensive team. While addressing these two concerns are critical issues, on balance the institution is better positioned today than it was a decade ago to continue to accomplish its educational and other goals with integrity.

B. Definers of the Relationship.

1. **Degree Level:** Bachelor's; no change requested
2. **Ownership:** Tribal College; no change requested
3. **Stipulations:** Accreditation at the Bachelor's degree level is limited to the Bachelor of Elementary Education; no change requested
4. **New Degree Sites:** No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites within Rolette County, North Dakota; no change requested
5. **Other:** None; no change requested

C. Commission Follow-up.

Progress Reports Due: July 1, 2005/October 1, 2006

1. A written plan for assessing institutional effectiveness, due July 1, 2005. The written plan for assessing institutional effectiveness should include assessment of student learning that will contain all of the following elements:
 - a. a coherent written plan for assessing student learning outcomes;
 - b. a plan that is faculty-driven in its development and implementation;
 - c. a plan that is tied to student learning outcomes;

- d. a plan that employs both direct and indirect measures;
- e. a plan that employs multiple measures;
- f. assessment instruments that are congruent with stated learning outcomes;
- g. results that are tied to the planning processes to improve student learning.

In addition, the institutional effectiveness plan should include an assessment of broader institutional issues such as student satisfaction, employee morale, financial fitness of the institution, facilities, community relations, and other issues directly relating to the institution's mission and purposes.

- 2. A written, institution-wide strategic plan. The strategic plan should incorporate the institution's plan for the use, implementation, and replacement of technology, due, October 1, 2006.

Rationale & Expectations: At present, the college has no plan for assessing institutional effectiveness. Recent attention at the college has been devoted to assessing student learning outcomes. While assessment of student learning outcomes is vitally important, the college must also assess all of its areas of operation as they all have an impact on student learning. Hence, the team recommends that the college be required to develop a written plan for assessing institutional effectiveness by July 1, 2005. In addition, the team learned that there was no technology plan in place at the institution, even though the institution has invested heavily in modern technology and is very dependent on it. Current decision-making almost appears to be on a random, unplanned basis with little thought given to future replacement needs. Consequently, the team is also recommending as part of this progress report a written plan for how technology at the college will be utilized, along with a timetable for implementing the technology, and a replacement schedule.

Monitoring Reports Due: None

Contingency Report Due: None

Focused Visit: 2008-2009

- 1. On implementation of a system of shared governance

- across the college;
2. On assessment of student learning; assessment of institutional effectiveness; and implementation of a strategic planning process linked to assessment.

Rationale & Expectations: Despite the challenges identified by 1993 team regarding the need for shared governance, little or no progress has been made in this area during the past decade. This lack of shared governance was evident across all sectors of the college. A faculty member and the vice president serve as co-chairs of the Assessment Committee. This has significantly clouded the issue of who should be the primary architect of the assessment of student learning program --faculty or administration. Faculty are generally not involved in decision-making processes at the institution, including the hiring of new faculty within their own department. While it is up to every institution as to how a collegial, shared governance system should be implemented, the complete absence of shared governance at Turtle Mountain is particularly noteworthy. Through this focused visit the team hopes that the institution will develop a culture and system of shared governance that will work best for it.

As to assessment, the team recommends a focused visit to evaluate:

- a. how well the institution has carried out the new plan for assessing institutional effectiveness it will develop as part of an earlier progress report;
- b. how well the institution has implemented its program for assessing student learning outcomes;
- c. how assessment at all levels is linked to an effective institutional planning process.

In addition, the team expects that at the time of the focused visit the institution will be able to demonstrate that it has used the results of its assessment activities to improve student learning. The institution should be able to demonstrate in each of its educational programs how assessment data was used in decision-making processes to improve teaching and learning. This should include examples of the collection of assessment data, analysis of the data, decision-making based on the data, teaching or curricular changes implemented as a result of the data, and further assessment of how well the changes have enhanced student learning. These efforts should be primarily faculty-driven.

