

Dakota College at Bottineau - ND

HLC ID 1522

OPEN PATHWAY: Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Review Date: 3/11/2024

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

3/11/2024

Review Type:

Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Dakota College of Bottineau is a public, two-year comprehensive college located in Bottineau, North Dakota. It serves as part of the eleven-institution North Dakota Universities System (NDUS). Originally launched in 1907 as the North Dakota School of Forestry, the College affiliated itself with Minot State University (MSU) in 1996 and expanded its mission in 2008. The college offers associate degrees for transfer and direct entry into the workforce, along with non-credit workforce and continuing education courses. The University President serves as president of both Dakota College and Minot State University. The DCB Campus Dean serves as CEO of Dakota College and reports to the University President. The institution is governed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, a seven-member board appointed by the Governor of North Dakota. According to the institution's website, the mission of the college is to provide "quality education in a caring environment."

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) indicate that 30 percent of Dakota College faculty are classified as full-time. Of the approximately 1100 students who attend Dakota College, 73% are classified as part-time and 62% identify as female. White students comprise 77% of the student body, and 56% of the students are enrolled exclusively in distance education classes.

It should be noted that a new Campus Dean was appointed in August 2022. Under this relatively new leadership, Dakota College is in the midst of developing a new strategic plan and has convened a cross-functional strategic planning committee, creatively named SPICE (Strategic Planning and Institutional Council for Effectiveness).

Interactions with Constituencies

The team chair met with the dean and ALO via MS Teams on January 9, 2024. Subsequent correspondence with the ALO via e-mail occurred on March 22, March 25, and March 26.

Additional Documents

Per the review team's request, the following documents were uploaded to the Addendum:

- Criterion_1_Additional_Cocurricular_Programming.pdf
- Criterion_1_Advisory_Committee_Guidelines.pdf
- Criterion_1_Faculty_Service_to_Community.pdf
- Criterion_1_FYE_Diversity_Presentation.pdf
- Criterion_1_Student_Support_of_Mission_Statement.pdf

- Criterion_2A_DCB_Employee_Evaluation_Improvement.pdf
- Criterion_2B_Review_of_College_Content_and_Process.pdf
- Criterion_2C_SBHE_Training_Curriculum.pdf
- Criterion_2E_Freedom_of_Expression.pdf
- Criterion_3A1_Currency_of_Courses.pdf
- Criterion_3A3_Addressing_Syllabus_Inconsistency.pdf
- Criterion_3B3_Recognizing_human_and_cultural_diversity_and_providing_growth_opportunities_and_lifelong_skills.pdf
- Criterion_3B4_AGRI_242_Course_Description.pdf
- Criterion_3C1_Addressing_Homogeneity_of_Faculty.pdf
- Criterion_3C2_Committee_Points.pdf
- Criterion_3C3_Faculty_Qualification_Plans.pdf
- Criterion_3C5_Faculty_Currency_Tracking.pdf
- Criterion_3C6_Student_Satisfaction_with_Adjunct_Faculty.pdf
- Criterion_3C7_Support_Staff_Training.pdf
- Criterion_3D1_First_Year_Experience_Student_Satisfaction.pdf
- Criterion_3D3_Advising_Model_Impact.pdf
- Criterion_5_Audit_Findings.pdf
- Criterion_5_Scaling_Continuous_Improvement.pdf

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The mission of Dakota College at Bottineau is to "[provide] a quality education in a caring environment." This statement, alongside the college's vision and values statements, is clearly displayed on the institution's web site, accessible to the public. The mission language is consistent across Dakota's college catalog, student handbook, and employee handbook, and these documents are easily accessible online and in print.

As evidenced by multiple sets of minutes from the institution's strategic planning committee, the mission, vision, and values statement underwent multiple iterations, each with continuous involvement from faculty, staff, and administrators. Although students were not directly involved in developing the mission, vision, and values statement, the Director of Student Success served on the committee that developed the current mission and, according to the institution, advocated on behalf of the Student Senate. Minutes from the Student Senate meeting dated January 24, 2024, indicate formal student support of the mission. Meeting minutes from the college's strategic planning committee and administrative council demonstrate the institution's internal approval process, and minutes from the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education provide evidence of governing board approval.

The mission, vision, and values of Dakota College directly impact the strategic and operational work of the institution. As noted in the assurance argument, the institution has convened a cross-functional team focused on strategic planning and institutional effectiveness. This team's documented responsibilities include the following language: "Ensure the DCB Strategic Plan is aligned with the college mission." Additional documentation indicates the college's implementation plan is informed by the college's vision statement: "Dakota College at Bottineau adapts to the changing educational landscape to empower students and impact communities."

The institution honors its public commitment to quality education and a caring environment through its academics, student services, and student-focused policies. The college's academic programs, general education

requirements, student learning competencies, and specialized program accreditations, demonstrate a quality education for all students. The college catalog lists a variety of short-term academic credentials along with associate degrees designed for transfer or direct entry into careers. General education courses are required for both transfer and career degrees. According to the college catalog, outcomes for career and technical programs include workforce readiness, industry-specific skills, and the integration of general education and vocational skills. In addition, the college's web site lists industry-specific program accreditations for Dakota's paramedic program and nursing program. As noted in the student handbook, the college offers a robust complement of student support services and student-centered policies on academic forgiveness and readmission. Additionally, the college holds an annual Jacks Give Back Giving Day online fundraising event, described on the website as "18 campaigns that includes support to all athletic teams, nursing program, dental assisting program, a student emergency fund, three scholarship funds, [and] student wellness." These efforts exemplify a commitment to a caring environment.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As indicated on the institution's website, the college's mission defines the institution's purpose: "Dakota College at Bottineau provides a quality education in a caring environment." The vision statement and values statements, respectively, read as follows: "Dakota College at Bottineau is student-focused and community centered. We value: Integrity, Engagement, Inclusion and Passion" and "Dakota College at Bottineau adapts to the changing educational landscape to empower students and impact communities." Collectively, Dakota College's mission, vision, and values statements reflect a commitment to the public good. Dakota honors this commitment through its facilities agreements with outside entities, its student clubs and organizations, and the standards it holds for its faculty.

Consistent with its general education tenets of "Nature, Technology, and Beyond," Dakota College leases designated space on its campus to the North Dakota Forest Service. Additionally, the Bottineau Economic Development Corporation rents space on the Dakota campus to house the Building Blocks Learning Center. As described on the Tootris website, this center "offers a unique childcare program designed to promote learning and foster a healthy, caring environment. The program provides children with a variety of activities to ensure both physical and mental development." In addition, the college's website spotlights a 2023 sub-agreement partnership with the City of Minot "to rehabilitate, equip, and operate a Center for Career and Technical Education (CTE)." A facilities agreement form, available on the college's website, provides clear, detailed instructions on how community members may reserve select meeting and event spaces on Dakota's campus. The form includes a list of fees and sections to request room set-up, technology services, and food services.

