



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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September 28, 2022

Dr. Carmen Simone
Campus Dean and CEO
Dakota College at Bottineau
105 Simrall Boulevard
Bottineau, North Dakota 58318-1198

Dear Campus Dean and CEO Carmen Simone:

Dakota College at Bottineau's interim has been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission, staff received the report providing evidence of a co-curricular assessment, a system to evaluate all functional areas, and appropriate faculty qualifications and evaluations. No further reports are required.

The institution's next Assurance Review is scheduled for 03/11/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029-2030.

For more information on the interim report process, contact interimreports@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Jamie Stanesa, jstanesa@hlcommission.org.

Thank you,

Higher Learning Commission

cc: Lexi Kvasnicka-Gates, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Jamie Stanesa, HLC Staff Liaison

STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: September 28, 2022

STAFF LIAISON: Jamie Stanesa

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: Dakota College at Bottineau, Bottineau, ND

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Carmen M. Simone, Campus Dean and CEO

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 09/01/2022 providing evidence of a co-curricular assessment, a system to evaluate all functional areas, and appropriate faculty qualifications and evaluations.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The interim report submitted by the Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) is presented in a three-part narrative, each part supplemented by supporting materials. These documents include, among others, the institution's "Assessment Academy Application—Fall 2020 Cohort;" the Fall In-Service Schedule (agenda) with a clearly identified item related to co-curriculum assessment; an email exchange outlining co-curricular themes; and the "Assessment Academy Gantt Chart." With respect to the second topic, Institutional Effectiveness, the supporting documentation includes minutes from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee; the institution's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan; and the "Institutional Effectiveness Planning Form." The third topic, pertaining to faculty qualifications, provides supporting materials in the form of examples from "Faculty Qualifications Plan Form;" an excerpt from the *2019-2020 Employee Handbook*; and an item titled "Process—Determining Qualified Faculty," among other documents.

Evidence presented in the interim report indicates that the document is candid and thorough.

REPORT SUMMARY: As noted above, the Dakota College at Bottineau interim report is presented in three parts, each addressing one element of the interim report requirements as set forth in the most recent HLC Team Report.

The first part of the interim report addresses co-curricular assessment. Here the document describes the institution's efforts in developing an effective co-curriculum assessment system, beginning with its application to the HLC Assessment Academy and internal personnel changes, including the appointment of a Director of Academic and Co-Curricular Assessment. The report notes the two objectives of the institution's participation in the Academy and lists the six co-curricular "group[s]" assigned to craft

an effective assessment process. In addition to identifying the groups (e.g. “Leaderjacks,” “Men’s Hockey”), the report provides a brief description of the role each plays in carrying out the co-curricular initiative. The leaders of each group were told of the College’s participation in the Assessment Academy, and, working with the Director of Assessment and the Accreditation Coordinator, the institution set forth the three purposes of co-curricular assessment.

Subsequently, the College appointed an HLC Co-Curricular Assessment Academy team consisting of the group leaders and “*members of the DCB Academic and Co-Curricular Assessment Committee.*” The team began its work by establishing co-curricular learning outcomes, attempting to align these with already established general education competencies. Following a survey administered to students, team members were able to use the survey results to identify five themes: 1) Community; 2) and 3) Leadership and Teamwork; 4) Career preparedness; and 5) Diversity. Here the report notes how each of these aligns with specific, existing general education competencies.

The series of steps summarized above took place during the 2020-2021 academic year. The team then sought to develop a metric for measuring achievement and progress in the competencies and learning outcomes, finally deciding to employ a self-assessment checklist using a 5-point Likert scale. According to the report, seventeen of the questions on the checklist were common to all co-curricular groups, though leaders had the option of adding questions they believed appropriate.

During the Spring 2022 semester, student participants in each of the six co-curricular groups completed the survey. Here the report provides the results of each, which are also included in the Co-curricular Assessment Report—and offers a brief synopsis of the findings, noting for example that the averages reflected slight to strong agreement that participation in co-curricular activities aided “*in a stronger connection to community, enhancement of leadership and teamwork skills, career preparedness, and an understanding of diversity.*”

The report states that the Academy team met in May 2022 to review co-curricular assessment procedures, and, after review, recommended an altered approach to the checklist survey. The document then describes its plans and activities for continuing the co-curricular assessment pilot process, with the group leaders meeting with the Academy team in Fall 2022 “*to refine the self-assessment checklist survey to better suit the goals of the individual co-curricular group.*” Halfway through its participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, the institution believes it has made significant progress in creating effective assessment procedures. DCB has determined that it will continue to work with the six current groups as it implements changes to the checklist survey.