The team was very careful and deliberate in its recommendations and believes this course of action is appropriate given the fact that the institution is in the very early stages of its assessment of learning outcomes journey and has yet to begin assessing institutional effectiveness. In addition, the team notes that despite the admonitions of previous NCA teams, the college has made very little progress in assessing student learning outcomes. At the time of the visit, the newly organized structure of the Assessment Committee had met only once. Granted, there had been assessment meetings prior to this, but it appeared as though there was still substantial confusion regarding assessment of student learning and how the results of assessment can be used to enhance student learning. Further, there is no interface between the institution's limited assessment activities and planning. A document purporting to be the long-range plan was incomplete and not developed with faculty input or support. Nor were items in the plan prioritized. Items costing little or nothing appeared to be given the same weight as those costing \$10 million.

A planning process, linked to assessment, needs to be developed, implemented, and show positive improvements.

D. Commission Sanction.

None

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

None

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT TURTLE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Since its inception in 1972, Turtle Mountain Community College has served the Turtle Mountain community well. From its original enrollment of less than sixty students, the college has grown to more than 650 students and is planning further expansion. The college expanded to a second site in 1999 with an excellent, modern 105,000 sq ft facility that meets the needs of the students and the community.

Team discussions with students, employees, trustees, and members of the community suggest an institution with a clear mission and purpose that is dedicated to accomplishing its goals. Students, employers, and the general public believe the college fills a critical need in the community in educating people and preparing them for work or further educational study. In addition, the college has been a leader in helping to maintain and promote the culture and heritage of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe.

The faculty, staff, trustees/board and administration are all dedicated and competent to carry out their respective roles. Students are appreciative and complimentary of the education they receive.

While it appears the institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes there are areas where substantial improvement is needed. Among the most critical are the following: (1) developing and implementing a system of shared governance; and (2) implementing a faculty-driven plan for assessing student learning outcomes linked to a planning process that results in enhancing student learning. The assurance section of this report focuses on moving the institution toward addressing these issues. This section contains consultations of the team to assist the institution as it moves forward on these and other issues.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

Shared Governance and Decision-Making

As an institution of higher education matures, gains stability, and is expected to return more and more to its constituents, shared governance becomes necessary for the institution to progress in the areas of effectiveness and efficiency, if not survive in today's environment. Shared governance is not a democratic process, but is a process developed within an institution which calls for the sharing of input by internal stakeholders before a decision is made by the person or persons responsible for and with the authority to make the final decision related to an issue.

Shared governance obligates those closest to the heart of issues to provide information and helpful ideas that the person or persons making the decision may not be aware of. It increases buy in by those affected and reduces both unproductive criticism and second-guessing.

Not only would a formal shared governance program provide valuable input, but would also encourage the productive expression of difference of opinion in a way that is non-threatening to all yet be meaningful in providing valuable input for Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) decision makers.

These things being said, it is imperative that TMCC develop a formal shared governance process to aid in decision-making.

TMCC currently uses a lottery system when selecting a search/screening committee for open positions. Names of all employees are “placed in a hat” and names are drawn for the committee. This method does not ensure that any member of the committee will be knowledgeable of the match of respective applicants to the duties of the open position. With the formal system of hiring at TMCC, a search/screening committee is advisory and does not have the final decision making authority which is common practice in higher education; however, the visiting team does not believe the lottery system affords the decision maker(s) input that could be very helpful in making the best decision for TMCC.

Library

Within the new college facility, the library appears to have adequate space and holdings for the college to meet its mission. The librarian honors faculty requests for supporting materials as the budget permits. Students were quietly working throughout the facility during the team’s visit.

There is an impressive collection (some 252 items) of computer software purchased through a grant to support many college programs; however, it is rarely used because faculty are either not aware of its value to their courses or do not have sufficient time to learn the software. The average heavy teaching assignments of eighteen credit hours per semester do not allow faculty sufficient time to regularly revise courses to include new materials and software.

Turtle Mountain Community College has a beautiful new building that includes an auditorium, gymnasium and cafeteria as well as a consolidated student services area, yet a classroom has been carved out of library space this fall. Delivering a class within the open library is not conducive to quiet study that is normally conducted within a library. The team strongly recommends that the class be moved to another area and that, in the future, care be given not to over-schedule classrooms at any given time.