Student clubs and organizations also provide evidence of Dakota's commitment to the public good. According to the college's website, the Lumberacts Theatre Group welcomes both students and community members to participate in all aspects of the college's theatrical productions. Members of the college's Phi Theta Kappa chapter are required to participate in service programming. Most notably, as indicated on the college's website, Leaderjacks, a student organization focused on "[developing] leadership skills through community involvement," has engaged the Bottineau community by delivering Valentine's Day greetings to long-term Bottineau residents and hosting toy drives and stuffed animal drives.

Dakota's employee handbook states that faculty are expected to "establish and maintain an appropriate presence in the community." According to the college's full-time faculty agreement and tenure requirements, full-time faculty responsibilities include 10% "service to the community" Each FT faculty member completes an annual summary of activities. The summary sheet includes a section for community engagement, defined as follows:

"Programs, talks/presentations, consulting activities, local civic/professional memberships and activities, outreach and/or continuing education activities, community relations activities, and any other activities that contribute to the community area and region." The institution furnished multiple examples of summary sheets from various general education and CTE disciplines to demonstrate the breadth and diversity of faculty engagement in the community. It should be noted that full-time staff are not required to meet such expectations, even though the institution acknowledges that many staff participate in community activities. As Dakota College prepares for its next comprehensive review, it may wish to consider ways to document and recognize staff for community engagement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The policies and practices governing and instituted by Dakota College clearly demonstrate a commitment to diversity and preparation to live and work in a global, multicultural society. Such language is pervasive in multiple documents and affirms the college's mission, vision, and values. The college's general education philosophy and select co-curricular opportunities provide additional evidence in support of diversity and global education.

The core values of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE) include the following language: "We value diversity of thought and of people and believing that diversity is a necessity to a vibrant learning community that pursues excellence in scholarship and research. We are committed to providing a university system that is trustworthy, supportive, safe and welcoming. We are committed to ensuring intercultural and international diversity in our curriculum and our people." Additionally, the NDSBHE Code of Conduct states that this governing board "supports an environment that is free of discrimination or harassment."

Similar language on diversity, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination is present in Dakota College's employee and student handbooks. As stated in the employee handbook, Dakota College is an equal opportunity institution that "does not engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion or creed, sex, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, national or ethnic origin, disability, age, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, political beliefs or affiliations, or information projected by the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) and complies with all federal and state non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action laws...." This language is reiterated in the student handbook. In addition, the student handbook states, "Dakota College at Bottineau in (sic) an equal opportunity institution and as such is committed to equal opportunity program and activities. Student organizations must be in compliance with equal opportunity guidelines to receive recognition or funding through the Student Senate."

Dakota College's general education philosophy provides additional evidence of the college's commitment to diversity and global education. As stated in the college catalog, "General education exists on the Dakota College campus to provide students with an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills to become life-long learners in a dynamic global community.... [Educated] people... recognize their place in the history, culture, and diverse heritages for the United States and the world. They appreciate the web of commonality of all humans in a multicultural world and are prepared for the responsibilities of engaged citizenship." In addition to the curricular aspects of these principles, Dakota's co-curricular programming "seeks to enhance academic learning and provide a greater understanding of human diversity through community involvement, leadership opportunities,

team building skills, and career readiness experiences." It should be noted that, of the sixteen co-curricular programs listed in the assurance argument, seven are related to athletics, two are specific to student governance, and two are associated with specific academic programs. In preparation for the next comprehensive visit, the institution may wish to consider how it democratizes co-curricular experiences across the curriculum.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

The mission of Dakota College at Bottineau, "[to provide] quality education in a caring environment," is clearly and consistently stated on the institution's web site and in various public media. In tandem with its vision and values statements, Dakota's mission statement guides all aspects of the institution's operations. General education requirements across the curriculum serve to align Dakota's academic programs with its mission, vision, and values, and student support services and student-centered policies exemplify a caring environment. Dakota's commitment to the public good is evident in the college's lease and short-term rental agreements with community partners, service projects rendered by student clubs and organizations, and mandated faculty engagement in the community. The policies governing Dakota College, the policies published in Dakota's employee and student handbooks, and the college's philosophies of general education and co-curricular programming clearly demonstrate a commitment to diversity, global education, and citizenship. In preparation for the next comprehensive visit, the review team encourages Dakota College to consider strategies for recognizing staff engagement in the community, and to demonstrate how it democratizes the co-curricular experience for all students.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) continues to demonstrate fair and ethical behavior through established policies and procedures. Dakota College is governed under the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE). This governing board operates with transparency and practices ethical behavior in its activities. In compliance with the State of North Dakota's open meetings laws, the board publishes its meeting notifications on the NDSBHE website in advance of scheduled meeting. Approved meeting minutes are also posted on this website. The SBHE complies with a set of ethical and professional standards identified in SBHE policy 308.1, Officer and Employee Code of Conduct. As referenced in Core Component 1.A, Dakota College's mission was recently updated and approved by the governing board April 2023.

As evidenced by a variety of audits furnished in the assurance argument, Dakota College continues to provide oversight for the use of funds to support the college's strategic plan, tuition increases, financial activities, use of assets, campus policies on student learning and quality, access, academic freedom, shared governance, efficiency and effectiveness, dedication, and professional integrity. Meeting minutes indicate the college attends meetings convened by the North Dakota University System Procurement team to address findings and hire additional personnel. As outlined in the Faculty Handbook and Employee Handbook, Dakota College maintains policies and procedures to address faculty hiring, code of conduct, safety, and Title IX training. During the last comprehensive review, the review team noted that the college lacked an employee evaluation system. Since that review, the college has developed an implementation plan that cites opportunities for improvement, including budgeting, employee compensation, and employee evaluation. In addition, the college recently implemented an annual evaluation process for full-time employees. In preparation for its next comprehensive review, the college is encouraged to develop a similar process for evaluating adjunct faculty and part-time staff.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau presents itself clearly and completely to the students and public as evidenced through the review of the website, admission materials, and college catalog. Dakota's Marketing and Institutional Research staff meet regularly to ensure marketing and public information, blogs, brochures, website content, and college catalog are accurate and current, and the proper links are working. In addition, Dakota's College Council, a cross-functional team of administrators, faculty, staff, and students, is responsible for ensuring the regular and accurate flow of information across the institution, as stated in its charter.

The current website presents information that is transparent and easy to navigate. Links are provided regarding costs of education, accreditation, faculty credentials, courses and programs, and relatedness to the North Dakota University System. Under the "Admissions and Financial Aid" page, the Cost of Attendance page discloses the current costs for tuition, fees, and room and board for students. The Paying for College webpage provides a comprehensive list of all costs, and the costs for tuition and fees are categorized by residency factors from North Dakota, Minnesota, contiguous states, Canadian provinces, WUE, MSEP, and international students. The "About" landing page lists Dakota's mission, values, and vision, directory and administration, and the institution's current accreditation status. This link also directs visitors to consumer information, including a tuition and fees calculator, campus map, and complaint resolution. The "Academics" page has links to the class schedule, college calendar, course syllabi, and academic catalog. A link is also available for each program's fact sheet, which provides an overview of the program and special admissions or academic progress requirements including location and course delivery mode.