The report notes the next steps in its participation with the Assessment Academy, with a Midpoint Report due by December 2022 and the final Impact Report due by the end of December in 2024. The document also points to other steps that need to be taken during the next two years, which include revision of the self-assessment checklist survey and a means by which to use assessment data for the improvement of student

learning, planning, and budgeting. This section of the report's narrative closes with an overview of the co-curricular assessment cycle, which will "mirror" that of academic assessment and employ a five-year rotation that includes Co-Curricular Program Review in year five. This cycle will engage co-curricular assessment in measuring each of the General Education Competencies.

The second part of the DCB interim report centers on Institutional Effectiveness (Core Component 5.D). Beginning with an overview of the pertinent issues in "Areas of Focus," the report notes the institution's evaluations of all "functional areas" that had taken place until Fall 2019, while citing the shortcomings of that system concerning such matters as *"follow up"* and lack of broad goals or objectives.

The report goes on to describe the formation of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) during Fall 2020—a body that is widely representative of institutional constituent groups. The institution decided to use the DCB Strategic Plan—which aligns with the North Dakota University System (NDUS) Strategic Plan goals—as the basis for IEC planning and reporting. Here the report makes reference to the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, pointing out the goals that had not yet been met, while noting the institution's completion of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy as an objective in the Plan.

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Planning and Reporting forms developed by the IEC *"called for an overall goal for the group and the steps/benchmarks necessary to ensure completion of the goal."* The report notes that all groups had the planning and reporting forms on file by February 2021, with monthly reporting continuing through the Spring 2021 semester, in advance of the final reports submitted at the May 2021 IEC meeting. The IEC compiled and reviewed the reports in July 2021 before submitting an Institutional Effectiveness Committee Annual Summary Report, which summarizes the monthly reports and sets forth recommendations *"as to whether the group should continue reporting the following academic year."* Here the document summarizes the IEC recommendations, beginning with those areas/units identified for continued reporting. Additional decisions regarding IEC reporting were awaiting completion of the NDUS strategic plan; this would enable DCB finish the updates to its own plan.

The Fall 2021 IE planning and reporting included continued reporting from Audits, Athletics, Advising, and Retention. The DCB report provides a brief overview of this process, noting for example the implementation of the "DCB Athletic Department Strategic Plan" and changes in the Athletic Department that included the appointment of a new Athletic Director. At this point the report provides summaries of the results of the institution's December 2021 IEC meeting and its IE activity during the Spring 2022 semester, beginning with a synopsis of the IEC meetings that took place during that time, employing the modified reporting format that required each group to present at two or more IEC meetings between January and June. According to the report, the new reporting process *"allowed for additional time to discuss the forthcoming DEB Strategic Plan and groups that would likely be identified in the 2022-2027 DCB Strategic Plan."*

The report goes on to name the six groups that submitted IE reports to the IEC: Advising, Athletics, Audits, Retention, Math, and Tutoring. 13 groups are scheduled to provide reports during AY2022-2023. Here the report also notes the completion of the NDUS Strategic Plan, indicating that this will enable DCB to finalize its own plan. The document makes reference to the AY2021-2022 Institutional Effectiveness Committee Annual Summary Report which, among other items, discusses the IE planning and reporting rotation and the need to “*offboard*” certain groups, which will be among the IEC meeting agenda items for AY2022-2023.

In the “Conclusion” of this section of the report, the institution cites the establishment of the IEC, a representative body that meets regularly and whose members “*have a vested interest in ensuring the effective operations of the Campus’ functional areas.*” As noted above, 13 key operational groups will be responsible for reporting during AY2022-2023, with some initial activities already completed, including the submission of Planning Forms that were reviewed during the IEC’s August 2022 meeting, and the identification of group leaders and “*individuals responsible for the successful completion of each benchmark.*”

The third major section of the report addresses the institution’s efforts at establishing policies and procedures to determine appropriate faculty qualifications. The report notes that the Faculty Qualification Plan Forms that were in use were not effective, and the policy for Determining Qualified Faculty did not provide specific guidance pertaining to Tested Experience (TE).