Another instance of usurping library space is the assignment of faculty offices to former tutor or quiet study rooms. There are times that students benefit greatly from such small rooms that can be closed-off from sound and movement found within a college. Surely, such a new building was adequately planned without having an almost immediate need for additional faculty office space.

Learning Support Services

The Student Support Services staff is now located in one large, well designed area that permits each member to contribute from his or her strength while combining their efforts to assist students to be successful in completing programs of study. In addition to providing transfer and career counseling and assisting with application forms as students are guided in the transfer process to bachelor level institutions, tutoring services are provided by staff as well as the employment of peer tutors.

A Math Lab is located in the library. Although the tutors who are available to assist math students are presently supervised by a math faculty member, the future of that activity is in question because the grant that funds the lab will be completed this academic year leaving the college without funds to continue that activity.

Another area that assists students at a tutorial level is the Academic Success Center that appears to focus on building reading and writing skills. Of special note are several powerful computer software programs that are available to students in those areas.

Like its sister tribal colleges, Turtle Mountain Community College relies to a great extent on grant funding to provide many student services. This permits the college to purchase computer hardware and software as well as to staff the activity for the duration of the grant; however, often, such programs are doomed at the conclusion of the grant period for lack of funding to continue the project.

The team suggests that the college may find it more economical to consolidate all tutoring efforts in one area, making the best usage of the computers and providing quiet areas for one-on-one or small group tutoring sessions.

At the beginning of each semester, faculty assess all new students to determine their competency levels in reading, writing and math. While this is commendable, and a standard practice at other institutions, students are only advised to take developmental courses when their skills are not at college level. Instead, the team recommends that students be required to take the appropriate reading, writing and math courses that are needed to increase their basic skills to college-level. They should be assessed again at the conclusion of each developmental course to determine, once more, student readiness for college-level courses. The ability to read and comprehend at the college-level is especially necessary in order to succeed in program and general education courses.

General Education

While the selection of courses that comprise the general education program at Turtle Mountain Community College is considered normal at community colleges, the stated goals are narrow since they only cover problem solving, technological literacy, cultural literacy/community service and critical thinking. Each of these is a viable goal but the total ignores such areas as composition, arts and humanities, history, social science, math and science. In addition, the assessment of general education should be revisited to select more appropriate instruments than measuring courses completed during the first semester at the college. The effectiveness of general education should be measured after all of the defined courses are completed. There are no capstone courses in the general education program that can serve as appropriate areas for assessment. Capstone courses are generally found in the final semester of study in a student's major area, that incorporate all of the skills attained over the entire program.

Associate of Applied Science Degree Program

Associate of Applied Science (AAS) programs listed are being offered with the exception of General Agriculture and Automotive. The Automotive program is inactive with the hope of bringing it back as soon as a suitable facility is acquired. The General Agriculture program is a part of the Land Grant initiative. A position for instructor has been advertised. At this time, discussion is taking place with North Dakota State University to offer the program through a cooperative effort rather than by TMCC.

Perhaps Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) should consider offering the program as a native agriculture that would support cottage industries as opposed to the traditional agriculture of North Dakota. Offering the program this way would be consistent with the spirit of self-determination and could contribute to lowering the unemployment rate on the reservation.

Currently most AAS programs offered are business or health related fields. TMCC has been very responsive to local people and local business/industry needs. In light of the high unemployment rate, both on the reservation and in the county, TMCC must do more. It is suggested that TMCC establish additional certificate and AAS degree programs that will encourage entrepreneurship and cottage industries as well as attracting external funding to the area. Doing so fits well with the institutional philosophy of providing "comprehensive higher education services in fields needed for true Indian self-determination."