Evidence furnished in the assurance argument supports the college's claims regarding contributions to the educational experience. Dakota College hosts many K-12 events on its campus. In the 2022-2023 academic year, the college hosted Science Olympiad, Water Festival, STEM Day, spelling bees, and College for Kids. Additionally, the college's Office of Financial Aid holds events on campus to assist with financial aid (FAFSA) applications. As noted in Criterion One, the college rents meeting spaces to various community groups for in-service and training throughout the year. All events are published on the college's website.

It should be noted that Dakota College maintains a social media presence on Facebook. Posts include announcements of upcoming events and celebratory recognition of students and employees. However, on the section of the Facebook page labeled "Page Transparency," Facebook states, "The person or group responsible for this page hasn't completed our verification process yet." In preparation for its next comprehensive review, the college is encouraged to clarify oversight of its social media presence.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau is governed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE). The NDSBHE is composed of seven citizen members appointed to four-year terms by the governor and one student appointed by the governor to serve a one-year term. This body serves as the governing board for Dakota College along with four other community colleges, four regional universities, and two research institutions. The 2021-2026 North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Strategic Plan provides the framework to allow NDSBHE to operate everything necessary and properly for the efficient and economical administration to preserve and enhance the institution. As stated in NDSBHE policies 100.1, 100.4, 100.5, 100.6, 310.2 and 310.1, Board Member Responsibilities, a board member "shall conform to and advocate the SBHE beliefs and core values, and help build and sustain an atmosphere of respect, openness, civility and partnerships in all relationships with fellow SBHE members, the Chancellor and NDUS staff, and the presidents, faculty and staff of each institution of higher education in North Dakota." According to Board Policy: 308.4 Conflict of Interest, board members shall remain free from the influence of, or appearance of, any conflicting interest when acting on behalf of the SBHE, NDUS, or any institution. Board members complete annual training during its summer retreat. According to the 2023 Summer Board Retreat and Agenda, training topics include student/workforce needs, and policy and board governance.

Board agendas and meeting minutes are posted publicly on the North Dakota University System (NDUS) website, and the meetings themselves are subject to North Dakota's open meeting laws. Board meeting minutes from December 2023 and January 2024 demonstrate that the board functions as a policy-driven body and operates with clear policies and expectations in the areas of finance, human resources, academics, student services, auxiliaries, information technology, and facilities. The board demonstrates its commitment to its constituents as evidenced by the actions taken at their subcommittee and monthly meetings and documented on the NDUS website. Regular board meetings are open to the public for comment, and these meetings provide opportunities to hear from student and faculty groups. Meeting minutes reflect that NDSBHE considers various constituents when reviewing and updating System policies through the various NDUS councils. Additionally, the Chancellor's Cabinet contributes advice and recommendations to the board through the Chancellor. The Cabinet is expected to attend regular SBHE meetings and is encouraged to provide input on agenda items about their campuses.

According to Board Policy 305.1, Institution President Authority and Responsibilities, the board delegates full authority to the presidents to administer their institutions in according with NDSBHE policies. With this delegation, the President, Campus Dean, administration, and faculty are responsible for curriculum and academic standards at the college. Consistent with its model of shared governance, Faculty Senate minutes from September 21, 2023 provided evidence that the curriculum committee issues and votes on recommendations regarding curriculum.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The policies established by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education indicate that Dakota College at Bottineau supports academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning for its employees and its students. Policy 401.1 includes a definition of academic freedom, along with academic responsibilities for faculty and staff including in scholarship, research and creative expression, the freedom for faculty to oversee the design and teaching of courses, the tolerance for conflict of ideas, and the opportunity to express diverse points of view. Further, the policy states that, within the classroom, "faculty shall not face discipline or adverse employment action based on classroom speech unless such speech violates other institutional policies or procedures." Additionally, Policy 605.1 states, "The purpose of tenure is to assure academic freedom. Academic freedom applies to all scholarly pursuits." Dakota's faculty and staff have opportunities to leverage freedom of expression on campus, often by serving on various institutional committees and campus-wide initiatives (e.g., Diversity Committee, Wellness Committee, and campus book reads). In accordance with Policy 503.1, Dakota College affirms its students' rights to free speech and expression, including "all forms of peaceful assembly, protests, demonstrations, rallies, vigils, marches, public speaking, distribution of printed materials, the display of signs or banners, or the circulation of petitions."

The review team notes that policies supporting academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning are clear; however, such language is not consistently accessible. In preparation for its next comprehensive review, Dakota College may wish to juxtapose these policies alongside other listed on its website and demonstrate how the institution informs and educates students on academic freedom.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Through its policies and academic practices, Dakota College at Bottineau demonstrates a commitment to reasonable acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge among its employees and its students. Although research is not a primary focus of its mission, Dakota College at Bottineau has an established Institutional Research Board (IRB) Policy and Committee. The IRB consists of at least five members with varying backgrounds to promote a complete and adequate review of research activities commonly conducted by the institution. The college's academic integrity statement is published in the student handbook and reads as follows: "Students are responsible for submitting their work. Students who cooperate on oral or written examinations or work without authorization share the responsibility for violation of academic principles, and the students are subject to disciplinary action even when one of the students is not enrolled in the course where the violation occurred." This statement also appears on all college syllabi. The student handbook also outlines the process and consequences if cheating, plagiarism, or other academic improprieties have occurred. Academic integrity and the role of artificial intelligence are also addressed in the North Dakota University System College's Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy.

Consistent with its mission to provide a quality education for all students, the principles of responsible acquisition and use of knowledge are embedded in required general education courses. According to one of the student performance indicators for ENGL 110 Composition I, the student is expected to "use information resources ethically and honestly, preserving the meaning of the source and documenting the use of the source in the style appropriate for the student's discipline or field." Additionally, the college's first-year experience course requires students to engage the library and demonstrate an appreciation for information literacy.

In the assurance argument, Dakota College notes that it is working to incorporate a more coordinated approach for students on the ethical use of information and information sources. In preparation for its next comprehensive review, the college may wish to consider developing a common statement for all syllabi regarding information use and resources and providing evidence of how students are using information in their courses. Examples of the college's IRB process would also strengthen evidence for this core component.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) staff and faculty operate with ethics and integrity. The college's policies and processes are designed to assure fair treatment of and ethical behavior toward all constituencies. Diverse publications and media accurately describe academic programs, costs, and requirements, along with the status of institutional and program accreditations. Dakota College is governed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE). In compliance with the State of North Dakota open meetings laws, this governing board operates with transparency by publishing its meeting notifications and approved meeting minutes on the NDSBHE website. The board maintains oversight of strategic initiatives, balancing prudent financial management with programs, facilities, technologies, and personnel to serve the needs of internal and external constituencies. Per board policy, the NDSBHE delegates day-to-day management of the college to the president. In the spirit of shared governance, faculty and staff serve on committees and participate in the process of academic matters including curriculum, equipment replacement, space remodeling, and student issues.