Here the report provides an overview of the work of the Faculty Qualifications Committee, which revised the process and associated documentation for determining faculty qualifications. This included creating a modified Faculty Qualifications Plan Form; the newly created form includes, among other items, the following, as enumerated in the interim report:

- *Degree and/or classes required to be considered qualified*
- *Institution where the degree will be obtained, or classes completed*
- *The timeline for completion (maximum of six years to complete per discipline)*
- *Identification of any tested experience relevant to the discipline taught and the points associated with each experience*

Currently seven faculty members have been identified who do not meet the minimum qualifications to teach within their discipline; these faculty members “were transitioned to the current Faculty Qualifications Plan.

The report describes the process for completion (or deletion) of a Faculty Qualification Plan, which is held in a faculty member’s Faculty Qualifications folder that contains all relevant documentation, such as transcripts and curriculum vitae or resume. The report also provides some detail about the Faculty Qualification Deletion of Plan form, which is used when 1) the course in question is no longer being offered; or 2) the faculty

members is no longer employed at the institution. This form is also completed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and kept in the Faculty Qualifications folder.

The report then sets forth the 12 different areas noted in DCB's Determining Faculty Qualifications policy that are used by the institution to help determine whether a faculty member is qualified through Tested Experience (TE).

- TE 1: Professional Work and/or Teaching Experience (0-9 points)
- TE 2: Training or Education (0-12 points)
- TE 3: Industry Certification (0-3 points)
- TE 4: Professional License (0-3 points)
- TE 5: Professional Publications (0-3 points)
- TE 6: Professional Presentations (0-3 points)
- TE 7: Awards of Recognition (0-3 points)
- TE 8: Professional Memberships (0-1 point)
- TE 9: Conference Attendance (0-1 point)
- TE 10: Documented Military Training or Experience (0-9 points)
- TE 11: Renowned in the Field (0-9 points)
- TE 12: Graduate Credits in the Discipline or Subfield (minimum of 9 points for faculty teaching in general education area)

According to the report, the Tested Experience Guidelines appendix improved the institution's ability to gauge this category more objectively, with the TE points now included on the Faculty Qualifications Completion of Plan Forms. In cases where the TE points are sufficient to enable a faculty member to teach in a particular discipline, the points and experiences are recorded on the Faculty Qualifications Form, which is a new procedure since 2020.

The report indicates that DCB has successfully moved all faculty members on a Faculty Qualifications Plan to the updated forms and tracked their progress, following which the institution sought to ascertain that documentation for all current faculty members was contained in their faculty folders and that each was qualified to teach in their respective disciplines. The report goes on to describe the process used by the Director of Distance Education, who "*maintains a master checklist of all active instructors.*" As a function of this process every faculty member's credentials are compared with the current iteration of the Determining Qualified Faculty policy, ensuring that all DCB faculty members are qualified to teach in their disciplines or are on a Faculty Qualification Plan.

Finally, the report notes that the Faculty Qualification Committee meetings "*are now a standing monthly meeting at Dakota College,*" which assists in ensuring that new faculty members are evaluated in timely fashion. The report cites an administrative change in relation to the process for faculty hiring, one feature of which is that all new faculty appointments are reviewed by the Faculty Qualification Committee before the faculty member begins her/his teaching assignment.

In its “Conclusion,” this section of the report recapitulates some of the key points made earlier in the section while affirming the institution’s commitment to ensure that “*all Dakota College at Bottineau faculty are appropriately qualified.*”

REPORT ANALYSIS: Materials presented in the Dakota College at Bottineau interim demonstrate that the institution has made discernable progress in the three report areas designated by the Higher Learning Commission.

Specifically, DCB has established an infrastructure for assessment in the co-curriculum along with procedures that should prove sustainable and effective. The infrastructure is concentrated largely in the institution’s participation in the Higher Learning Commission’s Assessment Academy and associated initiatives, such as the appointment of a new Director of Academic and Co-Curricular Assessment, signifying DCB’s commitment to measuring student learning in the co-curriculum. Further, the six co-curricular “groups” initially identified by the institution supply a further source of support for this effort.