Faculty Workload

The Self-Study Report and interviews conducted on campus indicate that most faculty have an 18 credit teaching load. This appears to be excessive, given the

usual 15 credits found in other community colleges. While requiring 18 credits appears to generate cost savings in instructional costs, the greater cost is the lack of time and resources for faculty to keep abreast of current developments in their fields, to conduct and evaluate assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness, to contribute to shared governance, and to participate in the community on behalf of the college. The overall result is a decreased level of citizenship and faculty oversight in appropriate matters that pertain to their work, such as curriculum, shared governance, assessment, and student support. Turtle Mountain Community College should aggressively explore ways of reducing faculty loads to an average of 15 credits a semester and undertake a thoughtful and deliberate process to involve faculty in the major issues cited by this team: participation in shared governance and implementation of assessment of student learning as well as implementation of assessment of institutional effectiveness.

Finances

Turtle Mountain Community College's financial condition has remained stable despite the heavy reliance on external grant funding. The newly acquired 5.5 million dollar loan for the new facility will add challenges to the financial portfolio. As the number of students increase, there will be a need to add more full-time faculty positions. In order to acquire additional money for an endowment and to keep abreast of the needed changes, the team recommends the following suggestions:

Design a plan to collect more of the tuition revenue. Of the 1.04 million dollars that should be collected for tuition the institution did not collect \$362,835 of that amount, leaving only \$682,092 of usable dollars.

Develop a plan for grant writing that will help the college move forward as directly related to its mission. It is commendable that the institution has over 100 grants being administered in any one year. However, careful planning would allow for a coordinated effort in writing grants.

The current development offices are working exclusively with grants. The institution may want to invest in a Director of Development who would solicit businesses, individuals, alumni, corporations, and friends of Turtle Mountain Community College. This person could help to develop the endowment into a higher level of security.

Retention

Enrollment at Turtle Mountain Community College is climbing quickly from a headcount of 639 (340 male, 299 female) in 2001-02 to a headcount of 907 (253 male, 654 female) in 2002-03, and a fall 2003 headcount of 926 (again with a majority of female students). This is very commendable. With enrollment growth comes new challenges for retention.

The team reviewed some of the retention data as well as who on campus was charged with overseeing retention. One piece of evidence from the record indicated that there were 98 first time, first year students who enrolled in 2002-03. Of these 98 students, 44 returned for 2003-04 (44.9%).

According to the registrar, retention fits under her job description, along with registrar, admissions, and MIS student services. There is a committee of over 30 faculty and staff called the "Recruitment Committee" that is involved with retention along with many other charges. This committee is probably too large to be effective with retention oversight. The team suggests that in order to improve retention, there needs to be a person devoted to the responsibility. While the team understands that there is a staff person who is a retention technician, monitoring truancy concerns but there should be a person or small task force assigned to reviewing why students leave and proposing ways to encourage retention. Institutional records indicate that 14.6% of students withdrew in the fall semester 2002 and 17.3% failed for a total of 31.9%. In spring semester 2003 17.7% withdrew and 15.2% failed for a total of 33%. There could be intervention steps put into place to lower the attrition figures. A higher retention rate is a goal that would be a win-win for the college and for the students.

The team recommends that retention be an integral component of the institution's strategic planning effort in order to insure that it receives campus-wide attention, support and action.

Technology Plan

Although there is a document entitled, "The Technology Plan for Turtle Mountain Community College," developed by Connecting Point Technology Center, Bismarck, ND, the document is not a plan, but an inventory of the technology as of 2000, needs assessment, and suggestions. The information contained in this report three years ago has not been updated, nor has any of the data collected been incorporated into a detailed technology plan that has set strategic priorities for the update, repair, maintenance and replacement of technology. This consulting report with its comprehensive nature, however, has provided a starting point for the college to maintain an inventory and to begin the process of planning for the future of its technology.

The technology plan should have many components: one that informs decision making, grant writing, and expansion/upgrade plans for the future, one tied to budget and personnel, one dealing with prioritization of needs (should we go wireless or add more workstations, as an example) as well as what to do with the older units. Alongside the technology plan should be policies for disposal and/or recycling of older units to comply with grant regulations (if purchased with grant funds), environmental safety concerns, and sensitive information on hard drives.