Institutional policies guide freedom of expression and academic integrity. The college's student code of conduct outlines clear expectations for ethical student conduct. Learning experiences in courses and student activities guide students in understanding and practicing ethical use of information. The college also maintains an institutional review board to oversee human subject research.

In response to the concerns cited in the last comprehensive review, the college recently developed an implementation plan that includes a review of employee evaluations; additionally, the college has implemented an annual evaluation process for full-time employees. Recommendations for the next comprehensive review include developing an evaluation process for part-time employees, clarifying oversight of the college's social media presence, demonstrating how the institution educates students on academic freedom, and demonstrating how students use outside information in their courses.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Rating

Met

Rationale

In accordance with its governing board policies and institutional policies, Dakota College at Bottineau offers 21 one-year career and technical education (CTE) program certificates, 25 Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, an Associate of Science (AS) degree, and three certificates of completion. Twenty-one academic programs are fully available online. The college demonstrates articulation and differentiation of learning goals through the established seven general education competencies as articulated in the academic catalog and the college website as learning goals for students seeking degrees. Learning goals for the CTE programs are program and certificate specific.

Dakota College strives to maintain currency in its academic offerings across all locations and delivery modalities (in-class, hybrid, and online) through a variety of methods, including course and curriculum proposal and change forms, participation in statewide academic discipline groups, assessment reporting forms where course currency is addressed, regular review of curriculum in the academic catalog, open educational resources applications, online course tracking reports, and annual summary of activity forms. New programs in Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting, plus revisions to Small Business Management and Medical Assisting programs (per feedback from advisory committees) also demonstrate an effort to maintain currency in academic programs.

Dakota College continues to use seat time (in class and online) and student academic progress to monitor and ensure rigor in course offerings. Seat time is established through policy and documented with appropriate tracking forms. The college's online seat time policy, effective December, 2019, "addresses how DCB calculates in-class and out-of-class time for online courses, to meet the DCB Credit Hour Policy and to comply with the U.S. Department of Education Federal regulations and the Higher Learning Commission requirement." The policy includes DCB's Faculty Policy - Definition of a Semester Credit Hour along with guidelines for calculating and documenting in-class and out-of-class seat time components (e.g., lectures, research, and project/lab work). Satisfactory academic progress and the procedures for academic probation or academic suspension are clearly outlined in the academic catalog.

In response to previous concerns regarding inconsistencies in syllabi, Dakota College furnished comparisons

between Spring 2020 and Fall 2023 as evidence of improvement. Although the degree of improvements is difficult to assess because of the absence comparison information, these improvements appear to be substantial. The college also provided a comprehensive checklist tracking progress for all syllabi and acknowledges that some syllabi have not yet met expectations for consistency.

In preparation for its next comprehensive review, Dakota College may benefit from an analysis of trends in satisfactory academic progress to support arguments of academic rigor. As an example, the spring-to-spring trend reported percentage of students on some form of academic monitoring moves from 4.5% (2020) to 4.1% (2021) and 3.3% (2022). These data suggest successful movement towards improved academic success. In addition, to ensure currency in all academic offerings, Dakota College is strongly encouraged to integrate its various efforts into a comprehensive tracking system that addresses all courses across all locations and instructional modalities.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As indicated in its academic catalog, Dakota College at Bottineau maintains a general education philosophy and general education competencies, which appear to be integrated and appropriate to the mission of the college and the institutional focus of "Nature, Technology and Beyond." These competencies are required to be presented in the syllabi. Comparisons of the college's general education competencies with the 10 NDUS General Education Areas (GEA) and the General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA) support the college's claims of an "institutional focus... on building student knowledge and understanding of concepts of the natural and social sciences, mathematics, communication, arts and humanities, technology, and wellness."

As stated in the college catalog and evidenced by course syllabi and other institutional efforts, diversity is a core value at Dakota College. In the assurance argument, the college provided 41 course syllabi that reference diversity in curricula, and the institution cites inclusion of diversity in academic assessment within the social sciences department and in the HLC Assessment Academy pilot with the social sciences department and co-curricular groups. The college's Diversity Committee continues to be active and sponsored 26 activities in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Because research is not a primary focus of its mission, faculty contributions to scholarship at Dakota College is primarily through attendance and presentations at workshops and seminars and professional meeting attendance. Student participation in cooperative education/internships, honors course, independent studies, study abroad, and leadership classes further demonstrate a commitment to scholarship.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau demonstrates sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty and staff to support its students, and qualifications for faculty and staff align with the college's mission of quality education. According to U.S. News and World Report, the current student-to-faculty ratio is 13:1. In addition, Dakota reports a range of faculty length of employment and degree levels that supports continuity of institutional knowledge in conjunction with new ideas. Although the primary distribution of faculty composition aligns with the distribution patterns in the general student body (80% white and 73% female in 2023) reported on the college website, the college regularly engages state and national platforms to address the homogeneity of its faculty.

As detailed in the Employee Handbook, faculty are required to provide contact availability for students, regardless of instructional method. Faculty enter their schedules into Microsoft Outlook, and campus faculty post their schedules outside their doors. Online faculty are required to be available by grading assignments and responding to questions in a timely manner and to log into Blackboard LMS a minimum of five times weekly.

Faculty activities related to course load and student contact accounts for 80% of workload with other activities such as committee participation accounting for the balance. Faculty engagement in non-teaching related activities is monitored using a point system developed by the faculty senate. In the 2023-2024 academic year, point totals ranged from 0-20 points, with an average of six points per faculty out of an expectation of roughly 10 points. Dakota attributes this low average to several factors, including restrictions on first-year employees and limited access to opportunities for faculty who are not based on the main campus. The average committee points for on-campus, full-time, non-first year faculty is above expectations at 12 points. In addition, not all committees or service activities have been assigned point values, a problem Dakota recognizes and plans to address in preparation for its next comprehensive review.

Faculty credentials are posted on the college's website and generally align with program and accreditation

standards. In response to concerns cited in the last comprehensive review, Dakota College provided an update on the seven faculty placed on a faculty qualification plan. According to the institution, six of these faculty are expected to complete their plans by Summer 2024. To demonstrate ongoing institutional efforts to ensure faculty qualifications, the college furnished copies of the relevant qualification plans and minutes from the Faculty Qualification Committee. The college is also reviewing its faculty evaluation process. New and revised policies will align the North Dakota University System's call for annual evaluation of faculty. The extent to which this overhaul will address gaps in evaluation of adjunct faculty has yet to be determined and will need attention during the college's next reaffirmation review.

To demonstrate that faculty members are current in their disciplines and in their teaching, the college shared percentages of faculty attending workshop/seminars and attending professional meetings as well as information on faculty development funds granted, process descriptions for CTE faculty, faculty mentoring, and faculty tenure and promotion. The college also shared examples of annual training logs completed by student support staff. Although these data are relevant to this core component, they do not provide information on the overall effectiveness of such efforts. In preparation for its next comprehensive review, Dakota College is strongly encouraged to provide information that captures the extent of faculty engagement in professional development and demonstrate how those faculty not participating in these activities maintain professional development. In general, development of more comprehensive tracking tools would strengthen the evidence presented.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Rating

Met

Rationale

As indicated in the course catalog and college website, Dakota College at Bottineau provides a rich complement of student support services, including Disability Support Services, Financial Aid, Library, Tutoring, and Mental Health Services. Since the last comprehensive visit, the college created a new master plan, which includes renovation of the library, completion of the new Dining Center, and renovation of Old Main building into a Center for Rural Health and Education. These services and investments clearly align with the college's identity as an open access two-year institution and support the college's mission of a "caring environment."

Dakota has established guidelines for placement into English and math courses based on several established tests. Course placement scores are drawn from those outlined by NDUS. Following a review of success rates in developmental mathematics courses, a new sequence was piloted in 2023-2024, with full implementation scheduled for Fall 2024. In addition, Dakota offers learning support in the Academic Atrium and through the tutoring programs. Students who have been placed on academic Probation are required to enroll in a college study skills course.

Dakota presents a comprehensive advising model that begins upon admission to the school and persists throughout the student's career. The current advising plan is a result of participation in HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy. Inaugurated in 2018, the new model employs full-time, dedicated advisors which enhances availability and responsiveness to student needs. In addition, the advisors are presented as advising beyond simple class selection to include identification and responses to a variety of needs such as field-of-study choices, study skills, campus engagement, goal setting, and managing student expectations. The college employs Starfish® as the primary advising tool. The college reports that year-to-year student retention rates have increased from 45% in 2017 to 70% in 2023, and graduation rates have improved from 20% (2017) to 38% (2023).

In the assurance argument, Dakota reports that many students avail themselves of support services and are satisfied with the services received. In preparation for the next comprehensive review, the college is encouraged to demonstrate how the institution assesses the effectiveness of these efforts, how well students who may have needs but are not requesting services are progressing, or how new and emerging needs or groups are identified.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Rationale

Through its academic programs, general education competencies, and student-facing personnel, Dakota College at Bottineau affirms its mission to offer quality education, regardless of location and instructional modality. Consistent with the mission of a two-year college, courses and programs are designed for transfer or career. As articulated in the course catalog and on the college website, Dakota presents a general education philosophy and general education competencies that are integrated across the curriculum and appropriate to the mission of the college and the institutional focus of Nature, Technology and Beyond. These institutional competencies are aligned with the 10 NDUS General Education Areas (GEA) and the General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA). Student scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge are supported through cooperative education, internships, honors courses, independent studies, study abroad opportunities, and leadership classes. Course syllabi are standardized to ensure consistency across modes of delivery and locations. In response to previous concerns regarding inconsistencies in syllabi, the college has developed a comprehensive checklist to identify course sections that do not conform with expectations.

Dakota College also demonstrates a commitment to quality education by investing in faculty, staff, and infrastructure. Dakota provides sufficient numbers of faculty to meet the needs of the institution, and the college strives to diversify its faculty and staff through actively searching beyond the local markets. The college continues to provide a wide range of student support services, and evidence furnished in the assurance argument indicates students who use the services are satisfied with these services. The college employed a full-time advisor model in 2018 and has seen a substantial improvement in retention and graduation rates. Faculty and support staff routinely engage in training and professional activities to ensure currency in their respective areas. The 2022 Master Plan provides the framework for ongoing development of institutional infrastructure across all locations. Since the last comprehensive review, the college has made substantial progress in revising qualification assessment to ensure all faculty are qualified for the courses being taught, and the college is currently revising the faculty evaluation process to align with NDUS requirements.

In preparation for the next comprehensive review, the review team recommends an analysis of trends in satisfactory academic progress, a comprehensive tracking system for professional development, a stronger evaluation process that includes adjunct faculty, and an assessment of student services.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

In 2023 the College Assessment Committee implemented a comprehensive five-year program review process that encompassed both transfer and CTE programs. The stated purpose is to examine, assess, and ensure the quality of academic programs at Dakota College. Evidence shared in the narrative demonstrates that the review is used to guide program priorities, strategic planning, resource allocation, and other program level decisions. Currently, Dakota employs several practices to assure the appropriateness of its courses and programs by 1) requiring faculty to use a standardized template for all course syllabi, 2) requiring all courses and curriculum additions/changes to receive approval from the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and the Campus Dean and 3) regular review of the academic catalog. A Program Review Report is produced. The 2023 report provided an overall summary of programs which examines data compiled from Fall 2019 through Spring 2023. In addition, Dakota College at Bottineau uses CTE Program Evaluation Reports provided by the North Dakota Department of CTE as an additional means of program review. Dakota College faculty review department missions and learning outcomes at the completion of each five-year assessment cycle to ensure currency and accuracy. Examples provided in the assurance argument provided evidence that the college uses data from the review and acts upon its findings.

Dakota College at Bottineau identifies seven Competencies (along with Learning Outcomes and Performance Indicators) for General Education. Collectively, the college's Academic Assessment Reporting Form and

Program Review Report include Department Learning Outcomes (LO), Courses/Instructors Reporting, Course Learning Outcome, Method of Assessment, Assessment Results, Analysis, Improvements or Actions Planned in Response to Findings, Curriculum Currency Update, Budget Requests, and Follow-up on Prior Action Steps/Assessment Driven Change.

Per board and institutional policy, Dakota evaluates all credit it transcripts and accepts college/university level courses recognized by the United States Department of Education from regionally accredited organizations or nationally recognized agencies. The college has a clear prior learning policy, handbook, and process to assist students with prior learning options including certifications, professional licenses, experiential learning portfolios, military training transcripts, and standardized assessments. The college's website includes an application for prior learning and states that a maximum of 30 prior learning credits may be applied towards an AA, AS, or AAS degree. Additionally, the college provides dual credit opportunities to high schools through concurrent enrollment offerings. The Faculty Qualifications Committee confirms the qualifications of faculty teaching all courses, including dual credit.

Dakota accepts transfer courses at full value if earned at a regionally accredited college or university. The college registrar reviews and evaluates official transcripts for all non-North Dakota University System (NDUS) transfer credits, ensuring the accreditation status of the transfer school. The North Dakota University System General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA) is routinely updated and guides the transfer of general education courses to assist students who transfer within the NDUS and within North Dakota tribal and private colleges who participate in GERTA. The GERTA agreement states that general education courses taken at any GERTA institution count upon transfer toward the general education requirements at all GERTA institutions.

The college utilizes a curriculum committee structure responsible for oversight of all course additions, deletions, and changes, and maintains authority over prerequisites and corequisites using professional discretion and input from faculty within the course discipline. The committee membership includes Director for Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate President, Registrar, and two faculty members (to be made up of two faculty from career and technical, or one from transfer and/or one faculty at large). In addition, the College has a documented credit-hour policy and online seat time policy that have been approved by the faculty senate. The college's academic class schedule and academic calendar clearly display prerequisites and co-requisites for all classes.

As indicated on the college website, Dakota College maintains specialized accreditations for CTE programs. The Dakota College at Bottineau Paramedic Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs upon the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP). The Nursing Program is accredited by the NLN Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA). Per the college webpage, the Nursing three-year NCLEX-RN pass rate is 95.33% and the Paramedic CAAHEP % of Graduates passing NREMT written exam - 1st attempt has increased from 63% IN 2020 to 75% in 2021.

Outside of IPEDS and programs such as Nursing and Paramedic Technology, Dakota College at Bottineau does not engage in formal surveys of its graduates. However, employees working within the Academic Atrium (i.e., Advising and Student Support Specialists) maintain informal records of student success through student surveys sent to graduates throughout the year following graduation. Formalizing these strategies could provide the college additional data and evidence to inform additional opportunities to strengthen student success.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Rating

Met

Rationale

At the institutional level, Dakota College at Bottineau provided evidence that processes are in place to assess student learning and achievement of learning goals at the curricular and co-curricular level. As stated in the college catalog and on the college website, seven general education competencies serve as the student learning goals for all students enrolled in AA and AS programs as well as for those pursuing a certificate in College Studies. The college catalog lists two CTE competencies for students pursuing an Associate in Applied Science (AAS). These competencies serve as the program-level learning goals for Dakota College students. Syllabi furnished in the assurance argument demonstrates that learning goals are provided to students. Assessment results are shared with the college via the Program Review Report and the Academic Assessment Report as well as during faculty in-service and adjunct faculty days. As the college recently established a new 5-year assessment cycle, DCB is encouraged to build into the design a plan for evaluating improvements at the program level. For example, data included in the assurance argument indicated a 54.7% reporting rate on courses during the first assessment cycle. Although the college shared some evidence that identified potential plans for improving academic programs and services, clarity is needed on timeline and strategies for documentation. Documenting data and evidence could be used as a means to demonstrate program improvements and as an indicator of support for Dakota's newly implemented assessment process.

Co-curricular assessment at Dakota College is overseen by the Academic and Co-curricular Assessment Committee (ACAC), comprised of staff, faculty, and co-curricular leaders. According to data included in the assurance narrative, reporting participation in curricular assessment has increased from 54.7% in cycle one to 65.4% in cycle two. Dakota College recognizes opportunities for improvement and has identified the following strategies: 1) increasing the department reporting rate, 2) increasing the course reporting rate, and 3) streamlining the process for reporting. Although the new assessment plan, reporting form design, and use of faculty in-service/adjunct days for training provide a solid assessment system design, Dakota may see additional benefit from increasing faculty involvement, both full-time and adjunct, as a strategy to strengthen knowledge of and participation in the overall assessment improvement process.

In response to concerns raised about co-curricular assessment during the last comprehensive review, Dakota College participated in a 2020 HLC Academy project and subsequently developed a mission statement, co-curricular competencies, and learning outcomes for co-curricular programming. Cocurricular competencies at DCB center around five themes supporting cocurricular assessment: community, leadership, teamwork, career preparedness, and diversity. Additionally, an assessment pilot with six cocurricular groups during 2021-22 and 2022-23 has been completed. Assessment of Cocurricular Competencies occurred using a student self-assessment survey using a 5-point Likert scale (0-Not at all to 5-strongly agree) where students rated agreement with theme-

based statements. Cocurricular leaders helped to validate the data by filling out the same survey for each student participant. The cocurricular report included in this assurance review demonstrates DCB's commitment to continued progress in this area. As the college prepares for its next comprehensive review, it is encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the co-curricular assessment design and determine its value in relationship to student persistence, completion and success.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau demonstrates a commitment to pursuing educational improvement in a variety of ways. In 2020, the college convened an Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), composed of the HLC Accreditation Coordinator, the Director of Academic and Co-Curricular Assessment, and the members of the Dakota College's Administrative Council. This committee has established ten key operations for which performance metrics have been identified, historical performance documented, and performance targets set.

The IEC's Annual Summary Report provides annual objectives and benchmarks for the collection and analysis of student retention, persistence, and program completion. Specifically, the report aims to identify the goal of each reporting group, summarize monthly reports from each reporting group, identify the progress made toward obtaining goals, and make recommendations for future efforts. According to the 2022-2023 report none of the five benchmarks for retention measurement were met, with one having no measurable/objective benchmark set. In response, the college recently hired a Director of Student Success, charged with integrating the Academic Atrium into a center for student success. The academic atrium is responsible to maintain planning and reporting on student success initiatives, namely advising, tutoring, and retention, to the College's Strategic Planning and Institutional Council for Effectiveness (SPICE). It should be noted that, although the report identifies a significant number of benchmarks as not yet met, the report does provide a clear indication that the college has identified reasonable goals and targets focused on student success.

Dakota College has defined strategies aimed at improving academic achievement through dedicated student success and support, academic, and athletic initiatives. The college leverages Starfish® as an early alert system to gain input from faculty and communication with students regarding academic performance. Dakota acknowledges that opportunities exist to increase faculty participation with survey completion. To obtain institutional retention, persistence, and graduation numbers, Dakota College relies on the North Dakota University System (NDUS), and IPEDS reports DCB validates these numbers through the publication of annual student profiles. The college acknowledges the limitations of IPEDS data in reflecting student success; DCB programs with specialized accreditation (i.e., Nursing and Paramedic) also enjoy strong persistence, retention, and completion numbers. The college may wish to consider leveraging insight from data measures used for

specialized accreditation programs along with its newly formed Academic Atrium project to strengthen its student success process.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The college has a newly developed, documented program review process integrating both CTE and transfer programs. The design is appropriate for the institution to ensure the viability and currency of its academic offerings. The college supports its educational program and has partnered with area public schools to provide concurrent enrollment opportunities.

The college uses results of its program review process to improve its programs. The institution has begun to strengthen its student success efforts through implementation of a new Institutional Effectiveness Committee along with an IEC annual report. The assessment of co-curricular learning is in the early stages as the college is currently piloting student engagement in clubs and activities as a persistence indicator.

Dakota College demonstrates responsibility for the quality of academic offerings by evaluating the quality of the credits it awards for transfer, maintaining specialized program accreditation, and provides some evidence of monitor success of its graduates. The college exercises authority over pre-/co-requisites, expectations for learning, and the rigor of course by adhering to college procedures.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As a part of the North Dakota University System (NDUS), Dakota College at Bottineau fulfills the requirements set by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE), its governing board. The NDSBHE has a variety of councils (e.g., Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administrative Affairs) to gather input and expertise in its decision-making. In addition to being part of the NDUS, DCB is an affiliate campus with Minot State University (MSU). As such, it is administratively attached to its parent institution. The University President oversees operations at both sites and is located in Minot, ND. The Chief Executive Officer at DCB is the Campus Dean.

In addition to the compliance and monitoring associated with the state-wide system, Dakota College has developed internal processes to engage its college community and to meet the needs of its local stakeholders. Shared governance on campus occurs through 29 committees and three Senates – Faculty, Staff, and Student. Evidence of engagement through these groups can be found in statements of scope, rosters of participation, and minutes of meetings. Overarching policies and procedure manuals for college operations are provided by the NDUS. An independent review of the website for the North Dakota University System verifies the references contained in the Assurance Argument and documents the role of Dakota College as one of the 11 institutions of higher education in the state. Using an established policy development process that moves proposals through the designated Senate and on to the College Council, additional campus-based policies have been developed at Dakota College. The Campus Dean holds responsibility for making the final decision.

In the last three years, the college has taken several steps to improve the effectiveness of its efforts using data. In addition to the seven examples provided in the Assurance Argument, evidence can be found in the Annual Summary Report of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. These reports identify specific objectives related to the implementation of the college's strategic plan and describe the extent to which the objectives were or were not met. The college's website provides data in a straightforward and transparent way. In addition, meeting minutes reveal discussions based on data, such as those related to the college's efforts to improve its retention rates. During the college's 2020 reaffirmation review, the review team identified concerns regarding the

college's ability to track its effectiveness efforts. In response, the college convened an Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Materials provided for this 2024 review, confirm that the work of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee continues and that the College is systematically addressing operational concerns.

The shared governance structures at DCB appear to be active and engaged in thoughtful consideration of their goals. The arrival of a new Campus Dean and subsequent work on the development of a strategic plan led to the realignment of one committee and two councils. The Policy Review Committee was absorbed by the Administrative Affairs Council. A newly constituted College Council now integrates institutional leadership by including the Campus Dean, the Associate Deans, and the leaders of the Senate (including the Student Senate). A 2023 charter for the College Council articulated its role and purposes. Its agenda and decisions are available to the College community through the website. The second council, the Dean's Council, now focuses its attention on the implementation of policies and initiatives, rather than their development. A review of the minutes of the College Council and other groups shows an engagement with substantive issues from across the College. Topics are tied to the four dimensions of the College's strategic plan and its implementation.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) hires and retains its employees under the policies established by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (NDSBHE). Campus specific resources and requirements are maintained by the college and documented on the College Policies webpage in the Employee Handbook. The record shows the policies to be current, with recent updates from 2019 – 2022. A review of the operating budget shows allocations for professional development that have increased in each of the last four years. Expenditures show that approximately 77% of the budgeted funds for professional development were used. Employee numbers appear to have remained relatively stable, showing some growth from 2022 to 2023. The college has been attending to the accuracy of classification of individuals. This has resulted in some shifts in the numbers of part-time faculty and part-time staff. The student-faculty ratio was 10/1 for 2023, even with a growth in enrollment.

Many dimensions of the DCB budget are established and controlled at the system level. According to the 2022 audit report of North Dakota University System (NDUS), the college's budget is divided as follows:

- 34.6% State appropriations
- 6% Contracts and grants
- 22% Tuition and fees
- 11% Auxiliary funds
- 2% Other
- 6% Sales and services

State appropriations are based on a funding formula tied to enrollment. Given that enrollment at Dakota College has grown in recent years, the appropriations amount is somewhat larger than for several of the other institutions in the state. The college showed a positive balance in its annual budget reports. Although it has acquired additional debt related to bond payments for the new Dining Center and the Energy Savings Project, the CFI remains solid, as does the amount in reserves.

In addition to the state-wide audit, individual colleges in the NDUS are also audited every two years. The most recent audit (2022) included three findings related to financial processes: a) the improper verification for veteran dependent tuition waivers, b) failure to follow state procurement rules, and c) instances of inadequate journal entry approvals. The annual report of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee shows that the college is working to address each of these findings, providing actions and timelines for correction. The appropriate college staff members meet monthly with NDUS Audit Services which is providing consultation and guidance to

address these three findings. It will be critical that the college adhere to the timelines it has established for correction.

Like many community college campuses, Dakota faces the challenges of aging facilities. Renovations and upgrades have not kept pace with usage, particularly in the residence halls. The college has submitted documentation to seek state funding for improvements. Additionally, a 2016 Master Plan and Space Utilization Study conducted by the NDUS, showed DCB classroom and teaching lab utilization at below 35%. Recognizing these challenges, the college convened an internal working group to produce the 2022 Master Plan for DCB. The plan, linked to the mission, vision, and institutional strategic plan, reflects a solid use of data and attempts to provide a comprehensive list of the challenges related to DCB physical facilities. It includes, to the extent possible, lower-cost solutions such as the reconfiguration of the Business Office and Student Services suite to provide more personalized services to students and better integration of the recruitment, admissions, and onboarding of students.

The budget for IT services in 2024 is \$294,539. There seem to be some shifts within those budget lines, reducing the salary line but increasing the line for new IT equipment. The IT repair budget line is over \$88,000 but only \$717 has been expensed. The Implementation Plan calls for the development of an Information Technology Plan (Item 3.8) and it appears this work is at the preliminary stage. The assurance argument describes the use of an Interactive Video Network (IVN) for connection with other DCB locations, including those for dual enrollment. The report also mentions the use of the Blackboard Learning Management System and Starfish® student retention software. An internal use of phishing demonstrates an awareness of cybersecurity issues. Although online enrollment has grown and the NDUS encourages the development of Open Educational Resources (OER), there is little mention of training and professional development in virtual learning. Given that the development of a technology plan is still ongoing, this is an area that may warrant further attention in the next comprehensive visit.

The college reviewed and revised its mission statement in 2022-23 and adopted a new Strategic Plan, Priorities, and Goals in 2023-24 (See 1.A.1). The three priorities – Student Success, Community Commitment, and Institutional Improvement – appear throughout the college’s materials. Seven goals have been developed to advance these priorities. An Implementation Plan with 28 specific tasks sets forth the steps to be taken to advance the strategic priorities. Team members found the planning materials to be clearly written and the goals appear to be ambitious but achievable. A review of the documents shows that 2022-23 was a significant planning year DCB, following the publication of the NDUS Strategic Plan in June 2022, and the arrival of the new Campus Dean/CEO for DCB in August 2022. Nonetheless, baseline measurements and assessment measures are readily available. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee provides an annual summary report related to the Implementation Plan categories. The assessment of progress is candid and straightforward, showing that some objectives have not been met, others are in progress, and some are completed.

The college’s budget process is iterative, based on the allocations and expenditures of the previous year(s). The library maintains a printed copy of the budget for access by campus and community members. Budget managers receive monthly budget reports from the Business Office. The allocation of college resources across budget categories (i.e., Instruction, Academic Support, Student Services, Institutional Support, Physical Plant) varies only modestly (within 2% points) from the average for NDUS two-year institutions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Rating

Met

Rationale

In preparation for its 2019 strategic planning process, Dakota College at Bottineau reviewed its list of 34 aspirational objectives and reduced the number to 14. Shortly thereafter, the college moved the assessment of strategic progress from the Outcomes Assessment Task Force and Dean's Council to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) in Fall 2020. The first area of focus for the IEC was the assessment of progress toward the goals of the sunsetting 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. Subsequently, other dimensions of effectiveness were added to the committee's charge, including the progress toward addressing audit findings, the implications of policy decisions, and various administrative functions. A review of IEC materials shows it to be a repository for monthly updates from all groups on campus. Groups rotate in meeting with IEC that works in partnership with them to document achievements and identify continued challenges.

In Summer 2023, the college's Strategic Planning Committee and its Institutional Effectiveness Committee were combined to form the Strategic Planning and Institutional Council for Effectiveness (SPICE). The group worked with the Campus Dean and administration to identify immediate action items from within the college's three priorities (Student Success, Community Commitment, and Institutional Improvement). The result was the 2023-24 Implementation Plan. This plan is aligned with the system-level strategic objectives and incorporates input from campus stakeholders. A mid-year status update was provided in January 2024, with reports from the various priority leaders. At the system level, data from DCB and the other North Dakota colleges and universities links Student Achievement Measures, IPEDS, and financial data to document achievements or short-falls in achieving college and system-level goals. Thus, there is evidence in the Assurance Argument and in supporting documentation that the college is linking its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting. As discussed in the team's evidentiary statements for Criteria 3 and 4, the college would benefit from processes that would track sub-components of its goals. Such documentation could serve to demonstrate overall goal fulfillment in preparation for the next comprehensive review.

The 2023-24 Implementation Plan calls for the development of several other plans: an Academic Master Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, and an Information Technology Plan. The steps taken thus far, and the recognition that further functional plans are necessary, demonstrate intentionality in planning and an effort to

improve its operations and student outcomes systematically. This activity also demonstrates continued attention to the commitments that Dakota College made to the Higher Learning Commission in its 2022 interim report. The items on the 2023-24 Implementation Plan were generated through discussions in the shared governance system. A call for 2024-25 Implementation Plan items is scheduled for Spring 2024 and provides evidence of a holistic planning process.

Recognizing the importance of the individual in achieving institutional goals, Dakota College utilizes the Performance Development and review process established by the State Board of Higher Education. The current Implementation Plan calls for steps to ensure greater consistency in the review process for DCB staff. The college's master plan and facilities utilization measures (discussed in 5.B as well as here), demonstrate that the college has adequate facilities for carrying out its mission, albeit with significant challenges in age and infrastructure.

Members of the team verified the college's status in specialized accreditations with CAAHEP, CoAEMSP, and CNEA (NLN). The team also notes the intention of the college to pursue other specialized accreditations to further solidify the quality of its offerings to students.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Rationale

Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) has demonstrated that its resources, processes, and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, pursue continuous improvement in its offerings, and prepare for the future. The college's mission, to provide a quality education in a caring environment, features prominently in its planning materials, its operations, and its presentation to the public.

In addition to the material provided in the assurance argument, the team found evidence of the college's secure role as a part of Minot State University and the North Dakota University System (NDUS). A review of the system-based data shows the college in a stable position among other institutions in the state, reflecting both strengths (e.g., enrollment growth) and challenges (e.g., lower retention rates). The college's strategic plans contain a realistic incorporation of these factors. The policy documents of the institution (e.g., policy manuals and handbooks) show recent activity, demonstrating active engagement with institutional improvement. Changes to the shared governance structures appear to be fostering greater alignment with the goals of the college. Of special note is the work of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee which has enabled the college to rise above the concerns identified in its previous HLC visit. The team found evidence that the commitments Dakota College made regarding improved planning capabilities in its last report to HLC are still reliable. The college has undertaken significant planning in some areas (e.g., facilities) and lists prominently the need for other plans to be developed in the coming year (e.g., academic master plan and a technology plan). Team members are confident that, if the institution remains on its current trajectory, these items will be addressed by the time of the next comprehensive visit.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Conclusion

Based on the evidence provided in the assurance argument, along with documentation furnished in the Addendum, Dakota College at Bottineau has adequately met all the criteria for this assurance review. The mission of the college is clearly stated, prominently displayed, and informs the college's operations, policies, and planning processes. External partnerships, co-curricular programs, and employee engagement in the communities served by Dakota College demonstrate a fervent commitment to the public good, and the college's policies, general education framework, and co-curricular philosophy support a culture of free expression and diversity appreciation. Governed by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, Dakota College acts with integrity in its practices and policies. The daily operations of the college are overseen by the Campus Dean, and shared governance is evident in various cross-functional committees, along with a Faculty Senate and Student Senate. The college affirms its public commitment to quality education in a caring environment through its academic programs, general education competencies, and robust student services. Faculty and staff are, in general, credentialed for the respective roles, and the college's investments in infrastructure ensure that students have access to updated technology and physical resources. A newly developed program review process and sustained practices in evaluating and awarding transfer credit demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement in quality education. Policy documents, financial audits, the college's implementation plan, and minutes from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and the cleverly named Strategic Planning and Implementation Council on Effectiveness (SPICE) provide evidence that the college's resources, processes, and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, pursue continuous improvement in its offerings, and prepare for the future.

As the college prepares for its next comprehensive review, the review team recommends the following actions, in the spirit of continuous quality improvement:

- Consider strategies for recognizing staff engagement in the community
- Demonstrate how the college democratizes the co-curricular experience for all students
- Develop an evaluation process for part-time employees
- Clarify the oversight of the college's social media presence
- Demonstrate how the college educates students on academic freedom and how students use outside information in their courses
- Analyze trends in satisfactory academic progress
- Develop a comprehensive tracking system for professional development
- Develop an assessment plan for student services
- Develop an evaluation process that includes adjunct faculty

In summary, the review team applauds Dakota College at Bottineau for its progress since 2020. The college has clearly made efforts to improve processes and structures related to the concerns addressed in its interim report to the Commission. The assurance argument and corresponding evidence suggest Dakota College has made appropriate adjustments and recognizes the growth opportunities for future success. Such awareness will serve the institution well as it prepares for its next reaffirmation review.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Not Applicable to This Review

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.