The report goes into sufficient detail concerning the institution’s first forays in assessment in the co-curriculum, offering data that show well-considered, broadly implemented assessment activity. At this point, the primary means of assessment appear to be achieved through indirect measures of learning (survey), which should be given more deliberation, but the initial efforts were thorough. Evidence provided in the extensive appendices confirms the information contained in the narrative, beginning with DCB’s “Assessment Academy Application,” and continuing with other Academy documentation, as well as a range of internal communication, outlining, for example, the co-curricular themes. The “Co-curricular Assessment Report” for AY2021-2022 provides an excellent overview and analysis of these first efforts.

With regard to Institutional Effectiveness, the institution’s activity has been equally thorough, beginning with the formation of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC), a body that, appropriately, comprises a wide range of DCB constituent groups, including the faculty (Faculty Senate), the staff (Staff Senate) and the students (through the Student Senate). At the core of the College’s efforts in this area is the DCB Strategic Plan. The report describes an extensive planning and reporting system devised by the IEC, using planning/reporting templates developed by the committee. Given the amount of detail provided in the report with regard to the results of the first rounds of reporting, it is evident that the College is attempting seriously to bring together evaluative material from a vast range of institutional units/bodies into its efforts at continuous improvement.

Here too the supporting material (appendices) verify the information provided in the report’s narrative. Review of this documentation, including meeting minutes from the IEC’s planning efforts and the College’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, which highlights particular items noted in the narrative. The appendices also contain several examples of completed “Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Planning Form[s]” as well as “2020-2021 Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Reporting Form[s].” To provide guidance to the various groups and units engaged in this work, the IEC created the “Institutional Effectiveness

Handbook” (2022-2023 revision), which sets forth the planning and reporting processes, as well as laying out the IEC meeting schedule. In a brief but key section, the document also presents an overview of the “Relationship between Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.” This section, while important, should be given additional attention; the report refers to the assessment of “service/functional areas,” when the appropriate terminology concerning any area not directly related to student learning should be “evaluation” not “assessment.”

Pertaining to the issue of Faculty Qualifications: Here too the institution appears to have put forth concerted and well-considered efforts to ascertain that all faculty members have the appropriate qualifications to teach the courses they are assigned. The report describes a process that involved substantive changes in the College’s methods for evaluating faculty credentials, beginning with revision of the Faculty Qualification Plans Forms and the assignment of several (seven) faculty members to continue through a Qualification Plan.

To clarify issues pertaining to Tested Experience (TE), the institution created an appendix to its policy for Determining Qualified Faculty; the policy now includes an itemized 12-point listing of areas that may be used to qualify a faculty member through tested experience. Review of the supporting documentation situated in the appendix to the narrative confirms the assertions contained in the narrative. Here the report includes, among other documents, examples of completed “Faculty Qualifications Plan Form[s],” and an excerpt from the institution’s Employee Handbook containing the “Policy for Determining Qualified Faculty (7/2017),” with the 12-point explication for Tested Experience noted above.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: Dakota College at Bottineau has complied in all respects with the interim report requirements. The institution’s document is thorough and well supported. DCB is to be commended on the quality of its interim report. The Higher Learning Commission will not require additional reporting on co-curricular assessment, institutional effectiveness, or faculty qualifications. (Please see the Staff Finding section below.)

However, there remains work to be done in each of these areas, given that each is still very much a work in progress and will continue to require institutional attention. DCB should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team conducting the institution’s next Assurance Review in 2024 will wish to examine the College’s continuing progress in each area. For example, the Team will almost certainly want confirmation that the institution continues to comply with its procedures for determining faculty qualifications, and that its efforts to improve institutional effectiveness have continued to progress.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 3.C pertaining to faculty qualifications.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 4.B concerning co-curricular assessment.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 5.D pertaining to continuous improvement, systematic unit evaluation.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report providing evidence of a co-curricular assessment, a system to evaluate all functional areas, and appropriate faculty qualifications and evaluations. No further reports are required.

The institution's next Assurance Review is scheduled for 03/11/2024.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029-2030.