As with institutional assessment and strategic planning, the college will need to go beyond the collection of information and move towards the analytic processes that result in a useable set of documents that will guide decision-making in the future. These planning processes should involve as many stakeholders as possible and include well-done needs assessments completed ahead of the organization of the planning sessions. When incorporated into a routine annual process, the updating of these plans will become more institutionalized and the resultant planning documents are kept current with the changing environment at TMCC.

Assessment

Assessment: Levels of Implementation

During a group meeting, a few college faculty members reported their perception that the assessment implementation according to NCA's Assessment Culture Matrix was at a Level 3. While a few of the characteristics found in the college were consistent with a level 3, the majority of evidence of the assessment program itself does not match the maturity expected of a level 3. Assessment activities did not appear to be systemic, but rather were episodic, unconnected, and belated, as evidenced by the Fall 2003 implementation of the new general education assessment program. The Assessment Operations Manual was a document prepared for the 2003 Self-Study process, as well as a guide for the 2003 Implementation of the Assessment Plan. The 2003 Plan makes no mention of building on a history or culture of assessment. It is unclear what, if any, assessment results have informed and provided direction to improve student learning. Previous efforts that were mentioned in the Self-Study Report did not provide clarity of understanding to the team that assessment had advanced to a level of maturation requiring another cycle of improvement; instead, the 2003 Plan appeared to be another start from square one.

The existence of an Assessment Operations Manual by itself is not convincing enough evidence that assessment implementation has been successful or has been integrated to the expectations of the Assessment Matrix. Instead, the Manual appears to set out future aspirations and intents, which, given the context of the impending accreditation site visit, give the appearance of making promises for future compliance when past performance has been less than successful.

Assessment: Faculty Ownership and Institutional Commitment

Given the excessive teaching load expected of full-time faculty, it is difficult to expect faculty to exercise a great deal of ownership for assessment and shared governance. They are simply too busy in the classroom to devote time to other matters. The effect of heavy instructional workloads results in more administrative control over non-classroom issues, as evidenced in the organizational structure at this institution where the Vice-President is a co-chair who selects a faculty member as Assessment Coordinator to co-chair the

assessment committee. While the leadership and support of assessment by the Vice-President could be viewed as institutional commitment, faculty participation should be encouraged by granting release time to those faculty members in addition to the Assessment Coordinator to own and evaluate the implementation of assessment of student learning. The duties of the Assessment Committee outlined in the Assessment Operations Manual are appropriate yet rather broadly defined. However, to assign overburdened faculty to carry out these duties may challenge the committee's effectiveness. Moreover, there appears to be an expectation that the Assessment Coordinator will be "providing an analysis and an evaluation of all programmatic and course assessment activities reviewed by the Assessment Committee that year (p.3, Assessment Operations Manual, 2003) and yet there is no structure in identifying the faculty groups relative to programmatic and course goals and objectives that are supposed to be doing this work.

By the time of the focused evaluation, the institution should have reviewed the organizational structure of the Assessment Committee and explicitly defined the lines of communication of assessment results from the course level to the broader general education and programmatic levels. Given the 18 credit faculty workload expectations, the institution is strongly encouraged to demonstrate commitment by providing the resources to do assessment well, and this includes reduction of faculty workloads as well as other human and financial support. Administrative involvement in assessment should be limited to support and indirect leadership rather than that of a co-chair position.

Assessment Design: Capstone Courses

A general definition of a "capstone" course is an advanced course that integrates previous knowledge and experiences into a higher level of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to cite Bloom's Taxonomy. Capstone courses, by commonly accepted practices, are knowledge-oriented, interdisciplinary, and require curricular preparation to advance to this level of student participation and performance. Usually capstone courses are those taken just prior to graduation and incorporate assessment of program outcomes.

The TMCC usage of the capstone label to foundational courses (p. 6, 2003 Assessment Manual) and general education goals creates confusion in the context of the purposes of a capstone course in higher education for many reasons. First, these TMCC courses are for the most part, beginning courses, not advanced courses. Second, these TMCC courses are essentially "stand-alone" courses and do not take an interdisciplinary or multiple-perspective approach to the higher learning skills associated with collegiate general education capstone courses. Third, the tying of each of the stand-alone "capstone" courses to one of the four general education goals is additionally not matched by the assessment tool chosen to measure the objectives of those goals. This concern will be discussed in another section below.

Overall, this unusual use of the capstone label may be symptomatic of a need to research and become more familiar with the literature and scholarship of assessment. Geographical isolation may also lead to academic isolation from networking with colleges with proven assessment programs. Several key essential Assessment books should appear on the bookshelf if they are not already there: Plomba, C.A. and T. W. Banta. (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Angelo, T. A. and K. P. Cross. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Banta, T. W. & Associates. (2002). *Building a Scholarship of Assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Banta, T. W., J. P. Lund, K. E. Black, and F. W. Oblander. (1996). *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The college should also use care in the selection of consultants to assist in the design and implementation of the assessment of student learning program as well as other institutional projects. The college is to be commended on taking advantage of the AAHE/Higher Learning Commission opportunities to learn about assessment of student learning and should continue to develop a core of faculty members who will take leadership roles in assessment design and implementation. By sending faculty leaders to such workshops and conferences, the college will be able to establish a core of engaged and informed faculty members who will then advance and implement a system of assessment that meets the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission.

Assessment: General Education Goals, Objectives, and Assessment Instruments:

Of great concern to the team is the identification of general education goals and their corresponding assessment instruments. The course requirements for general education are stated on page 41 of the Academic Catalog for the AA and AS degrees and on page 99 for the AAS degree. Although the course and credit requirements are different for the two kinds of degrees, the course requirements meet the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission's GIR 16, however the assessment of general education needs considerable attention. At issue are the assessment instruments and their corresponding goals, and whether or not these goals and instruments reflect values of collegiate learning at the level of the general education core. Many of the instruments outlined in the Assessment Operations Manual may not effectively assess the intended goal as set out in the general education assessment plan.

The four general education goals listed on page 5 of the Assessment Operations Manual are:

Students will be able to solve problems [Intermediate Algebra]

Students will demonstrate technological literacy [English Composition I & II]

Students will demonstrate cultural literacy and contribute to the community

[Ojibwa Language and Chippewa History]

Student will cultivate critical thinking skills. [American Government]

Each of these four goals is keyed with courses identified as “capstone” courses (see the discussion above on capstone courses) that are identified in square brackets after the goal. Inspection of the general education course requirements reveals a much broader curriculum than these four courses: Science with lab, psychology, physical education, arts and humanities, communication. The four goals do not address learning outcomes in these other areas. The college faculty should consider incorporating additional goals that speak to the learning outcomes of a science course, for instance, as well as other content areas required in the general education curriculum.

Next, we will turn our attention to the congruency of the assessment instrument with the existing general education goals and the “capstone” courses associated with each.

General Education Outcome: Students will be able to solve problems [Intermediate Algebra]

While problem solving may be an acceptable general education outcome, the IPDE (Identify, Predict, Decide, Execute) algorithm constrains the assessment of alternative problem solving strategies that may also be effective. Even of more concern is the instrument itself: the four alternative problems presented to the students have little to do with Intermediate Algebra and quantitative reasoning that may be essential in the selection of alternatives solutions to a problem that has economic consequences. The nature of the questions contained in this instrument trivializes the expectations that students solve problems.

The college should research and obtain assessment instruments that provide valid and reliable data to inform faculty whether or not this goal is being achieved. Faculty may want to roll this goal into the critical thinking goal and use a proven instrument designed to assess problem solving and critical thinking skill attainment.

General Education Outcome: Students will demonstrate technological literacy [English Composition I & II]

The six tasks outlined in the technological literacy rubric do not address an outcome expected of general education, but is more of a screening evaluation of whether or not a student can perform the most elementary of word processing tasks, including turning on a computer. The instrument appears to be more of an input measure, not an outcome measure.

While technological literacy is an essential skill for college success, the faculty should reconsider more sophisticated instruments that would inform more accurately and completely where future curricular interventions are needed to assure students have technological literacy. The instrument as designed would not provide necessary outcome measures data for improving student learning.

General Education Outcome: Students will demonstrate cultural literacy and contribute to the community [Ojibwa Language and Chippewa History]
The faculty should be mindful that focus groups provide indirect measures of assessment of this goal's objectives. A concern to be considered is that Ojibwa culture in the traditional sense discourages individuals from self-promotion at the expense of their peers. It is unclear if this instrument has been piloted successfully in the context of a gathering of Ojibwa students who are respectful of this tradition, for instance, students stating what they have done for community service. Additionally, the involvement of the Vice President may influence the conversations of the focus group. The rubric is subjective and inter-rater reliability and rater training will need to occur to assure the results from group to group of students are comparable and consistent enough to inform the assessment committee whether or not this goal is being adequately addressed.

Because cultural literacy may be a component of the required courses in the general education curriculum, the college may want to consider course-embedded assessment strategies. As an example, a final exam question could be designed to prompt the student to write an essay attesting to these goals. The essays can then be detached after the final exam has been graded and forwarded to a faculty committee for rating according to a rubric. As this faculty committee reads and scores the essays, there will be the opportunity for reflection and fine tuning of the assessment instrument to yield meaningful data for the necessary feedback loop.

General Education Outcome: Students will cultivate critical thinking skills. [American Government]
The internet-delivered instrument chosen to assess critical thinking skills is Accuplacer, an instrument designed for placement into introductory courses according to student performance measures. Accuplacer is the placement instrument of choice at many community colleges, however, it is unclear if this instrument has utility in assessing critical thinking skills beyond the pre-entry level. There are many collegiate critical thinking skill instruments on the market and a faculty committee should review and select an appropriate instrument that measures critical thinking skills as part of an exit/graduation assessment strategy.

Before the Focus Visit, the faculty will need to examine and revise the general education goals to be more congruent with the general education curriculum. The general education goals should reflect the collegiate nature of the general education curriculum in its breadth and depth. Faculty should be mindful that

instruments designed to evaluate student preparation for entering college-level work may not be appropriate as instruments for assessing general education and degree outcomes. Instruments chosen should be aggressively piloted in order to evaluate their utility in informing the college whether or not these instruments will provide meaningful data to improve student learning.

Assessment: Program Outcome Assessment

The Assessment Operations Manual, 2003, limits program outcome assessment to degrees and not the actual programs completed by the student. It should be mentioned that according to the Academic Catalog, these associate degrees are largely general education with a greater emphasis of the arts, humanities, and social science for the A.A. degree or an emphasis of science for the A.S. degree. Many of the program outcome assessment goals are essentially general education goals. What is missing are the individual program outcomes, such as art, business administration, early childhood, English, History, Journalism, Tribal Advocacy—Legal Studies, Music, Pre-Law Curriculum, Secondary Education, Social Science, and Social Work in the A.A. degree, and Biology, Engineering, Environmental Science, Food/Nutrition, Math, Medical Records, Medical Terminology, Natural Resources, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Pre-Dentistry, Pre-Medicine, Pre-Optometry, Pre-Veterinary Medicine, and Wildlife Studies for the A.S. degree.

Clearly, program outcomes for each of these areas should exist and be assessed as part of the program outcome assessment process. Faculty should take advantage of the commonalities among related programs in the identification of program outcomes. Advanced courses in the program could serve as actual “capstone” experiences with a course-embedded, authentic assessment activity or set of activities or assignments.

III. Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, and Practices

While there are many positive aspects of Turtle Mountain Community College, the team notes two particularly significant accomplishments that will position the institution well for the future;

First, the institution has a modern, state of the art facility that is well-equipped and provides an excellent educational environment. In addition, the architectural design of the facility supports the philosophy of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe.

Second, the two board structure of the institution serves it well and has generated interest from other tribal colleges.

Third, the college has been aggressive and successful in pursuing and obtaining a variety of grants to support many programs and services of the colleges. This has

been especially important during a time of declining financial support for colleges across the nation.

Finally, the dedication of students, faculty, staff, trustees/board, administration, and community are phenomenal. The institution has clearly taken a leadership role in the community—particularly in preserving and promoting the culture of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe.