

Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Self-Study for Re-accreditation

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Chapter 1

History and Profile

Overview

Minnesota West Community and Technical College (hereafter referred to as Minnesota West or “the college”) is a merged comprehensive two-year institution of higher education. It is a family of five campuses, three additional locations, and one course location in a geographical area that comprises 19 southwestern Minnesota counties. The geographical distances between campuses and each location’s unique community, history, traditions, philosophies, and cultures, distinguish Minnesota West from all other colleges in Minnesota.



Several publicly supported liberal arts and technical colleges were merged in Minnesota in the 1990s, but unlike Minnesota West, all of them were either co-located or closely located. With a combined surface area of more than 21,000 square miles, Minnesota West’s territory exceeds that of every New England state except Maine (the combined areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island is only about 14,000 square miles; that of New Hampshire and Vermont is only about 18,000 square miles). The shortest route from Granite Falls to Canby is approximately 40 miles, from Canby to Pipestone is 50 miles, from Pipestone to Worthington

is 60 miles, from Worthington to Jackson is 30 miles, and from Jackson to Granite Falls is 120 miles. The shortest route from the Luverne additional location to Redwood Falls is 110 miles.

The Buffalo Ridge on the west side of the region and the Minnesota River on the east cause Minnesota West’s service area to experience disparate weather patterns, which are especially noticeable during severe Minnesota winters. A blizzard day in Granite Falls may be a sunny day in Worthington; an ice storm in Jackson may be light snow in Canby.

Because of their geographical proximity, most of Minnesota’s other merged two-year colleges had



long-standing relationships previous to their merging. With the exception of the Jackson and Worthington campuses, which began cooperating in some associate degree programs in the late 1980s, the campuses involved in the Minnesota West merger were relatively isolated from each other. Even though Minnesota West’s four technical campuses were merged administratively as Southwestern Technical College in 1985, the four individual technical campuses continued to function with relative autonomy and compete with each other for students until they became part of Minnesota West.

Liberal Arts Education

The oldest institution in the Minnesota West family began admitting students as Worthington Junior College in 1936. Worthington Independent School District 518 established the two-year liberal arts college that was accredited by the Minnesota Department of

Education. The institution continued this accreditation until 1973, when the Worthington campus received its first accreditation from North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). Worthington Junior College became Worthington State Junior College on July 1, 1964, when it affiliated with the Minnesota State Junior College System. In 1974, that system changed its name to the Minnesota Community College System, and Worthington State Junior College became Worthington Community College. That name remained until the merger of Southwestern Technical College and Worthington Community College in January 1997, when the official name of the merged institution became Minnesota West Community and Technical College.

The Worthington campus of Minnesota West is located in the northwest corner of Worthington on the north shore of Okabena Lake. The Worthington community is in the center of Nobles County and has a population of approximately 13,000 citizens. In the past few decades, Worthington has become the second-most racially and ethnically diverse community in greater Minnesota. In addition to production agriculture, the community's major industries include bio-science, pork processing, and manufactured homes and plastic products, as well as research and development of veterinary medicines and vaccines.

The Worthington campus provides and oversees most liberal arts courses for all of the Minnesota West campuses and additional locations via interactive television and the Internet.

Technical Education

Until the creation of Minnesota West, technical education campuses were at Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, and Pipestone, Minnesota. On July 1, 1985, these campuses, which until then had operated autonomously under the jurisdiction of local K-12 public school districts,

were consolidated to form one regional technical college. Southwestern Technical College (STC) was officially created on July 1, 1985, and became part of the Minnesota Technical College System. STC received its first NCA accreditation in August 1991.

Also in 1991, the Minnesota Legislature passed legislation mandating that the Minnesota State University System, the Minnesota Community College System, and the Minnesota Technical College System merge by July 1, 1995. A new agency, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), was the result of that three-way merger. On January 1, 1997, again by order of the Minnesota Legislature, Worthington Community College and Southwestern Technical College merged to become Minnesota West Community and Technical College, a single, comprehensive two-year college.

The Canby campus of Minnesota West Community and Technical College was founded in 1965 and is located in western Yellow Medicine County. The Canby community has a population of about 1,800 citizens. Education, government, health care, manufacturing, services, wholesale and retail trade, and wind power account for the non-agricultural employment in the area. The Canby campus offers programs in accounting, administrative assistant, dental assistant, diesel mechanics, diesel technician, electrician, medical coding specialist, and wind energy technology.

The Granite Falls campus of Minnesota West was also established in 1965. The campus serves eastern Yellow Medicine County. The population of Granite Falls is approximately 3,100. Primary industries in the area are agriculture and light manufacturing. The Granite Falls campus offers technical programs in accounting, administrative assistant, biofuels, child development, collision repair, computer support technician, computer maintenance and repair, computer

information security, computerized Small Business Management, fluid power, engineering, medical coding, medical secretary, and biofuels technology. In recent years, more students have sought AA degrees at the Granite Falls campus than any other degree, certificate, or diploma.

The Jackson campus of Minnesota West is located on the west edge of Jackson, a community of approximately 3,500 citizens in eastern Jackson County, another primarily agricultural area. The Jackson campus, established in 1964, was the seventeenth post-secondary vocational school in Minnesota. New buildings were added to the facility in 1965 and 1975. Jackson campus technical programs include accounting, administrative assistant, automotive technology, business, computer engineering technology, computer maintenance and repair, cosmetology, electrical utility technician, electrician, emergency medical services, Farm Business Management, medical secretary, medical coding specialist, networking specialist, power sports technology, and power line technology.

Minnesota West's Pipestone campus was built on the site of the former Pipestone Indian Vocational School, which was established on February 2, 1893. That institution provided vocational training to Native American students until 1958, when the campus, which comprised some 56 buildings, was closed. Two of those buildings were used by Pipestone Area Vocational-Technical Institute (PAVTI) and remain in use by Minnesota West. In 1957, the federal government ceded the property to Pipestone, a community of about 4,100 citizens in central Pipestone County. PAVTI enrolled its first students at the site in 1967. Today, Minnesota West's Pipestone campus programs include accounting; administrative assistant; carpentry; cosmetology; computerized Small Business Management; Farm Business Management; lamb

and wool management; heating, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration (HVAC/R); medical secretary; medical coding specialist; nursing; and plumbing.

Minnesota West maintains additional locations at Fairmont, Luverne, and Redwood Falls, and a course location at Marshall. The Luverne (pop. 4,500) additional location focuses on massage therapy, medical assistant, medical laboratory technician, phlebotomy, surgical technology, and radiologic technology. The Fairmont (pop. 10,500) location's focus is liberal arts education online and via ITV, and the newest location, Redwood Falls (pop. 5,100), provides access to all Minnesota West ITV courses. The Marshall (pop. 12,500) location is devoted primarily to Customized Training/Continuing Education.

Minnesota West Online

The World Wide Web could be considered Minnesota West's fifth location. In recent years, the enrollment in online classes has grown to more than 30 percent of total enrollment for the college. Students in online courses live and work in the 19-county region and beyond.

Degrees, Diplomas, and Certificates

Minnesota West currently provides developmental and lower-division college instruction in academic programs, occupational programs that involve a liberal arts component, and technical programs. It awards associate in arts (AA), associate in science (AS), and associate in applied science degrees (AAS) as well as one-year, eighteen-month and two-year diplomas and technical training certificates. The college also awards associate degrees in nursing (ADN) at the Worthington campus and diplomas in practical nursing at both Worthington and Pipestone. Minnesota West also provides hour-based instructional programs, continuing education units,

customized training, teleconferences, online courses, and management programs to respond to community and regional needs.

In addition to traditional on-campus classes, Minnesota West offers Farm Business Management, Lamb and Wool, Computerized Small Business Management, and Small Business Management (FBM/SBM) courses off campus; courses via interactive television (ITV) to all of its campuses and locations; customized training and continuing education (CT/CE) courses at various locations; and courses online. FBM/SBM programs include mentoring programs and off-campus classes for credit.

Each Minnesota West campus and location has its own ITV studios, which are connected through the Learning Network of Minnesota. The Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications (SHOT) is one of six telecommunication regional entities that administer the network statewide. The network was established to provide interactive television and telecommunication services to state higher education institutions. The network first became operational in southwestern Minnesota in January 1995.

Minnesota West began offering online courses in 1999. The first of those courses was in accounting. In FY10, Minnesota West offered 342 online courses and was actively developing several others. Online education now represents nearly 32 percent of Minnesota West's total enrollment.

Enrollment

Enrollment at Minnesota West has held steady or slightly increased each year since the merger. Full-year equivalent enrollment in 2009 was 2,032¹. Most Minnesota West students are

¹ [MnSCU Reporting and Data Services](#)

local, but some international students also enroll each year. Although the vast majority of students are Caucasian (89 percent), the percentage of non-white students grows annually as local industries expand their hiring base. Minority populations are primarily Hispanic and Southeast Asian, although Native American and African populations are also increasing.

More than one-third (33 percent) of Minnesota West Community and Technical College students are traditional (18-21 years old) and 67 percent are non-traditional (22 and older). In fall of 2009, full-time headcount was 1,583 and part-time head count was 1,628. Non-credit head count was 2,143 and head count in dual enrollment (high school) programs was 417.

Of Minnesota West students in fall 2009, 51 percent attended college part-time; 53 percent were women; 44 percent were aged 25 or older; and 9.34 percent were non-Caucasian.

Many students entering Minnesota West require developmental courses to improve basic reading, writing or math skills. The Accuplacer exam is the “system endorsed”² entrance exam for all MnSCU colleges. In FY10, Accuplacer scores showed that 71 percent of full-time, first-time students needed one or more developmental math courses; 53 percent needed one or more developmental reading courses; and 53 percent needed one or more developmental writing courses. (The same Accuplacer cut score is used to place students in developmental reading and writing.)

Minnesota West had a total 2,360.7 FYE in FY10. When Minnesota West students who take non-credit courses were added to the total, the headcount for FY10 was more than 10,000. Noncredit-bearing courses are offered exclusively by Customized Training Services (CTS).

² [MnSCU Procedure 3.3.1 Assessment for Course Placement](#)

Summary

This self-study will show that Minnesota West is a maturing institution that is facing many challenges, but it is boldly meeting those challenges and creatively planning for the future. Its creation was a forced polygamous marriage of partners from different cultures and traditions that did not know each other well enough to trust that everyone involved could ensure the future health and historical integrity of the institutions served. In spite of these worries, in our second decade, trust among the partners continues to increase while students, faculty, and administrators improve ways to work together. As Minnesota West passes its fourteenth anniversary, the partners continue their efforts to thrive and to serve all of its constituents effectively.

Chapter 2

Responses to Recommendations

Responses to 2001 HLC Recommendations

During the last comprehensive visit for reaccreditation, in 2001, HLC consultant/evaluators made only two recommendations for Minnesota West. The first recommendation was for the college to complete its Strategic Plan. The second was for the college to assemble a policies and procedures manual. Both tasks were completed and approved in May 2004. The Strategic Plan was reviewed in 2009 and the plan was extended from 2010-2015.

Other Recent Improvements

In June 2005, MnOnline included Minnesota West in a system-wide peer review. This occurred after the college received HLC approval to provide distance learning in 2004. The MnOnline Peer Review Process was completed and the fiscal plan for distance learning stability was accepted.

In October 2009, Minnesota West received a letter from the Higher Learning Commission that indicated that the college's financial composition (CFI) scores were low. The commission requested a response to indicate why the scores were low and how the college planned to correct them. Through continual monitoring and evaluation of services, staffing, and programming, the college quickly met the level of efficiency needed to correct the CFI curve. The CFI grew from .75 in FY08 to 1.59 in FY09, bringing the measure to above the zone range for public institutions, as classified by HLC.

The college achieved a CFI of 4.33 for the year that ended June 30, 2010. Much of the improvement from FY09 occurred because the college used one-time federal stimulus funds to retire debt on an energy loan. The resulting decrease in both current and noncurrent long-term debt positively affected the ratios by over 1.15. Additionally, the college experienced a 13 percent increase in enrollment with only a 5 percent increase in course sections offered. The use of existing seat capacity in courses equated to approximately \$400,000 in unneeded expenditures. This accounts for another third of the increase in the CFI. Although the college anticipated and appreciates the effects of these actions on the CFI, the CFI alone did not drive the decisions.

Just as those factors caused Minnesota West to show marked improvement in the index, the college expects that negative fluctuations will occur in the CFI in the next few fiscal years. The absence of stimulus funds after FY11 will cause the calculation to be lower. At the same time, higher enrollment than the college experienced before the economic downturn will allow the college's CFI to remain higher than the average of the past few years. However, as the economy recovers and the currently unemployed return to work, the college's CFI will again be reduced. These are a few factors that will cause fluctuations in the college's CFI over the next three to four years.

When the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC) evaluated the Minnesota West nursing program in 2009, it found that the Director of Nursing did not have appropriate credentials. Although the director at the time had multiple advanced degrees, she did not have a master's degree in nursing. That deficiency was corrected before NLNAC's return visit in 2010. The Director of Associate Degree Nursing now has a doctorate of nursing practice

degree and the two full-time nursing instructors hold master's degrees in nursing. Seven of the eight part-time nursing instructors also hold master's degrees, while the eighth has special skills and teaches only three credits in the program. The college received five-year NLNAC accreditation in summer 2010. The college will continue to maintain an appropriately credentialed nursing faculty as recommended by the NLNAC.

On-going recommendations from the MnSCU system office are to thoroughly monitor placement rates and job satisfaction among graduates. Such follow-up was also recommended by NLNAC evaluators and is part of MnSCU's Accountability Dashboard.

Overall, faculty credentials have vastly improved in the 15 years since the formation of MnSCU. In 1997, MnSCU colleges initiated a system of developing and collecting individual professional development plans that faculty review with administrators at least once every three years.

In 2009, MnSCU contracted with Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE) group to assess five dimensions of student engagement and satisfaction at each college in the system. The dimensions assessed were titled "Active and Collaborative Learning," "Student Effort," "Academic Challenge," "Student-Faculty Interaction," and "Support for Learner."

Survey forms were sent to a student cohort in courses randomly selected by CCSSE. Results were then calculated according to the student responses. Research was also conducted on matriculation and retention.

Scores in the five areas indicated that Minnesota West ranked within similar score ranges as other colleges surveyed by CCSSE in both the consortium and the cohort. The college

scored well in the areas of “Student-Faculty Interaction” and “Support for Learners.” Two subjects for concern were “Active and Collaborative Learning” and “Academic Challenge.”

Methods to address those challenges in FY10 included the implementation of an early warning system; faculty provide the names of students who are performing at less than C level to advisors, who then send letters to students encouraging them to visit instructors for extra assistance. In FY11, the college initiated a new course titled Freshman Seminar. The purpose of the course is to ease students’ adjustment to college life and increase their likelihood of success. Freshman Seminar provides first-year students with general orientation, a review of study skills, and information regarding college resources. Also in FY11, the college employed a Minnesota College Athletic Conference (MCAC) Administrative Assistant/Athletic Retention Coordinator to help athletes remain academically engaged through graduation.

The challenges of retention and matriculation to graduation are constantly being addressed at Minnesota West. Unfortunately, MnSCU only tracks the success of first-time, full-time students, while Minnesota West tracks all students, whether they are first-time enrollees or returning students. Therefore, the retention rate shown in the CCSSE analysis appears lower than the college’s true rate of success in this area.

A Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey in 2007-08 assessed student satisfaction at Minnesota West. The survey compared student expectations for the college to the college’s ability to meet those expectations. Survey responses showed either no gaps or gaps of less than one point between expectations and satisfaction in most areas. However, the survey revealed a gap of one point between student expectations and satisfaction regarding financial aid.

Two major areas of concern revealed in the Noel-Levitz survey were that “financial aid awards were not announced in time” and “financial aid available for most students.” To respond to those concerns, the college’s financial aid office initiated a system of notifying students via email of the status of their financial aid package. If students are selected for verification, instead of sending letters through the mail, the financial aid office emails letters that explain the process and link the students to the verification form. The process makes the letters available on the day they are processed. The financial aid office now posts on the Minnesota West website notifications of when financial aid packages are available and has enhanced the website to include more links and information regarding financial aid. The financial aid director also sends a series of all-student emails one month before the academic year begins to inform students of timelines and processes related to their receiving financial aid. Included are instructions on how to apply for a loan, deadlines for book vouchers and funds applied, and guidelines for checking financial aid status.

In 2010, Minnesota West entered into a contract with SunGard Higher Education to further assess and recommend improvements in the college’s financial aid services. The report was completed in March 2011. Administrators and affected staff are currently reviewing the findings and implementing the recommendations.

Through all of the changes here noted, Minnesota West has shown its ability and commitment to make necessary changes that benefit students, improve graduation rates, and enhance the overall quality of the institution.

Chapter 3

Criterion I - Mission and Integrity

“The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.”

Core Component 1a: The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.

Mission History

Minnesota West’s first mission, vision, and goals documents were developed at the time of the merger. A series of campus meetings involving faculty, staff, and administrators from all five campuses began in December 1996. A number of committees and work groups developed and reviewed drafts of the mission documents until a final version was approved in March 1997.

In August 2001, Minnesota West contracted with the Clements Group (a consulting firm) to conduct an extensive strategic planning process involving students, staff, faculty, businesses and industry, and college-wide constituents. The process concluded with a revised mission statement, goals, and vision statement. Group advisory feedback, surveys, interviews, and research of relevant demographics were used to develop the comprehensive statements. Since then, mission documents have been periodically reviewed and reapproved both locally and by

the MnSCU board of directors. The most recent review by the MnSCU board was in 2008. A copy of the report titled *Mission and Vision Approval Process of the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities* is in the resource room.

The college mission and goals are published in most major Minnesota West publications, including the college catalog, strategic plan, promotional materials, and the Minnesota West website.

Mission Statement and Goals

Minnesota West Community and Technical College is dedicated to serving the varied educational needs of our diverse populations in affordable, accessible and supportive settings.

Mission Goals

1. To provide pre-professional and liberal arts courses which lead to associate in arts (AA) or associate in science (AS) degrees. The courses are designed to transfer to a four-year college or university and will apply toward a baccalaureate degree.
2. To provide certificate, diploma, and associate of applied science (AAS) degree courses for students working to develop and enhance occupational or technical competence leading toward employment or further education.
3. To provide learning opportunities for people of varying ages, backgrounds, and abilities with particular focus and commitment to retraining and lifelong learning.
4. To provide continuing education, management education, and customized training for professions, businesses, and industries.

5. To provide facilities for programs, activities, conferences, teleconferences and courses to meet community needs.

6. To provide extended educational opportunities by means of flexible scheduling and delivery.

7. To provide effective and efficient use of resources through partnerships with agencies, other educational institutions, businesses and industries.

8. To provide continuous improvement processes via assessment, evaluation and upgrading of programs and services, and to support the professional development of college personnel.

9. To provide the resources to meet the contemporary standards of facilities, informational resources, technology, and teaching strategies to insure quality educational outcomes.

10. To provide comprehensive student services enabling academic and personal growth toward lifetime learning.

Vision Statement

Minnesota West Community and Technical College provides dynamic, responsive, creative, and quality education to a diverse population in an ever-changing educational, business, and cultural environment.

Vision Goals

Access: To provide students with access to learning and information through electronic education and technology in addition to traditional methods of instruction.

Position students: To provide students with transferable credits, employment skills, and the ability to access lifelong learning.

Regional Needs: To be a partner with agencies, other educational institutions, businesses and industries in regional economic development.

Continuing Evaluation: To continue evaluating all college activities, programs and functions with regard to service to students, performance outcomes, fiscal accountability and cost effectiveness to insure future college growth and success.

MnSCU goals: To support goals of Academic Accountability, Skill-Based Transfer, Career Education, Electronic Education, Program Alignment, and MnSCU/K-12 Partnership.

Public Awareness of Mission

Minnesota West's constituencies are kept apprised of the college mission and goals in many ways. The mission and goals are published or posted in nearly every form of communication the college produces, including the college catalog, semester bulletins, the Minnesota West website, online social networking pages, and selected program and marketing publications. Marketers and friends of the college disseminate those publications throughout the region to potential students, employers, families, and partner institutions. Marketers and staff organize events that bring constituents to the campuses to introduce them to Minnesota West, and they reach out in nearly every way possible to tell the Minnesota West story.

The [Minnesota West website](#), includes the entire text of the mission statement, vision statement, and goals. Constituents can also access the site to register for classes, check grades and discover college history, programs, schedules, services, and other vital information about the college.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West has a comprehensive mission statement and goals that represent all major aspects of the college.

2. Developing the mission statement and goals was a highly participatory process involving all five campuses and all factions of Minnesota West operations.

3. The current mission statement and goals are compatible with and grow from the MnSCU mission.

4. Minnesota West's mission and vision is widely known through the region. The statements are posted in a variety of media, including print, internet and broadcast.

5. Minnesota West's mission and vision are appropriate to meet the higher education needs of its constituents.

Challenges

1. Minnesota West's mission and vision statements should be reviewed more frequently to ensure that they continue to direct the efforts of Minnesota West to meet the needs and interests of the college and constituents in the service area.

2. Minnesota West's growing commitment to online education should be addressed more clearly and directly in the mission and vision statements. Although college efforts to increase online education have always been intended to provide greater access for students in the region, the rapid expansion of online courses has expanded enrollment beyond the 19 counties in southwestern Minnesota.

Core Component 1b: In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Minnesota West currently offers a wide spectrum of classes and services to meet its mission and strives each academic year to enhance and enlarge its capacity to meet and exceed the goals it has established.

A Newly Diverse Region

Minnesota’s total 2008 population was 5,220,393, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Of that number, 85.4 percent were identified as “White persons not Hispanic,” 4.6 percent were Black persons, 4.1 percent were persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, 3.5 percent were Asian, 1.5 percent were mixed race, and 1.2 percent were Native American.

According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the state gained 300,000 residents from 2000 to 2008; however, the 18 counties in southwestern Minnesota lost about 9,000 people in the same period. Only



two of the 18 counties (McLeod and Meeker) gained population since 2000, while 13 of the remaining 15 counties lost more than 500 people, and three of those counties, Redwood, Renville, and Yellow Medicine, lost more than 1,000. Two counties, Lac Qui Parle and Yellow Medicine, lost more than 10 percent of their populations in that eight-year period. Twelve counties in southwestern Minnesota were among the 25 fastest *shrinking* counties in the state.

The region's population is also aging. According to DEED, by 2035 as much as 30 percent of southwestern Minnesota's population will be 65 years or older (19.3 percent were 65 or older in 2008 compared with 12.8 percent statewide). The number of births is expected to decline by 5.5 percent. Total population will grow by a mere 3.3 percent by 2035.

DEED also reports that the region is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Although the region remains predominately white (96.2 percent), Hispanic or Latino populations increased by 5.6 percent, and nine of the region's 55 school districts had more than 20 percent minority students in 2008.

The 2008 population of Nobles County, the county in which Minnesota West's Worthington campus resides, was 20,365, with 74.4 percent "White persons not Hispanic," 18.2 percent Hispanic or Latino, 4.5 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.5 percent Black, 1.1 percent mixed race, and .8 percent Native American.

In 2010, 84 percent of Minnesota West's students were White, 4 percent were Hispanic or Latino, 3 percent were Black, 2 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American. Six percent of students were "uncoded," which means they did not identify themselves by race.

The Region's Labor Force

The unemployment rate in southwestern Minnesota has lagged well behind state and national rates, and most people who live here also work here. From 2000 to 2008, the unemployment rate in southwestern Minnesota was below 4.5 percent but rose to nearly 6 percent in 2009. Statewide unemployment was between 4.5 and 5 percent until 2008, increased to 7.1 percent in 2009, and fell back to 6.9 percent in August 2010. More than 60

percent of workers in the region work in their home counties. Of those who commute to jobs outside of the region, about two-thirds drive to South Dakota and one-third to Iowa.

Hourly pay rates in southwestern Minnesota are also the lowest in the state. Average hourly wages in the region ranged from \$13.48 to \$14.51 in 2008, while in the Twin Cities the average hourly wage was \$18.90. In Sioux Falls, SD, the average hourly wage was \$13.97.

Minnesota West and Diversity

To satisfy its mission to serve “the varied educational needs of our diverse populations,” MnSCU and Minnesota West attend to diversity issues in a variety of ways.

Civil Rights Compliance Review

In 2009, the MnSCU Office for Diversity and Multiculturalism conducted a *System Civil Rights Compliance Review* of Minnesota West. Reviewers inspected facilities at all the college campuses and locations in July and visited campuses in November to gather data on existing conditions, perceptions, policies, and practices. The committee found the college to be in compliance in most categories and made only moderate suggestions for minor corrective actions. The complete [Civil Rights Compliance Review](#) is in the resource room and on the website.

Multicultural Awareness

Minnesota West has made extraordinary efforts to welcome and serve the region’s newest residents and prepare them for work and assimilation to their new environment.

Culture Corner is located in the Information and Technology building on the Worthington campus. It is the college’s principle Office of Cultural Diversity. The office provides a central location where underrepresented students can access services designed to help them

succeed. The office was first funded in 2004 “with the purpose of improving retention of students of color, as well as increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among undergraduate students.” The college provides a variety of programs, services, and referrals that are intended to enrich the campus experience and enhance learning for all students.

[Culture Corner’s Mission](#) Goals are to:

- Develop and implement programs designed to increase and improve diversity awareness at all levels of the college.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive system of responsibility, accountability, and recognition for increasing campus diversity and improving campus climate.
- Support outreach, community and service learning opportunities for multi-ethnic students, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transsexual (GLBT) students, and women's concerns.

The [Office of Cultural Diversity](#) website includes complete mission, vision, and goals statements and links to minority scholarships and other important services.

All other Minnesota West campuses have designated multicultural awareness officers assigned to assist minority students. At the technical campuses, student services advisors are designated diversity officers. The advisors plan activities for minority students, including monthly activities or meetings with guest speakers, videos, or testimonials from students who have successfully acclimated to their new college environment. Other activities provide opportunities for students to reach out to surrounding communities. For example, the Pipestone campus helped with the prom at the Flandreau (SD) Indian School in 2009 by

collecting and distributing 60 dresses and providing free cosmetology services. The advisors also coordinate awareness-raising events on their campuses during Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Cinco de Mayo, and other occasions.

Services available to underrepresented and international students at Minnesota West include information and referral, access to social and cultural activities, cultural awareness programming, diversity training, advising, and help filing financial aid and admissions applications. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the college has also hired a half-time retention coordinator to aid in retention and persistence of minority student athletes, who have the lowest college success rate historically.

Student Organizations to Promote Diversity

No formal student organizations exist for specific minority groups on Minnesota West campuses. However, each campus coordinator plans meetings intended to raise student awareness of diversity issues and distinctive cultural traditions.

Veterans Resources

Minnesota West is approved by the Minnesota State Approving Agency for Veteran’s Educational Benefits. Every Minnesota West campus also has a designated certifying officer to help with veterans services.

Applications for veteran educational benefits can be obtained from registration staff on all campuses. The [Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs](#) and MnOnline also have a website designed to serve the unique higher education needs of military veterans, students currently serving in the military, and families of veterans.

Minnesota West also offers credit for military experience and training. Course equivalencies can be found at [u. select](#) and on the college website at the college page titled [Alternative Methods of Earning Credit](#).

Transfer and Technical Education

To meet the education and training needs of its diverse population, Minnesota West offers 65 certificate programs, 69 diploma programs, 52 associate in applied science (AAS) degree programs, 17 associate in science (AS) degree programs, and five associate in arts (AA) degree programs. Minnesota West offers technical instruction in 28 technical areas.

At the end of the FY10, 87 Minnesota West students were awarded associate in arts degrees, 118 received associate in applied science degrees, 132 received associate in science degrees, 265 received diplomas, and 592 students earned certificates.

Flexible Scheduling

Minnesota West schedules classes at various times to meet the demands of its working constituents. The college offers traditional face-to-face courses, ITV courses, and Internet courses. In addition to the fall and spring semesters, the college offers a winter term, a May term, and a summer term with various starting dates. Minnesota West courses include transferable college-level courses, business and farm management courses, technical courses, customized training services, continuing education courses, and contract for training programs to enhance job skills. A number of course offerings, including developmental courses, are also available in eight-week segments to enable students to take two courses per semester. Face-to-face courses are offered at traditional times, evenings, and weekends.

College Articulation Agreements

Minnesota West has articulation agreements with several four-year colleges interested in receiving graduates with associate in science and associate of applied science degrees.

Some 26 articulation agreements are in place between Minnesota West and other public higher education institutions around the state.

- Minnesota West graduates in six different degree programs can transfer into the law enforcement program at Minnesota State University-Mankato.
- The University of Minnesota-Crookston will accept Minnesota West’s agricultural production management AS degree and biofuels technology AAS degree into its animal science program.
- Minnesota State University-Moorhead’s operations management major will accept Minnesota West AAS degrees in automotive technology, computer information technology, computer engineering technology, computer specialist, computer support technician, diesel technology, electrical utility substation, electrician, fluid power, HVAC, machine tool technology, manufacturing engineering, networking specialist, nursing, plumbing technology, power line technology, and robotics technician.
- Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) in Marshall will accept graduates from Minnesota West’s computer science and GIS programs into its bachelor of applied science or technology (BAS/BAT) and 2+2 programs.

In 2010, Minnesota West entered into partnership with [Franklin University](#) in Columbus, OH, to help students earn a bachelor’s degree through a combination of courses from Minnesota West and online courses from Franklin. Students earn an associate’s degree at Minnesota West and continue their education with “bridge courses” and online Franklin

University courses. Majors are offered in 24 fields, from accounting to web development.

Franklin University also offers MBA and MS degrees in marketing and communications online.

Students in the online program also have access to Franklin University's online academic advising, a technology help desk, and library. Each online student is assigned to a Franklin student services associate to answer questions regarding transcripts, financial aid, and textbooks.

Customized Training Services (CTS) and Contracts for Training

The Minnesota West Marshall Center houses the Customized Training Services Division (CTS). The CTS office is located at the Minnesota Emergency Response and Industrial Training (MERIT) Center, 1001 Erie Road/County Road 33, Marshall. The MERIT Center is a regional partnership between Minnesota West and the City of Marshall that was established in 1999 when the training facility was constructed.

Minnesota West's CTS staff members are the primary points of contact for the emergency response and industrial safety training programs delivered through the MERIT Center. Currently, four full-time CTS staff members maintain offices at the MERIT Center. CTS offices are also located at the Canby campus (three staff members), the Granite Falls campus (three staff members), the Pipestone campus (two staff members), and Jackson campus (two part-time staff members).

Minnesota West's CTS offers a variety of hour-based and continuing education credit-bearing courses to meet the dynamic needs of business and industry for workforce development and skills training. When employers request new skills courses, CTS responds in a flexible and timely manner. CTS consistently serves nearly 6,500 constituents each year in open

enrollment and contract for training programs throughout the Minnesota West service region. CTS offers more than 75,000 hours of training annually.

Instructors for CTS courses are adjunct faculty members, industry professionals, and industry consultants with expertise in their subject areas and current industry experience. In FY10, CTS employed 90 different instructors and 42 different consultants.

CTS courses are offered throughout the calendar year. In FY10, 1,015 CTS classes were offered to 5,968 students. Examples of successful current CTS course offerings include Online Firefighter I and II (both online and face-to-face); Industrial Maintenance and Manufacturing Machine Automation; Industrial Safety, Confined Space, OSHA Compliance; Computer Technology Training; Management/Supervisory Development; Introductory and Intermediate Welding Training; Boiler Operator; IV Therapy and Trained Medical Administration (online and face-to-face); Lean Manufacturing; and Six Sigma Black Belt and Green Belt Certification. CTS also offers continuing education courses for dental care, health care, law enforcement professionals.

Industry

In FY10, Minnesota West's CTS facilitated 166 employer contracts for training throughout the college service area. In addition, CTS secured more than \$820,000 in grant funds to develop and deliver specialized training programs to regional manufacturers, fire departments, and medical professionals.

CTS has established long-term training relationships with the majority of employers in the region. Examples of area industries with which the college has long-term contracts for training include Archer Daniels Midland (ADM); AGCO Jackson plant; AGP Soybean Processors;

Avicenna Technology, Inc.; Case New Holland, Benson plant; Hi-Rel Laboratories; JBS Swift; Minnesota Freezer; Minnesota Soybean Processors; the Schwan's Food Company; Suzlon Rotor Corporation; and several area health care, long-term care, and dental care facilities, fire departments, and law enforcement agencies.

Minnesota West's CTS training representatives initiate most contacts with industry employers. Training representatives establish and maintain business-to-business relationships through professional networking and by maintaining memberships in professional organizations throughout the region. These partnerships and active memberships enable CTS to be proactive in identifying and meeting the rapidly changing workforce development needs of the region's employers. All CTS training representatives have industry experience and expertise in their specialized fields. They maintain current licensure and industry training certifications to ensure that they can deliver credible and current training curricula.

“Green” programs

Minnesota West is a state leader in agriculture education, renewable energy, and bioscience technologies.

Minnesota Energy Enterprise Center is located on the Granite Falls campus. A director coordinates the center's activities, which include wind energy technology and biofuels technology programs at the college. Approximately one-third of the director's responsibility is to teach courses in those programs. The director also coordinates instruction, schedules classes, manages staff, prepares budgets, conducts research, ensures accountability for grants, develops new programs, and represents the college at renewable energy meetings.

Students at Granite Falls can earn an AAS degree in Biofuels Technology or a certificate in Biotechnology Biodiesel or Biotechnology Ethanol, either in the classroom or online. Biofuels technology is the application of biological organisms, systems, and/or processes to the science of life and the improvement of pharmaceuticals, crops, and livestock.

The Worthington campus offers an AAS degree in Biotechnology Lab Technician. Biotechnology is the application of biological organisms, systems, and processes to improve pharmaceuticals, crops, and livestock. Biotechnology integrates knowledge from several sciences, including biochemistry, chemistry, microbiology, and chemical engineering. Graduates may pursue careers in pharmaceuticals, food processing, molecular biology, agricultural research, and product analysis.

Much of the biotechnology program is taught in laboratory space provided at Newport Laboratories, a subsidiary of Prairie Holdings, Inc., a private corporation in Worthington. Each year the college co-sponsors a bioscience conference. Other co-sponsors are energy companies from throughout the region and several local businesses.

Minnesota West offers nine degree or certificate programs in agriculture, including AS degrees in Agriculture, Agriculture Business, Agriculture Plant Science, and Agriculture Production Management; associate of applied science degrees in Agriculture Production, Agriculture Business Management, and Agriculture Business Marketing; a diploma in Production Agriculture; and a certificate in Precision Agriculture Application Technician. The college also offers an AS degree in Forestry/Natural Resources. The Farm Management program offers diplomas in Farm Business Management and Lamb and Wool Management and

certificates in Advanced Farm Business Management, Applications in Farm Business Management, and Essentials of Farm Business Management.

The Canby campus provides a hub for harnessing the enormous potential of wind power on Buffalo Ridge by offering an AAS degree in Wind Energy Technology, a diploma in Wind Energy Mechanic, and a certificate in Windsmith, which focuses on installation and maintenance of wind towers.

Management Courses

Farm Business Management (FBM) programs at Minnesota West provide lifelong education to agribusiness owners and managers. These programs focus on record keeping, goal setting, and informed decision making with the goal of helping owners and managers maintain successful and profitable operations. In FY10, FBM enrolled 407 students; students enrolled in FBM courses increased their net worth by nearly \$33,000, or 19 percent.

Minnesota West's Small Business Management (SBM) instructors provide one-on-one instruction in student business places, but they also meet with small groups of students in classrooms, attend meetings, lead field trips, and arrange for tours of other enterprises. In FY10, SBM enrollment was 116. Computerized Small Business Management (CSBM) programs at Minnesota West also provide lifelong education to farm and business owners and managers. In FY10, CSBM enrollment was 45 students.

In 2009, students enrolled in SBM/CSBM courses increased their net worth by approximately .5 percent. Students in manufacturing programs increased sales by about 10 percent and their net worth by about .5 percent. Students in retail and service operations just held their own due to the downturn in the economy.

Lamb and Wool Management Program (LWMP) instructors provide one-on-one instruction at student operation locations, but they also meet groups of students in classrooms and through webinars, provide management updates through a newsletter and weekly e-mail, attend small group meetings, lead field trips, and arrange for tours of other enterprises. In FY10, LWMP enrollment was 161 students. Students enrolled in LWMP courses increased ewe numbers, implemented more efficient and effective labor management practices, and produced higher quality lambs and wool. They increased their net worth by 11 percent.

Online courses

Minnesota West was one of the first institutions of higher learning in the country to offer online courses and programs that would lead to degrees. The college created its own open source online platform in 1999 and continued to use the program until MnSCU adopted Desire2Learn as its system-wide platform for all courses. The college applied for Higher Learning Commission approval to offer associate degree programs online in late 2003 and received approval in April 2004. By FY09, 25 Minnesota West degree programs were offered fully online. Also by 2009, more than half of Minnesota West students had taken at least one online course, and more than 21 percent had taken online courses exclusively.

Most Minnesota West liberal arts and technical classes are available via the Internet. Members of the faculty develop new online courses each semester. A complete current list of [Minnesota West online courses](#) is on the college website.

The Center for Digital Education, in conjunction with the American Association of Community Colleges, has three times named Minnesota West the fifth leading small college nationally in using digital education.

Interactive Television Courses

Worthington Community College was also a pioneer in offering interactive television courses, conducting its first ITV classes during FY1987. Although the high school television studios that were involved in ITV delivery in the early days no longer function, Minnesota West continues its commitment to ITV course delivery via its own ITV classrooms on campuses and at locations. Minnesota West offered 268 classes via interactive television in FY10. Most general education courses required for AAS degrees at the technical campuses are taught via ITV from the Worthington campus.

Winter Term

Each year, Minnesota West offers a winter term during the holiday break in December and January. Four classes were offered in FY11, generating 20.27 FTE. Sixteen of the winter term students were enrolled in other colleges during fall and spring semesters.

Developmental Courses

Many students who enter Minnesota West require developmental courses to improve basic reading, writing, or math skills. In FY10, Accuplacer scores for first-time, full-time students entering Minnesota West showed that 71 percent needed one or more developmental math courses and 53 percent needed reading and writing courses.

Minnesota West offers two-credit developmental courses in math, writing, reading, and study skills. It also offers a free one-week Fast Track course in late summer to students whose Accuplacer cut scores are almost high enough to allow them to take college courses. In FY11, the college began offering a second two-credit developmental writing course (ENGL 0095) and a one-credit college-level Freshman Seminar study skills course (STSK 1110) to help students

who test into two or more developmental courses understand the rigors of college study and the expectations that college instructors have for adult learners. Nearly 200 students enrolled in the Freshman Seminar courses in fall 2010.

High School Partnerships

Minnesota West has articulation agreements with high schools in Minnesota through the [Southern Minnesota Articulated College Credit Certificate Request Project](#). The project represents the cooperation of eight Carl Perkins Consortia and 17 post-secondary campuses in southern Minnesota. The project provides students in participating high schools with opportunities to earn college credit for classes they take in high school. Students can earn the credits at no cost to the school district, and the credits can be redeemed at a variety of post-secondary campuses upon admission.

Tech-prep is a program of sequential study that combines at least two years of secondary education with two years of postsecondary technical education. Minnesota West's technical campuses participate in tech-prep arrangements through Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative, an education consortium that serves southwestern Minnesota high schools.

In 1985, Minnesota lawmakers enacted the Post-Secondary Enrollment Option, program, or PSEO (M.S. 123.3514), to enable high school students to complete their junior and senior years while attending college and earning college credit at the same time. Students who qualify under the law and MnSCU policy guidelines may attend college full or part time.

Textbooks and materials for the class are provided by the school district where the participating students reside and must be returned to the district at the conclusion of each course. According

to the [Minnesota Office of Higher Education](#), approximately 7,500 high school students attended classes on college campuses statewide in 2008.

Concurrent enrollment programs allow qualified high school instructors to contract with Minnesota West to teach college courses in high schools while being mentored by college instructors who visit their classrooms at least once each semester. These agreements permit high schools to retain their state aid and negotiate fees with the colleges. Statewide, nearly 20,500 high school students were concurrently enrolled in college courses at their high schools in FY08.

Minnesota West has concurrent enrollment agreements with Edgerton Public High School, Fairmont High School, Jackson County Central High School, Luverne High School, Martin County West High School, Pipestone High School, Round Lake-Brewster High School, and Worthington High School. The program involves 25 courses, including biology, chemistry, literature, math, psychology, and sociology.

Minnesota Career Fields, Clusters and Pathway

MnSCU's [Career Fields, Clusters and Pathway Chart](#) helps potential students understand the academic expectations and requirements of various career fields to help them accomplish their occupational and professional goals.

A History of Flexibility

In the past, Minnesota West has offered faculty supervised television courses in such areas as art history, the humanities, literature, political science, and composition. The college has also offered weekend classes on campus and both day and night off-campus classes. It has offered concurrent enrollment and complete academic programs at area high schools and

industrial sites, including the Toro plant in Windom and the former Bayer Animal Health laboratory in Worthington, now owned by Intervet Corporation, a division of Shering-Plough Animal Health. While some of these attempts at alternative delivery were more successful than others, college administrators and faculty remain eager and open to find new and convenient delivery methods to meet the demands and needs of its multiple constituencies.

Strengths

1. Each Minnesota West campus and location provides access to a variety of courses to help students meet their academic, professional, and personal goals.

2. To achieve the goals established in its mission and vision statements, Minnesota West delivers a wide range of courses in a variety of ways to educate an increasingly diverse student base and satisfy mounting demands for trained employees and informed citizens.

3. Minnesota West was a pioneer and is now a state and national leader in distance education, both on ITV and online.

4. Minnesota West is the only two-year college in Minnesota to offer programs in both biofuels and wind energy.

5. Minnesota West educational offerings have improved the lives and livelihoods of several generations of constituents in southwestern Minnesota and surrounding states.

Challenges

1. Each year, more students enter college with inadequate basic skills. In some cases, the need for developmental courses is a product of English being a second language for students, but in most cases the need is caused by under-preparation in K-12 schools. The

increasing need to offer developmental courses for incoming students is a constant drain on college resources.

2. Southwestern Minnesota has an aging, declining population, so the challenge of tailoring programs and developing educational opportunities for a diminishing number of people will only become more difficult to meet. As demographics and the needs of students and the area economy change, Minnesota West must remain flexible and able to meet the needs of its many constituents.

3. As efforts to recruit and graduate diverse, underrepresented, and first-generation college students continue to evolve, courses and programs to meet the needs of traditional students cannot be diminished.

4. Students for whom English is a second language may need more than one developmental writing course to prepare them for success in college. Minnesota West added a second developmental writing course in FY11, but the college must continue to monitor the success of these students and respond to their needs.

Core Component 1c – Understanding and support for the mission pervade Minnesota West.

Minnesota West is so deeply ingrained in the culture of southwestern Minnesota that understanding and support for its mission pervade not only the college but also the main streets and residential areas of the region.

The mission statement is published in program self-studies, the catalog, the employee handbook, notices and news releases, and on the college website. It is also included in Power Point presentations for all students who participate in college orientation.

At three college-wide meetings of faculty, staff, and administrators from all Minnesota West campuses and locations, the HLC coordinator facilitated three “PEAQ Conversations,” inspired by and based on sessions that a small Minnesota West delegation experienced when they attended an HLC regional self-study workshop at St. Louis in October 2008. The first of the conversations happened on the Jackson campus in February 2009, the second on the Canby campus in August 2009, and the third at Worthington in February 2010. (Forms and summary reports are available in the resource room.) A survey of administrators, faculty, and staff occurred at the August 2010 all-college day. The conversations and survey showed how ubiquitous the understanding of the mission is and how passionately the faculty, staff, and administrators are engaged in applying their work to fulfilling the college mission.

At the Jackson meeting, individual participants were asked to "recall and describe a peak experience...while working at Minnesota West." It was to be an experience that made them feel "excited" about their work – a time when they and "the college seemed to be working at peak performance."

The most frequent experiences participants described (21 responses) involved an instructor with an individual student or with individual students in class or in a program.

Examples:

A peak experience for me is when I had a student thank me for believing in her and telling her she could do it. All through high school, she had always been

made to feel like she was too stupid to [identifying detail deleted]. She was proud of her achievement, and I was, too.

And,

A student was starting a new business with a new product he later patented. [I] mentored the student in marketing, financing product development, and tasting. [His] first year, the business grossed \$11,000 in sales. This past year, sales were \$6.5 million, and he just completed construction of a \$1.2 million manufacturing facility.

Second, participants were asked what they valued most about their work. “Student Success” and “Working with students” were the two most common responses. To the question, “What specific things do you value most about Minnesota West?” the most frequent answers were “Student success,” “Concern for students,” and “People.” When asked, “What core factors give life and vitality to Minnesota West? What factors keep you here?” the top three responses were “Diversity,” “Flexibility,” and “Colleagues.”

Six months after the conversation at the Jackson meeting, participants at Canby at the start of the 2010 academic year were asked to consider the college’s strengths and weaknesses. Comments were especially positive toward faculty, staff, and administration. Several respondents said “Quality Faculty” was a strength and others said “Caring Faculty” was. Six respondents wrote that “relationships with students” are college strengths. Others praised the college for its willingness to employ technology and offer courses through a variety of media. Additional answers cited academic freedom, advisory boards, affordability, communication,

commitment to communities, comprehensive course offerings, distance learning, diverse programs, physical plants, and future planning as Minnesota West's greatest strengths.

The conversation at the college-wide day in February 2010 asked participants to write newspaper headlines appropriate for memorable stories about student learning in their classrooms and programs. Some examples of headlines they contributed were "Non-Trad Scared to Take Class but Really Enjoys It," "Students Inspect Gearboxes and Discover Failures," "Bio Students Excel through Electron Transport Chemiosmosis Game," "Discover the Ether Bunny," and, "Student Has Sixth Child While Attending School." Participants were also asked to write topics of stories they would want to read about Minnesota West in February 2013. Among those offerings were stories about retention rates improving, new buildings, increased community support, innovation, and extended HLC accreditation.

At the end of an all-college administration day in August 2010, the HLC self-study coordinator asked participants to complete a survey that was intended in part to measure their understanding of the college mission and their role in it. Nearly 80 participants submitted completed surveys.

One question on the survey was "What do you understand the Minnesota West mission to mean?" Some answers included:

Access and opportunity for multiple vocations and academics through many means – internet, ITV, face-to-face; outreach not only in credits but cooperation and partnership of our services.

Equal liberal arts and career education [are] available to all students of any cultural descent.

It means that we will try to keep education affordable to all who want to attain it.

Service, access, opportunity, and improved economic [and] employment opportunities.

The college will teach anyone that is willing to learn.

To the question: “How do you understand *your* role in fulfilling the mission?” the answers included:

Adding to my industry and community by teaching content and life skills to others in my community.

Be a help to students, remove barriers, educate!

Educate students and teach that education shouldn't and doesn't end at graduation.

I need to do my job so that students get admitted, assessed, registered, and graduated. I am a small but vital cog in the wheel.

My role is to deliver the education and relay to communities the value and opportunities available at the college.

To educate students with the skills they need to succeed.

A more complete report on the results of the survey is in the electronic resource room, and all of the survey forms will be placed in the physical resource room on the Worthington campus.

Web Survey

In September 2010, the college created a 12-question electronic web survey to serve as a vehicle for constituents to comment on the college's value to them and to the region. Each vendor and member of an advisory board was sent a link to the survey, which was also prominently displayed on the college website with a button that read "HLC Survey: We want your opinion." More than 360 constituents participated in the survey before the end of February 2011. Of the people who completed the survey, 96.2 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "Minnesota West is a valuable asset to the region."

Other results include:

- 84.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the college "sponsors service events and volunteer activities that are an asset to the region."
- 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "Minnesota West contributes to the region's quality of life."
- 95.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the college "develops services and programs that respond to the region's employer needs."
- 89.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the college "meets the needs for continuing education and certification/recertification of professionals."
- 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "Minnesota West offers career and technical education and training to meet the changing needs of the workforce."
- 88.2 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the college "strives to meet the needs of diverse constituents."

- 86.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the college “facilitates collaboration and partnerships in the region.”

Some 91 percent of participants in the survey reported that they had attended Minnesota West to obtain a degree (56.3%), a diploma (22%) or certificate (12.6%). Of the remaining survey participants, 21% had attended the college for continuing education, 8% had attended for job training, and 17% had attended special programs. Complete results of the Constituent Survey can be found on the college website.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West administrators, faculty, and staff clearly understand the college mission and their various roles in fulfilling it.
2. Minnesota West’s internal and external constituents recognize and highly value the contributions that Minnesota West makes to southwest Minnesota’s economic, educational, and social quality of life.

Challenges

1. College administrators, faculty, and staff must constantly review the college mission, renew their commitment to it, and continue to use it to guide decisions in all areas of college operations.

Core Component 1d – Minnesota West’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable Minnesota West to fulfill its mission.

MnSCU

Minnesota West is one of 32 colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and University (MnSCU) system. The MnSCU office is located in St. Paul, MN, the state capital. MnSCU is led by a Chancellor whose staff includes a Vice Chancellor, an executive assistant, and an executive support person. A list of [MnSCU system services and resources](#) can be found on the web.

MnSCU Board of Trustees

Minnesota West complies with policies and follows procedures established by the MnSCU Board of Trustees. The 15-member MnSCU board is appointed by the governor and is responsible for oversight, planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admission requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations for 35 public colleges and universities. The board usually meets in Saint Paul. The [MnSCU Board’s FY11 meeting calendar](#) is posted on the web.

The MnSCU board grants authority for implementing policies to the MnSCU Chancellor. The Chancellor appoints Vice Chancellors to assist in specific areas of operation. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellors also rely heavily on assistance and cooperation from the system’s Campus

Presidents, who serve as non-voting members of MnSCU committees and provide input to board members individually and at monthly meetings.

Members of the MnSCU Board of Trustees

1. The honorable Duane Benson, Minneapolis, MN; Legislative Dist. 31B. Term expires June 30, 2016.
2. The honorable Cheryl Dickson, Saint Paul, MN; Legislative Dist.65B. Term expires July 2, 2014.
3. The honorable Jacob Englund, Minneapolis, MN. Legislative Dist. 59A. Term expires June 30, 2014.
4. The honorable Christopher Frederick, Mankato, MN. Legislative Dist. 23B. Term expires June 30, 2011.
5. The honorable Clarence Hightower, Saint Paul, MN. Legislative Dist. 45A. Term expires June 30, 2014.
6. The honorable Philip Krinkie, Shoreview, MN. Legislative Dist. 53A. Term expires June 30, 2016.
7. The honorable Dan McElroy, St. Paul, MN. Legislative Dist. 40A. Term expires June 30, 2012.
8. The honorable Alfredo Oliveira, Clearwater, MN. Legislative Dist. 19A. Term expires June 30, 2012.
9. The honorable David Paskach, Cottonwood, MN. Legislative Dist. 21A. Term expires June 30, 2014.
10. The honorable Thomas Renier, Duluth, MN. Legislative Dist. 7A. Term expires June 30, 2016.
11. The honorable Christine Rice, Lake Elmo, MN. Legislative Dist. 56A. Term expires June 30, 2012.

12. The honorable Louise Sundin, Minneapolis, MN. Legislative Dist. 60B. Term expires June 30, 2014.

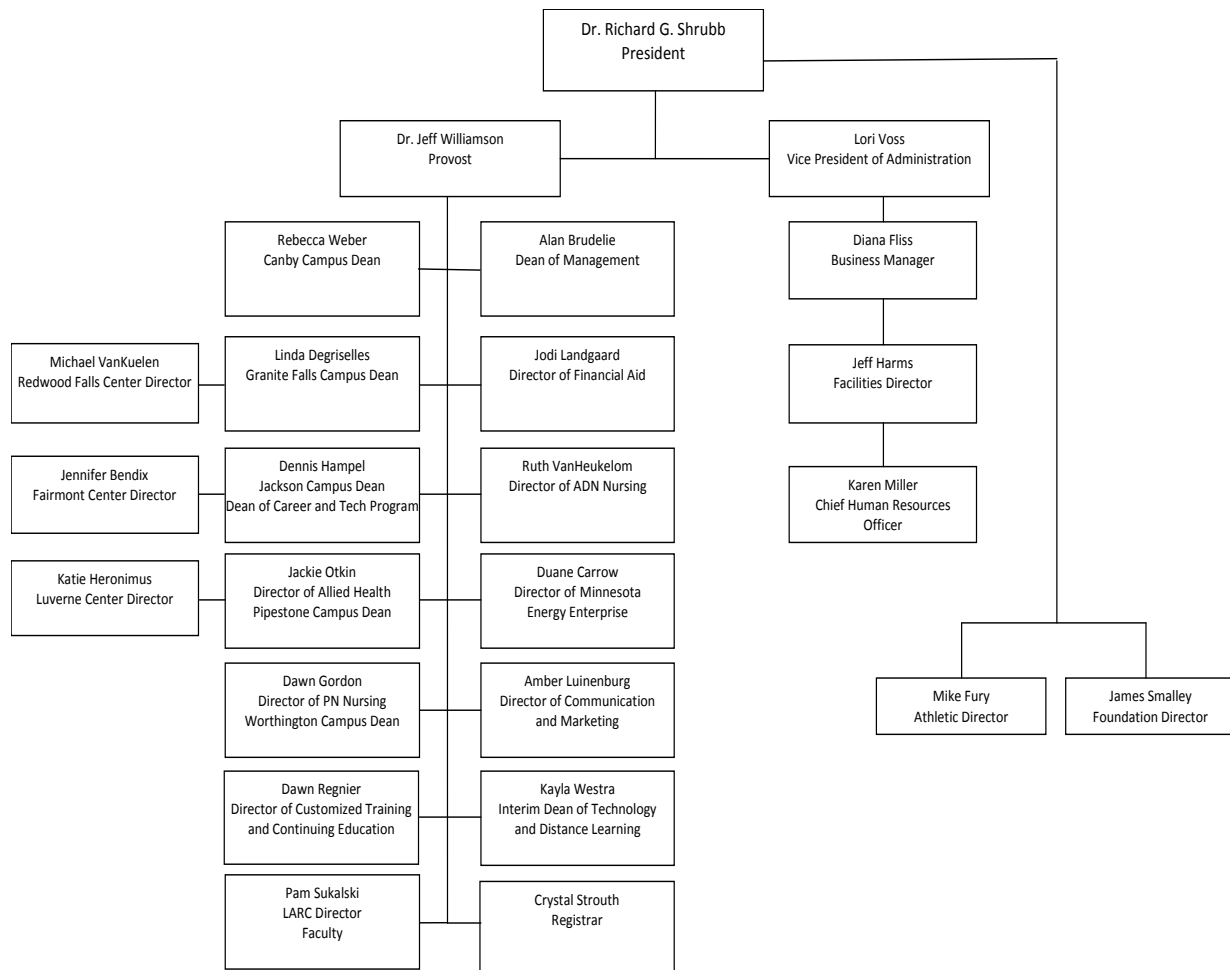
13. The honorable Scott Thiss, Edina, MN. Legislative Dist. 41A. Term expires June 30, 2012.

14. The honorable James Van Houten, Minneapolis, MN. Legislative Dist. 60B. Term expires June 30, 2012.

15. The honorable Michael Vekich, Minneapolis, MN. Legislative Dist. 44A. Term expires June 30, 2016.

Minnesota West Administration

Organizational Chart



College Administrators

Each of MnSCU's colleges and universities is headed by a President who serves as the chief executive officer. Presidential appointments are approved by the MnSCU Board of Trustees. Presidents report to the MnSCU Chancellor and are ultimately responsible for developing and implementing college missions.

The President is the primary spokesperson for Minnesota West and periodically consults with students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. Duties and responsibilities of the President include providing academic leadership, allocating campus resources, employing personnel, following system policies and procedures, and implementing the system's and campus's strategic plans.

The Minnesota West Provost serves on the President's Cabinet and provides the President with professional advice on executive leadership and academic planning and processes. The Provost is responsible for planning, initiating, implementing, managing, and evaluating all projects and tasks assigned by the President. The Provost oversees all credit-bearing course work in approved program areas. He or she also monitors Student Services operations, progress toward achieving *Strategic Plan* goals, and several college budgets, including those for equipment, financial aid, technology, and academic and student affairs. The Provost coordinates HLC accreditation and individual program accreditation efforts, oversees academic program reviews, recommends policy changes or program improvements, and directs the posting and publication of all relevant documents and reports. The Provost maintains a working knowledge of college finances and personnel. In the absence of the President, the Provost serves as the college's chief executive.

The Vice President of Administration plans, coordinates, and directs all college administrative services. The Vice President of Administration oversees human resources, business offices, facilities, financial aid services, and auxiliary enterprises for the entire college. The Vice President reports to the college President and supervises the college Business Manager, Facilities Director, and Chief Human Resources Director. The Vice President of Administration is also a permanent member of the President's Cabinet.

The Dean of Career and Technical Programs develops and directs technical instruction on all five campuses. The Dean recommends curriculum, evaluates technical faculty, conducts program reviews, and represents the administration at appropriate committee meetings. The Dean reports to the Provost and works closely with student services and the Director of Customized Training/Continuing Education (CT/CE) programs.

The Director of Customized Training/Continuing Education recruits, hires, and supervises project coordinators, faculty, and support staff for CT/CE and manages the Minnesota West Marshall office. The Director of CT/CE also cooperates with business, industry, and government agencies and leaders to develop new programs that provide relevant training and retraining for workers in the region. The director reports directly to the college Provost.

The Dean of Management Education plans, develops, evaluates, executes, and monitors farm and business management education programs offered throughout the region. The Dean formerly worked with both Minnesota West and South Central College (SCC) in Mankato, MN, but starting in FY11 works exclusively for Minnesota West. The Dean supervises nine Farm Business Management instructors, two Small Business Management instructors, two Lamb and

Wool Management instructors, and one office support staff person. The Dean reports to Minnesota West's Provost.

Minnesota West's Interim Dean of Technology and Distance Learning has responsibility to develop and implement all information technology and distance learning initiatives at the college. The Dean is responsible for the technology division, distance learning division, and distance support services. Responsibilities include developing and managing technology fee budgets, technology office budgets, and campus technology support budgets. The Dean supervises three campus technicians. The Dean reports to the college Provost.

The Chief Human Resources Director oversees all human resource functions at the college. The director participates in planning, administering labor contracts, resolving personnel issues, managing recruitment of new employees, and organizing staff development. The director also serves as coordinator for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations for employees and as Affirmative Action Officer. The director reports to the Vice President of Administration and supervises a personnel assistant and payroll technician.

The Director of Associate Degree Nursing and Director of Practical Nursing programs collaborate with other administrators and nursing program faculty to develop and direct the associated degree nursing (ADN) and practical nursing (PN) programs at Minnesota West. The directors report to the Provost.

The Director of Allied Health works with the Director of Associate Degree Nursing and the Dean of Career and Technical Programs to develop and direct allied health instruction at Minnesota West. Allied health programs include nursing assistant, medical assistant, medical laboratory technician, medical coding specialist, phlebotomy, dental assistant, healthcare

supervision and leadership, radiologic technology, and surgical technology. The director reports to the Provost.

Minnesota West's five Campus Deans oversee enrollment, admissions, registration, orientation, counseling, student success activities, student records, placement, housing, and financial aid services at the campus level. The Campus Deans are also responsible for facilities, grounds, personnel supervision, community relations, campus promotions, planning for growth, and carrying out college and MnSCU policies and procedures. The Campus Deans report to the Provost and supervise all employees on the campuses.

Minnesota West also has location directors at Fairmont, Luverne, and Redwood Falls.

President's Cabinet

Minnesota West's President's Cabinet meets nearly every Friday morning to discuss current issues and to plan for the future. The cabinet consists of the President, the Provost, and the Vice President of Administration. The cabinet considers minutes and messages from advisory boards, program review reports, accreditation reports, enrollment data and projections, and evaluations from outside sources (for example, the IT audit conducted in FY10). An administrative assistant records cabinet actions and decisions. The Cabinet also meets regularly with the Faculty Shared Governance Council.

Consultation Committees

Minnesota State College Faculty

Because of its sprawling geographical territory, Minnesota West has two Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) chapters, MSCF North and MSCF South. The north chapter

represents faculty at Pipestone, Canby, and Granite Falls campuses and college locations at Luverne, Marshall, and Redwood Falls. The south chapter represents faculty at the Jackson and Worthington campuses and the Fairmont location.

The Faculty Shared Governance Council (FSGC) is a contractual MnSCU/MSCF “meet and confer” committee. “Meet and confer” refers to the obligation to fairly exchange views and concerns between faculty and administration. The purpose of FSGC is to communicate faculty positions in matters of “personnel, student affairs, facilities, fiscal matters, and general matters” (*MSCF Master Agreement 2007-09 26*). FSGC meetings involve the President’s Cabinet and a delegation of MSCF members from “a cross section of disciplines” (*MSCF Master Agreement 2007-09 26*). FSGC faculty members are division chairs or their designees. The president of Minnesota West’s south chapter of MSCF chairs the FSGC meetings, which are required by contract to occur at least twice each academic semester, but usually occur monthly. Meetings are usually face-to-face at a central location, but an occasional meeting with a short agenda may be conducted via ITV or desktop conferencing.

Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) is the only other contractual MnSCU/MSCF “meet and confer” committee. The purpose of AASC is “to provide direction for the College President in all matters included in academic affairs, including course outlines, award requirements, academic standards, course and program components, and the inventory of course and program offerings” (*MSCF Master Agreement 2007-09 27*). The AASC comprises two-thirds faculty and one-third administration, including the college Provost. The president of Minnesota West’s north chapter of MSCF presides at AASC meetings, sets the agenda, and arranges meeting times and locations cooperatively with the Provost. Division chairs or their

designees from all the campuses fill the remaining faculty seats on the council. The AASC usually meets at the end of each month from September through April, after campus curriculum committees have met. In a non-catalog year, meetings may be less frequent.

Campus committees also exist on all Minnesota West campuses. Each campus has a local curriculum committee that acts as a clearinghouse for curriculum changes that go on to AASC for final consideration. Other campus committees include technology committees that help apportion equipment funds; safety committees; suspension and appeals committees; disciplinary committees; and *ad hoc* committees with various missions such as screening job applicants, decorating, and planning special events. Most campuses also have unofficial faculty associations that meet regularly to communicate with campus administrators, provide guidance to representatives serving on required meet and confer committees, and organize social events.

Staff Associations

Minnesota West AFSCME employees meet regularly on each campus. Contractual language specifies that meet-and-confer and labor-management meetings must occur every three months. The Labor-Management Cooperation section of the current AFSCME contract states:

When an appointing authority initiates a planning process or management study which is anticipated to result in layoff, the appointing authority will meet and confer with the local union during the decision planning phase and again during the implementation phase. The appointing authority and the local union shall enter into negotiations regarding a Memorandum of Understanding upon request of either party to modify this agreement regarding the implementation

plans which shall include, but are not limited to, the following: length of layoff notice; job and retraining opportunities; alternative placement methods, early retirement options...; bumping/vacancy options for part-time employees to preserve their insurance eligibility or contribution; and other methods for mitigating layoffs or their effect on employees.

Other provisions in the [AFSCME](#) contract call for labor/management committees to be formed “to promote and foster” a “mutually constructive, cooperative relationship between the parties” (Article 31). Included in this area is a Safety Committee whose purpose is to “propose policies, programs and guidelines” to ensure that the college deals with such safety issues as OSHA compliance, right-to-know training, workers’ injury reports, workers’ compensation claims, bomb threats, and communicable diseases. Other labor/management committees include an Affirmative Action Committee, a Child Care Committee, and a Parking Committee. A copy of the current [AFSCME](#) contract is in the resource room.

The remaining Minnesota West employees are represented by MAPE and MMA (see also Chapter 4, Criterion II). Their contracts contain language for meet and confer, which is conducted whenever issues arise. Employees in these groups are covered by the Administrator’s Plan and are considered “at will” employees.

Student Senate

Each Minnesota West campus has a Student Senate that communicates regularly with administrators on policy and financial matters. Usually, the communication is conducted through local Senate officers who request meetings with administrators in writing when Senate members raise questions or articulate concerns or requests regarding policies that affect them.

A staff or faculty advisor attends all Senate meetings and sometimes acts as liaison between students and administrators.

The Minnesota West Student Senates are affiliated with the Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA) and a delegation of four to eight Minnesota West Student Senators attends a statewide MSCSA conference each semester. The state assemblies are usually held either in Brainerd or in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Minnesota West Student Senate members have also served on MSCSA statewide committees.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West is part of a large and stable state-wide system of higher education (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities) that is funded by the Minnesota Legislature, guided by a diverse board of private citizens, and managed by experienced, highly credentialed professional educators.

2. Minnesota West's internal operations are directed by experienced and well-qualified administrators in consultation with advisory boards, employee groups, faculty, and student leaders. In most cases, collaboration in decision-making is both contractual and encouraged.

Challenges

1. As participation in online learning grows and faculty and students spend fewer hours on campuses, leadership positions on campus committees and union offices become increasingly difficult to fill.

2. As older faculty and employees retire, more recent hires must assume the leadership roles they leave behind.

Core Component 1e – Minnesota West upholds and protects its integrity.

Minnesota West places high priority on meeting its ethical, legal and academic responsibilities to its internal and external constituencies, communities, region, and state. Its goal is to continue that tradition far into the future. The assessment measures for academic integrity, student success, and institutional improvement described in Chapter 5, Criterion III, help the college meet that goal.

Minnesota West treats students and employees fairly (see Chapter 5, Criterion III, Chapter 6, Criterion IV, and Chapter 8, Federal Compliance.) The college maintains policies and procedures that are aligned with those established by MnSCU and articulated in employee contracts. Clear procedures for grievances are outlined and followed. The [Policy and Procedures Manual](#) is available in print and online. An [outline of students' rights and responsibilities](#) is also posted on the college website.

As frequent external audits show, Minnesota West's business and fiscal operations are models of integrity and transparency. The operations fully conform to MnSCU policies and Minnesota West mission goals. Financial decisions and planning reflect constant monitoring of economic realities in the region, state and nation. College financial operations are the charge of the Vice President of Administration, who reports directly to the President and who has a permanent seat in the President's Cabinet. Details regarding college financial affairs are in Chapter 4, Criterion II.

Minnesota West also has firm [policies on data privacy](#). Those policies are posted on the web.

Minnesota West abides by local, state, and federal laws (see Chapter 6, Criterion IV, and Chapter 8, Federal Compliance).

Minnesota West presents itself honestly to the public

Minnesota West presents itself to the public through a variety of media outlets and communications tools. Communications media include radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, television (cable and on-air), internet social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), the college website, online advertising, and direct mail. The college also sponsors open houses and community orientations and participates in college fairs, high school visits, and business recruiting events. Many students choose to enroll at Minnesota West because of the positive reports they hear from friends, neighbors, and relatives.

Minnesota West regularly prepares and publishes reports that provide information about nearly all aspects of college operations for local, state, and federal entities. Many of the reports are published on or linked to the college website.

Minnesota West documents timely responses to complaints and grievances, especially those of students. A complete description of policies regarding student complaints is included in Chapter 8, Federal Compliance.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West communicates openly and honestly with its external and internal constituents in a multitude of ways.

2. Minnesota West's business and financial operations are frequently audited and generally praised.

3. Minnesota West honors its internal and external constituents by scrupulously protecting their private information.

4. Minnesota West has clearly articulated policies and procedures based on MnSCU directives and negotiated contract imperatives.

Challenges

1. As the college's technology and online services evolve, their usefulness in providing constituencies with information regarding mission, goals, values, and services must evolve at a similar pace if Minnesota West is to continue its national leadership in this area.

Chapter 4

Criterion II: Preparing for the Future

“The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.”

The test of time

Although Minnesota West in its present form is only a teenager, the formerly independent institutions that formed it have operated successfully in southwestern Minnesota for decades. Those institutions have survived many changes, some more successfully than others, but they individually and collectively continue to offer meaningful and appropriate higher education experiences to students of all ages, consistent with the college’s mission, vision, and goals. Minnesota West has a qualified and stable faculty, staff, and administration; the support of its various constituencies; the financial backing of a healthy state government; and the fiscal and physical resources it needs to continue far into the future.

Core Component 2a – The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

The enormous region that Minnesota West serves is described in detail in Chapter 3, Criterion I. Current trends indicate that the region’s population and workforce are aging, shrinking, and becoming increasingly multicultural. The role of manufacturing in the region’s economy is minimal. New efficiencies in agriculture production have reduced the need for farm workers. On a more positive note, bioscience and renewable energy industries such as wind power and biofuels offer new opportunities for economic growth. Minnesota West must constantly seek new and creative ways to reach out to traditional and nontraditional students as well as native English language speakers and those for whom English is a second language to prepare and retrain skilled workers for innovative employers trying to succeed in a highly competitive environment.

Planning Documents and Resources

Minnesota West’s planning grows out of a number of state and local resources including the *Minnesota State College and Universities Strategic Plan 2008-2010*; the college’s own *Strategic Plan* and related reports; the *Minnesota West Presidential Work Plan and Strategies*; region-wide strategic plan advisory boards, which include students; responses to the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*; *IDEA Surveys*; and conversations related to the HLC self-study conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators at college-wide meetings in February 2009, August 2009, February 2010, and August 2010.

Running parallel with Minnesota West’s mission goals, the four major goals and directions of the MnSCU strategic plan are to “increase access and opportunity,” to “promote and measure high quality learning programs and services,” to “provide services that enhance the economic competitiveness of the state and regions,” and to “innovate to meet current and future education needs.” Minnesota West’s numerous locations, including recent additions, its commitment to distance education, and its increasing numbers of program offerings reflect these goals.

The last comprehensive Minnesota West *Strategic Plan* was developed in 2009 and 2010 for fiscal years 2010-15. Trends and challenges identified in the plan include agriculture-related industry development, demographic changes due to the growing diversity of the population, continued “out-migration” from the region, an increasingly difficult economic climate, and needs to enhance distance learning technologies. Opportunities identified included course delivery to high school students, increasing needs for health occupations training, and planning for the aging, increasingly diverse population. These goals were confirmed in community feedback received through 2009.

In September and October 2009, campus deans and the Director of Customized Training met with community and regional leaders to evaluate the college’s effectiveness. Community meetings were held at each of the five campuses and were attended by community political and business leaders, interested citizens, and college personnel. Nearly every group identified the following as Minnesota West’s strengths: affordability, variety and diversity of programs, community support, online offerings, student success, quality faculty and staff, and health care

programs. The groups also restated Minnesota West's challenges: housing, threatened funding sources, marketing issues, limitations for student life activities, and a shrinking population.

The *2010-2015 Strategic Plan* identifies three "Strategic Directions" that will guide Minnesota West policy decisions. They are:

Strategic Direction One: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will increase access, learning opportunities and success for the citizens of southwestern Minnesota.

- Goal 1.1 – The College will increase the level of achievement of underrepresented students.
- Goal 1.2 – The College will refine its services to underserved/underprepared populations.
- Goal 1.3 – The College will develop new credit and non-credit programs that serve the needs of the region.

Strategic Direction Two: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will provide innovative and accountable programs and services to ensure the growth of our students.

- Goal 2.1 – The College will improve instruction and student support through assessment of student engagement and learning outcomes.
- Goal 2.2 – The College will access and refine multiple delivery options for education programs and student services.

- Goal 2.3 – The College will increase the participation of faculty and staff in professional development opportunities focused on strategic decisions.

Strategic Direction Three: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will deliver programs and services to enhance the economic competitiveness of the state, the region, and its people.

- Goal 3.1 – The College will be the region’s leader in workforce education and training.
- Goal 3.2 – The College will support regional vitality by contributing artistic, cultural and civic assets that attract employees and other residents seeking a higher quality of life.

Presidential Work Plan 2010-2011

The Minnesota West *Presidential Work Plan* was developed by members of the President’s Cabinet after extensive consultation with personnel they supervise. The plan calls on the college to “improve persistence and completion rate of underrepresented students,” to “increase the percentage of students enrolled in college-level STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math] courses,” to “increase the percentage of system credits provided through online and blended courses,” and to “address the needs of dislocated workers as appropriate to [the] institutional mission.”

Specific steps the college has taken to meet these goals are described in Chapter 3, Criterion I, and other sections of this self-study.

Master Academic and Student Services Plan

Minnesota West's [Master Academic and Student Services Work Plan](#) was developed by the Office of the Provost in 2010. The purpose of the plan is "to examine, solidify, and institutionalize systems in programs and resources that assure students of stable, quality service." The plan's goals emerge from the MnSCU and Minnesota West missions, strategic plans, documents, and related resources. The plan articulates eight "Strategic Directions" for Minnesota West academic offerings and student services:

Strategic Direction One: To develop vision, mission and continuing objective statements for student services and academic support systems.

Strategic Direction Two: To better define the focus and direction [of] college wide student activities and determine their effectiveness in meeting the mission of the institution.

Strategic Direction Three: To determine the level of student satisfaction utilizing research tools.

Strategic Direction Four: To determine student satisfaction and recommendations for changes that would impact retention.

Strategic Direction Five: [To] provide distance learning courses that are equal in quality to those classes offered on the campus.

Strategic Direction Six: [To] enhance and improve the delivery of management education, increase management program awareness, develop and implement a transition program for new instructors, and require at least half of our

management meetings to be held jointly with South Central College’s management division.

Strategic Direction Seven: [To] review Customized Training program offerings and budgets for cost effectiveness and focus on developing contract training and business partnerships, [and to] create a marketing plan for customized training.

Strategic Direction Eight: [To] enhance effectiveness of technology in support of academic and student support programs and aid in the expansion of ITV and online sites as outlined in the Master Academic and student services work plan.

Affirmative Action Plan

Minnesota West’s [Affirmative Action Plan](#) for 2010-12 begins with the following

“Statement of Commitment”:

Minnesota West Community and Technical College is committed to conducting all personnel and educational activities without regard to race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission as defined by law. Personnel activities include, but are not limited to: recruitment, selection, placement, employee development, promotion, retention, compensation, leaves of absence, disciplinary action, transfer, demotion, termination, and layoffs affecting all employees and job applicants. Minnesota West Community and Technical College will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of these protected class categories in accordance

with all state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action laws, directives, orders and regulations.

The plan further commits Minnesota West to “continue to seek opportunities to maximize the selection and retention of protected group employees by continuing to actively and aggressively recruit protected group applicants; continuing affirmative action training for employees, with an emphasis on those serving on selection committees; and by supporting affirmative measures to retain protected group employees.”

Access, Opportunity Report for 2010

Another important planning document used to guide Minnesota West’s future is the [*Access, Opportunity Report for 2010*](#). The report articulates the challenges the college faces to increase services to underrepresented and academically underprepared students. The report articulates three major goals:

Goal 1: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will increase enrollment of underrepresented students of color [with access] to each campus.

Goal 2: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will increase matriculation to graduation of all underserved and underprepared students by high school to college transition and early developmental programs.

Goal 3: Minnesota West Community and Technical College will review outcomes of students who have participated in Fast Track, Learning Contracts, Case Management and Developmental Education citing retention and graduation rates (2005 – 2008).

Economic Development

Minnesota West assists in economic development planning throughout southwestern Minnesota. Customized Training/Continuing Education is an active partner with county and city economic development authorities and is an active member of the Northern Economic Development Professionals and Southern Economic Development Professionals associations that serve the region.

Additional economic development planning is facilitated through Workforce Development Centers in Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington and through the Southwestern Minnesota Initiative Foundation ([SWIF](#)). Customized Training/Continuing Education has established solid relationships with the Business Service Specialists and the Private Industry Council representatives from each area and with economic development specialists from SMIF. These relationships allow the college to participate in planning initiatives that benefit the entire region.

Small Business Management (SBM) and Computerized Small Business Management (CSBM) programs are applied management programs that combine education and direct assistance to business owners and managers. These programs help to increase the viability of businesses within their community. The SBM and CSBM Programs assist existing businesses as well as help in the areas of business startup, expansion, and transitioning. The management programs work with financial institutions, community EDA organizations, and the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) to encourage good business practices among their client members. Statistics indicate that businesses that complete the SBM and CSBM programs have a 95

percent chance of remaining in business after five years compared to the national average of 20 percent.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West’s planning documents are current, complete, and consistent. Each of them is fully supported with vital data that presents an accurate description of the college and the region it serves.

2. Minnesota West’s planning documents demonstrate a clear understanding of the most vital issues facing the college and the region. The directives articulated in the documents indicate that Minnesota West has devised appropriate and consistent strategies to deal with those issues.

3. Minnesota West works closely with business and industry leaders to assess the region’s economic health, plan and shape economic development, and prepare for economic shifts.

4. Minnesota West’s business management programs work together with other economic development resources to enhance the region’s economic growth and success rates for new enterprises.

Core Component 2b – The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Financial Resources

Funding for Minnesota West comes from two major sources, state allocations and tuition. Less significant sources of income include grants, gifts, and special allocations from the federal government, private industry, individual donors, and other entities.

State Allocation

State allocations are based on a [MnSCU](#) formula adopted for the 2006 fiscal year. Minnesota West's base allocation for 2010 was \$9,967,505. Information regarding the history, formulas, principles, and underlying assumptions of the framework can be found online.

Budget Funds

Minnesota West's financial structure rests on its four fund types.

The general fund is the main operating fund for the college. Revenues are mostly unrestricted and used to cover basic operating costs, including salaries, benefits, utilities, and supplies.

Minnesota West has four major funds within the general fund. The general fund is used to cover basic operating costs of credit-based instruction. The customized training/continuing education fund is used to cover costs of non-credit based instruction. The equipment fund is used for new equipment purchases, and the repair and replacement fund covers costs of repairs to facilities or replacement of items not routinely replaced.

In FY10, the general fund had revenues of approximately \$25.75 million and expenditures of \$24 million. Excess funds were placed in reserve accounts, which are used for unplanned expenditures and, currently, to meet MnSCU Board required reserve levels needed for years immediately ahead that will likely be marked by reduced state allocations.

The enterprise fund is dedicated to self-supporting enterprises such as the bookstore and parking. In FY10, the fund had revenue of approximately \$2 million and expenditures of \$1.765 million. Unused and undesignated funds are set aside for large, costly projects such as parking lot expansion or repair.

The restricted fund account includes student financial aid and federal and state grant allocations. In FY09, approximately \$17 million flowed through this fund.

The capital building fund is for building projects designated for Minnesota West in the state's capital bonding bills. Funds for such projects are kept in a separate account, with the exception of funds designated for roofs, which are managed by MnSCU. In FY08, the college received capital bonding funds of \$450,000 for schematic and design development for field house renovations at the Worthington campus, with the expectation that funds for completing the project would be approved during the 2010 legislative session. The funds were not included in the final 2010 bonding bill, so the request will be resubmitted in 2012. In FY10, the college received \$525,000 to remodel the former meat cutting lab at the Pipestone campus into an ITV center with four studios, a bank of computers, and an office. Minnesota West also received \$450,000 for HVAC projects and for various other building improvements throughout the college.

In addition to the four college funds, Student Life committees on each campus submit budgets for funds collected on their behalf through student fees. Student Life funds support activities at college campuses and locations. They also provide financial support for the various student organizations recognized by the committees. The committees also monitor Student Life policies and expenditures. Decisions on the budget are approved by Student Senates and the

college President or designee. The Student Life budget for FY10 was \$220,000. Student Life budgets carry large balances from year to year on most campuses, but students are now using the banked funds to purchase fitness and entertainment equipment and as matching funds for campus beautification projects.

Budget Development

Minnesota West begins its budget development process by projecting revenues to be received from the state allocation framework, tuition, grants, and other sources. Estimates of state allocations are available from the MnSCU board at various times during the legislative cycle. Tuition estimates are based on projected FYE and proposed or approved tuition rates. Minor sources of revenue include gate receipts, gifts, rent payments, and resale profits.

The second step in the budgeting process is gathering information on proposed expenditures. The finance office prepares budget worksheets and distributes them to appropriate members of the President's Cabinet. Cabinet members then forward the worksheets to department leaders for recommendations. The worksheets include information on cost centers, two-year histories of budgets and expenditures, the current year's budget numbers, empty columns for the next year's budget proposals, and space for relevant comments that may inform and guide final decisions in the budgeting process.

Department leaders complete the worksheets and resubmit them to appropriate cabinet members. Cabinet members review and approve the requests before sending them on to the finance office. After all the worksheets are compiled, members of the President's Cabinet build a budget based on the requests, considering such factors as carryover funds, estimated

revenues, anticipated growth of the college, and documented areas of concentration, such as marketing.

Recent Unallotments

A shortfall of state revenues caused MnSCU to take back (unallot) \$347,000 from Minnesota West's allocation in January 2009. More such unallotments were expected for FY11 but did not occur.

Minnesota West administrators chose to address the unallotment and the projected 10 percent reduction in the state allocation in FY10 at one time. The non-faculty workforce was reduced by just less than 15 FTE, for a savings of nearly \$1.2 million. Approximately one-third of the reduction was felt in FY09. Also, supply and operating budgets were reduced by \$150,000 for FY09.

Workforce reductions affected several areas. Facilities personnel were reduced by 2.04 positions; reception lost .44 FTE; IT services eliminated 2.02 FTE; marketing/recruitment/application cut 3.13 FTE; the library and academic resource center lost 1.34 FTE; financial aid staff was initially reduced by 1.36 FTE, but 1 FTE was reinstated; bookstores lost .54 FTE; institutional research cut .75 FTE; and campus and academic administration was reduced by 2.52 FTE. College-wide services were reduced by 6.27 FTE, and campus services were cut 7.87 FTE.

In addition to the cuts due to unallotment, annual reviews produced plans for program expansion, contraction, or elimination. Additional cost reductions are expected to result from more strategic use of adjunct and temporary part-time faculty.

Tuition

Individual colleges in the MnSCU system set tuition rates each year based on guidelines established by both Minnesota statutes and MnSCU guidelines and limits. In addition to tuition, colleges also set and collect fees for parking, student associations and activities, athletics, health services, and technology.

Before tuition and fee rates can be established, MnSCU requires consultation with students on each campus. The current MnSCU policy for student consultation is on MnSCU page [5.11 Tuition and Fees](#). Minnesota West's Vice President of Administration has developed a PowerPoint presentation to share with students at consultation meetings. In early spring semester 2011, the Vice President of Administration and the college President presented the financial information to students at free lunch events on the campuses. The goals of the consultation are to share information with students regarding the college's financial health, to obtain input from students, and, ultimately, to invite student leaders compose and submit letters to the MnSCU board of trustees regarding the consultation and tuition changes.

In FY10, tuition at Minnesota West was set at \$151.46 per credit, up \$7 from FY09 (\$144.46). The annual tuition increase for a student registered for 30 credits was \$210. Funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) covered \$2.67 per credit, so the effective annual tuition increase for a full-time student was \$129.90.

Student fees per credit remained at \$15.76 from FY09 to FY10. Fees include \$10 per credit for technology, \$4 per credit for student life and activities, \$1.45 per credit for access to the facilities, and \$.31 per credit for the statewide student association.

Due to costs, tuition for a few selected programs is different. For example, an online fee of \$12.50 is charged for all internet classes; \$5 goes to MnSCU to help pay for Desire2Learn and \$7.50 remains to cover costs at Minnesota West. The FY10 Truck Driving tuition rate was \$240.07 per credit excluding fees; total cost for 16 credits including fees was approximately \$4,094.72. Nursing, surgical, and radiologic courses with an 8 or 16 student maximum class size and clinical courses are also assessed different tuition rates.

Grants

Minnesota West receives numerous grants. In recent years, the U.S. Department of Energy has provided grants for renewable energy (particularly wind energy and biofuels).

Since 2009, grants awarded to the college for energy-related programs have totaled \$1,998,838, including

- \$489,554 from the Department of Labor, for which the college was fiscal agent (not all the funds stayed at Minnesota West). The funds were to develop an Energy Technology Specialist AAS program.
- \$326,405 from [Minnesota Renewable Energy Marketplace](#) (MN-REM) to purchase an Ethanol Training Simulator
- \$118,222 from MN-REM for energy training for high school instructors
- \$100,000 from MN-REM for a wind energy coordinator
- \$78,750 from MN-REM for Energy Technical Specialist program scholarship awards
- \$22,500 from MN-REM for an electronic newsletter

- \$555,720 from the Department of Energy for programs, personnel, and equipment

Grants from the U.S. Department of Labor and Minnesota Job Skills Partnership provide funds for training and retraining local workers. In 2009, Minnesota West applied for and received four Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) grants worth a total of \$787,094. These grant funds were dispersed to help several regional manufacturing businesses including Future Products and Case New Holland, both of Benson, MN; Avicenna Technology, Inc., Montevideo, MN; Fey Industries, Edgerton, MN; Hoffco Cabinet Accessories, Wood Lake, MN, and Electrolux, Marshall, MN.

Workers trained with these funds tend to stay and work in southwestern Minnesota. More information on state grants is available at the [Positively Minnesota](#) website.

Perkins IV Grants

In FY10, the combined Perkins IV consortium budget was \$580,055, of which Minnesota West's share was \$288,930. Minnesota West uses more than \$200,000 to support recruitment, retention, tutoring, and advising of students who are first generation, underprepared, and of color. These services are available both online and on ground at each campus and location.

Although the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 is authorized through 2012, it will require increased accountability and stronger efforts to link secondary and postsecondary programs, integrate academic and technical programs, and connect with business and industry.

The Minnesota West consortium is directed by five goals:

1. Build a Career Pathway/Programs of Study structure that includes:

- High school to college transitions for career and technical education students
- Adult student transitions in high skill, high wage, or high demand occupations

Minnesota West plans to meet this goal by expanding pathways in health science technology, an area where Minnesota West already has strong programs. The college uses a statewide *Program of Study* website and conducts workshops for school personnel to enter data and be apprised of changes. Minnesota West also entered into a baccalaureate program offered online by Franklin University for students enrolled in Minnesota West's business program.

2. Provide access to the same set of programmatic and support services for the underserved and special populations in career and technical education programs that all other students are afforded.

Minnesota West works with many southwestern Minnesota partners to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional learners in a variety of ways. The college conducts conferences, offers staff-development opportunities, and promotes student competitions and other events for which it relies on the expertise of partners in industry, non-profit organizations, work force centers, and educators at all levels to provide the best and most relevant information.

3. Effectively use employer, community, and education partnerships to support career and technical education.

Minnesota West partners with Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council to provide high school students with information regarding nontraditional careers through annual "Breaking Traditions" events held on all five Minnesota West campuses. A new marketing

campaign focuses on Minnesota West students who have succeeded in non-traditional programs. High school sophomores attend an annual Career Expo where they learn about non-traditional programs by playing the Career Game Show. Project Discovery, a regional career assessment and exploration program, now includes an independent living skills component to meet the needs of students and their families. At the college level, special population students receive more intense career counseling, mental health counseling, and developmental education through both web-based services and face-to-face meetings with staff.

4. Examine and expand collaborative practices under the new consortium structure to support CTE programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels thereby ensuring a continuum of service provision from multiple entry points to multiple exit points.

The [Southern Minnesota Articulated College Credit](#) website enables instructors to request college credit certificates for high school students who meet certain competencies. Approximately 3,000 certificates are requested each year. The website was recently improved to allow instructors to search for certificates in particular career fields. Users can now view exactly which certificates they are eligible to request by school district. The consortium website is used to apprise members of upcoming events, facilitate registration for staff development workshops, and provide access to Perkins forms.

5. Build and sustain the local consortium from conception through development, setting the stage for sustainability for the six-year period of the Perkins Act.

The partners in the Minnesota West consortium have a long history of successful relationships and successful projects. The partnership continues to grow by adding new businesses, colleges, and organizations. An annual evaluation of services by consortium

instructors and administrators helps to improve services. Cooperative programs in the consortium include the Technical Skills Challenge, Breaking Traditions, Programs of Study in six areas of business, college faculty providing in-service for high school faculty, Accuplacer assessment in high schools, and a joint coordinator.

Minnesota West Foundation

The [Minnesota West Foundation](#) is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization that exists to provide financial support to Minnesota West students. The foundation is administered by an executive director and a board of community volunteers who set policies and distribute funds. In 2009, the foundation board formed an investment committee to ensure that assets would be managed for maximum return. Also in 2009, mechanisms were put in place to enable the foundation to receive credit card gifts through the college website. The board's goals for early FY11 included establishing strategies to enhance long-term planning.

The Minnesota West Foundation's combined assets in FY10 totaled \$900,000. Private donations to the foundation in that year totaled \$130,000. Nearly 25 percent of Minnesota West faculty, staff, and administrators contribute to the foundation through payroll deduction or annual gifts. The foundation received gifts from employees totaling \$22,000 in FY10. Scholarships awarded to students totaled \$117,000.

Donations from Constituents

Several of Minnesota West's external constituents also help the college control its costs by donating equipment and services. For example, Sanford Health recently donated an x-ray machine and provided \$200,000 to the City of Luverne to remodel the college's Luverne

additional location, which was formerly the Luverne Hospital. Several area clinics donate medical supplies to help defray costs of all allied health programs.

The wind energy program has benefited from donations of equipment valued at more than \$600,000. For example, Vestas Americas of Tyler, MN, donated two V47 gear boxes and two generators. AES Wind Generation from Lake Benton, MN, donated the tube section for a wind energy training tower. Avanti Wind Systems donated a lift cage and three ladder sections. Fastenal of Marshall, MN, donated a climbing harness.

Other recent donations to Minnesota West programs include:

- CISCO Systems donated approximately \$60,000 worth of computer hardware to the Jackson campus in the fall of 2010.
- Chrysler Corporation donated new vehicles for the auto mechanics program
- Ditch Witch donated two trenchers
- HYTORC Tool Company donated tools
- Pipestone Veterinary Clinic donated equipment valued at \$2,000
- Fire-fighting equipment manufacturers donated training equipment
- Gas companies donated gas line fittings, air exchange units, and air conditioning units to the HVAC program
- Students, faculty, and staff regularly donate books and other materials to Minnesota West libraries

Human Resources

Employee Contracts

Minnesota public policy has historically supported organized labor. Minnesota West currently has employee contracts with six employee bargaining units representing administration, faculty, and staff.

Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) is the official representative of faculty at Minnesota West. MSCF was formed after the merger from the two bargaining units that formerly represented technical college faculty (United Technical College Educators – UTCE) and liberal arts faculty (Minnesota Community College Faculty Association – MCCFA). The merger of the two units was a process that began in 2001. The *Master Agreement 2001-2003* included transition language for the merged association with two salary schedules. The *2003-05 Master Agreement* was the first to contain common language and a unified salary schedule for both groups; that language and schedule have continued in subsequent agreements.

MSCF maintains two local chapters at Minnesota West. The north chapter represents faculty assigned to campuses at Pipestone, Canby, and Granite Falls and locations at Luverne, Marshall and Redwood Falls. The south chapter represents faculty assigned to campuses at Jackson and Worthington. Each chapter has its own slate of officers. The president of the north chapter chairs the college-wide Shared Governance “meet and confer” committee, and the president of the south chapter chairs the college-wide Academic Affairs and Standards Council.

In FY10, MSCF represented 131 Minnesota West faculty members. Of those, 59 were female with an average age of 48 and average salary of \$59,669, and 72 were male with an average age of 52 and average salary of \$60,053. A total of 164 members of the faculty were

not part of MSCF. Of those, 63 were female with an average salary of \$32,059 and 101 were male with an average salary of \$31,338. Most instructors who are not MSCF members are adjunct or customized training faculty.

Minnesota West employed 68 classified staff in FY10. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) represents the classified staff. In 2010, AFSCME represented 61 Minnesota West classified employees; 46 were female at an average salary of \$38,413, and 15 were males with an average salary of \$37,218. Seven classified staff employees were not represented by AFSCME in 2010; of those, six were female and one was male.

Also in FY10, the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) represented 33 Minnesota West professional employees; 14 were male with an average salary of \$56,748 and 19 were female with an average salary of \$49,933.

Two bargaining units represent managers and administrators at Minnesota West. In FY10, the Middle Management Association (MMA) represented nine managers, four females with average salaries of \$64,773 and five males with average salaries of \$53,123. Six females and seven males were counted in the Excluded Administrators unit in FY10. Average salary for the females was \$93,256 and average salary for males was \$87,784. Two employees are also part of the Commissioner's Plan.

Professional Development, Tuition Waivers, Sabbatical Leave

Minnesota West's mission goals four and eight call for continuing education and professional development for faculty and staff. The college meets these goals in a variety of ways. These policies are discussed further in Chapter 6, Criterion IV.

Article 17 of the *MSCF Master Agreement for 2007-2009* (which was continued through 2011) stipulates that

Each college will allocate faculty development funds at the rate of two hundred fifty dollars per each full-time equivalent faculty position at the college during the preceding academic year. The total MSCF chapter shall determine an equitable procedure for the distribution of faculty development funds. (MA 79)

At Minnesota West, both the northern chapter and southern chapters of MSCF have policies in place for distributing faculty development funds. In FY10, about \$7,000 was used by 19 north chapter instructors and about \$13,000 was used by 29 south chapter instructors. Unused faculty development funds can be carried over from one fiscal year to the next, from campus to campus, or from northern chapter to southern chapter if necessary.

FY10 Faculty Development Fund Usage					
Campus	Allocation	Carryover	Budget	Activity	Balance
Canby	\$1,875	\$634	\$2,509	\$1,862	\$647
Gr. Falls	\$3,000	\$955	\$3,955	\$3,212	\$743
Jackson	\$2,500	\$1,083	\$3,583	\$2,632	\$951
Pipestone	\$3,344	\$1,000	\$4,344	\$1,760	\$2,584
Wgtn	\$9,838	\$1,612	\$11,450	\$10,839	\$611
Mgmt	\$2,625	\$1,038	\$3,663	\$3,201	\$462
FD Pool		0	\$3,033	0	\$3,022

MnSCU contracts and benefit agreements also provide tuition waivers for faculty, staff, and dependents who pursue education opportunities at other MnSCU institutions. In FY10, 64 Minnesota West employees registered for a total of 663 credits at various Minnesota State colleges and universities.

The *MSCF Master Agreement* also provides sabbatical leave options for unlimited full-time, temporary full-time, and unlimited part-time faculty. Eligible faculty “must have continuously served the equivalent of six or more academic years in the Minnesota state colleges with an aggregate of twelve semesters of actual service without having been granted such an experience” (81). Faculty members on sabbatical leave for one semester receive full base salary; faculty members on sabbatical leave for two consecutive semesters receive two-thirds of base salary. After a sabbatical, a faculty member must return to his or her campus for at least one academic year of service or repay the salary received while on sabbatical. The chancellor or designee may waive the repayment requirement “because of special circumstances” (MA 83).

The college budget also includes resources for professional development of classified and unclassified non-faculty employees. Members of the classified staff manage their professional development budgets and the college Human Resources Office manages unclassified/non-faculty resources. Application forms are available on the college website.

Center for Teaching and Learning

Another professional development tool for working faculty is the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). This program was originally supported by MnSCU, but remained a funded part of Minnesota West’s commitment to faculty development after MnSCU funding ended in

FY09. Each campus now has a CTL coordinator who arranges CTL activities for faculty. One joint faculty duty day each year is devoted exclusively to CTL activities, with faculty sharing their knowledge with other faculty in 40-minute breakout sessions.

Cost to the college for CTL in FY10 was \$33,242, \$5,700 in operating funds and \$27,542 for coordinator salaries.

More information regarding CTL is in Chapter 5, Criterion III, and Chapter 6, Criterion IV.

Louma Leadership Academy

Minnesota West has sent seven employees to the [Louma Leadership Academy](#) since it began in 2004. Participants include two faculty, one administrator, two middle managers, and two MAPE employees. The Louma Leadership Academy is an 18-month leadership development program designed to encourage and develop leadership skills for MnSCU institutions. The Academy is sponsored by MnSCU's Office of the Chancellor and facilitated by The Academy of Mesa, Arizona.

Recognition of Achievements

The Award for Excellence in Teaching is an honor bestowed upon one MnSCU instructor each year to acknowledge exceptional individual professional accomplishment and excellence in teaching. The award "proclaims the MnSCU Board of Trustees' pride in the dedication and accomplishment of faculty in providing instruction that prepares students for their professional, scholarly, and civic lives." Each fall, Minnesota West instructors from each campus nominate one of their peers for the award. A committee made up of faculty and administrators from all campuses selects one final candidate for the system award from the five campus nominees. The college nominee's name is submitted to MnSCU, and the candidate must then create and

submit a portfolio to support his or her nomination. The winner is named at a spring banquet to which all nominees, their families, and representative administrators are invited.

Each spring, college administrators recognize Minnesota West employees for every five years of their continuous service to the college. Most awards are in the form of framed printed certificates or plaques, but employees who mark 25 years of service receive imprinted clocks.

Instructors who earn additional advanced degrees during the academic year are recognized and celebrated at commencement ceremonies held on each campus at the conclusion of spring term. At 2010 commencement ceremonies, two Minnesota West - Worthington instructors were recognized for earning doctoral degrees, and one instructor was recognized for achieving a master's degree.

Physical Resources

Facilities plan

To comply with MnSCU policies and to ensure that Minnesota West meets mission goals five and nine, an updated *Campus Facilities Master Plan* is completed every five years. The facilities plan includes periodic updates and long-range (25-50 year) facilities planning for each campus that takes into account the college mission, physical plant maintenance, current conditions and usage, plans for capital improvements and other considerations over a two to six-year capital budget cycle and future budgets. Minnesota West's most recent *Facilities Master Plan* was completed in July 2006, so the next scheduled presentation will be to the MnSCU Vice-Chancellor/Chief Financial Officer in November 2011.

Some recently completed Minnesota West facilities projects include new signs at all campuses and locations, a student services addition and classroom renovation at the Worthington campus in 2005, remodeled health science labs at Granite Falls in 2006, relocated and remodeled automotive and auto body labs at Jackson and Granite Falls, a remodeled cosmetology area at Jackson, remodeled science and wind labs at Canby, and a cooperative project with the YMCA and the City of Worthington to create a new aquatic and fitness facility and new parking spaces on the Worthington campus, a project that was completed in late 2009.

The most recent *Campus Facilities Master Plan* for Minnesota West is available in the resource room.

Technology Plan

To meet mission goal nine, the college provides and maintains access to computers for students in various places on each campus, including designated computer classrooms, Learning and Academic Resource Centers (LARCs), and kiosks in common gathering areas. Many classrooms are equipped with large screen, high definition television monitors and control boxes for ELMO projectors, video players for both VHS and DVD formats, and connections for laptop computers. At least one classroom on



each campus has a permanent desktop computer connected to a multi-media projection system. All campuses and locations have wireless internet connectivity.

Each Minnesota West campus and location provides and maintains at least one interactive television (ITV) studio. Many ITV studios are equipped with high definition monitors and high definition cameras, desk-top computers, connections for laptop computers, telephones and FAX machines, ELMO projectors, and video players. The codec³ devices in the main ITV rooms were replaced in summer 2010.

All full-time faculty and staff members are provided with either laptop or desktop computers. Most are on a schedule to replace the computers every third year. Adjunct faculty members also have access to computers in designated offices or in campus LARCs.

Shortly after the merger, faculty, staff, and administration developed the first five-year plan for procuring and replacing instructional technology equipment. Faculty members revise the plan annually in division meetings and rank the requests on a scale of one to three according to priority. A technology committee then meets to approve purchases and other expenditures that are included in the plan. First priority items are given top consideration for funding. Historically, funding has been adequate to cover all of the first priority requests each year. In most years, many second and third priority equipment requests have been funded as well.

In 2001, Minnesota West became the first college in Minnesota to adopt voice over IP Telephony. All campuses are now connected with the IP system. The IP system is also

³ Equipment that converts analog signals to digital form for transmission and digital signals to analog for reception. The word is derived from coder-decoder.

connected with the Twin Cities metropolitan area, enabling calls from any campus to be toll free.

Bookstores

Each Minnesota West campus provides a [bookstore](#) where students can purchase textbooks, school supplies, clothing, souvenirs and sundries. Allocated space for bookstores varies from 600 to 1200 square feet. The college employs bookstore managers at Canby, Jackson, Pipestone and Worthington. The Canby manager also is in charge of the Granite Falls campus store. At all campuses except Worthington, the bookstore managers have additional campus duties.

At the Canby campus, total bookstore sales were \$170,000 in 2009. At Granite Falls, 2009 sales were \$222,000. After the two operations merged in 2010, combined sales for bookstores at both campuses reached \$431,000. At Jackson, bookstore sales went from \$280,000 in 2009 to \$315,000 in 2010. Sales at Pipestone increased from \$280,000 in 2009 to \$323,000 in 2010. At Worthington, sales jumped from \$777,000 in 2009 to \$813,000 in 2010.

Total profit from campus bookstore operations went from \$168,000 in FY09 to \$251,000 in FY10.

In November 2008, Minnesota West started a trial textbook rental program for books used in six popular on-site courses. Textbooks for additional courses were added in 2009 and 2010. Students who take advantage of the textbook rental option pay about one-third of the purchase price of a new textbook and must return the rented book to the bookstore before the end of the last day of final tests.

Food Services

Each Minnesota West campus provides a food service for students, faculty, staff, and special activities on campus. Hours of operation vary by campus. Lunchtime Solutions, Inc., 717 North Derby Lane, North Sioux City, South Dakota, has managed the food services for the past eight years. The contract is reviewed annually and a request for proposals is completed every five years. In FY10, Minnesota West paid the company a \$50,000 subsidy to provide food services on all the campuses.

During the 2010 fall semester, the college President arranged face-to-face meetings with student leaders on all five campuses to seek their input regarding the future of food services. At the meetings, the President told students that he was considering changes in food service operations. He asked them how frequently they used the food service; he sought comments on food prices, quality, promotion, and service; he described the current arrangement with Lunchtime Solutions; and he answered questions regarding possible alternatives. Student comments varied on each campus, but most indicated that improvements would be welcome.

Housing

Locating housing for Minnesota West students is a challenge that grows more difficult every year. Student services staff at all Minnesota West campuses try to provide current information to students regarding available local housing options. Small apartment buildings and multi-family housing units are scattered throughout the Minnesota West communities, but affordable rental housing is extremely scarce throughout the region.

Until 2008, community colleges in Minnesota were prohibited from owning and operating residence halls. Since that year, a revenue fund for housing has been allowed, and campus leaders are considering plans to provide student housing in the future.

The Minnesota West Foundation owns Carr Residence Hall at Canby, but the campus staff operates daily functions, which include contracts, conduct, maintenance, recruitment, and repair. The hall is located adjacent to the campus and can accommodate 32 students in eight units. Each unit has a complete kitchen and living area, one bathroom, and two bedrooms.

Campus View Apartments is located across the north parking lot of the Worthington campus and offers 35 units for rent. Across the street from Campus View is Golf Park Apartments, which contains 48 one and two-bedroom units in two buildings. Both apartment complexes are privately owned.

College students and others who are military veterans, married, parents of dependent children, or at least 24 years old can qualify for income-based, rent-subsidized federal housing in Jackson, Luverne, Pipestone, and Worthington. Sunrise Estates, Hill Crest Apartments, Mayberry Apartments, and Rolling Hills apartment complexes are located in Jackson. Pipestone offers income-based housing at Nokomis Apartments and Storybrook Apartments. The Atrium Apartments, a multi-level structure operated by Worthington Housing Authority, is in Worthington's downtown, about a mile from campus. Student rentals at Blue Mound Tower, a multi-story apartment building located across the street from the Luverne additional location, have delighted city officials because the students helped fill what was previously an under-used public asset.

Strengths

1. As a public college, Minnesota West's financial health depends primarily on biennial allocations from the state legislature. Although state revenues have diminished in recent years, the fiscal health of Minnesota appears to be adequate to maintain funding for higher education far into the future.

2. In addition to state allocations, Minnesota West receives both public and private grants and donations from a variety of sources. These funds and donations enable the college to offer programs and services that otherwise could not be offered.

3. Minnesota West invests heavily in its human resources to be sure that employees maintain professional skills and qualifications.

4. Minnesota West maintains safe and secure facilities.

5. Minnesota West invests in technologies that enable administrators, faculty, staff, and students to participate in the high-tech modern environment that the work world has become and will continue to be.

Challenges

1. Providing affordable housing for students and workers is a major problem throughout the region. The college must be involved in finding a solution.

2. With state allocations stagnant or shrinking, and the prospects for rapid recovery unlikely, the college must manage its resources as efficiently and frugally as possible to maintain an adequate level of service to its constituents.

3. Rising health care premiums and minimal or no increases in employee compensation for the past two contract cycles have caused employees to lose financial ground. That reality

combined with the possibility of lay-offs due to future unallotments could create job dissatisfaction and diminished morale.

4. The cost of textbooks continues to climb, creating challenges for instructors and the college to keep books affordable for students. Textbook rental programs have helped students, but the rental program creates many logistical problems for bookstore staff.

5. Food service operations are subsidized by the college but underutilized by students, faculty, and staff. The President’s meeting with potential providers and students will likely inform and shape changes in food service operations in FY12.

Core Component 2c – The organization’s ongoing assessment and evaluation processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

As is described more fully in Chapter 5, Criterion III, Minnesota West has developed a culture of assessment that informs all of its decisions. A full-time instructor is provided release time to serve as assessment coordinator. All college courses, programs, events, and activities include some form of documented evaluation and assessment. Data produced by these instruments are integral to college planning and decision-making.

MnSCU’s “Accountability Dashboard”

From the MnSCU website:

The Accountability Dashboard for the Minnesota State



Colleges and Universities system is designed to track progress in reaching the system's strategic goals and to encourage continuous improvement of the seven state universities and 25 community and technical colleges. The dashboard provides a snapshot of selected performance indicators and does not give a comprehensive picture of a college's or university's overall performance.

MnSCU's [Accountability Dashboard](#) categories are labeled "Access and Opportunity," "Quality Programs and Services," "Meets State and Regional Economic Needs," and "Innovation and Efficiency." Each of the categories contains at least two subcategories, although some subcategories have not yet been completely defined. Minnesota West meets or exceeds expectations in all subcategories except "Tuition and Fees" in the "Access and Opportunity" category.

IDEA

Designated Minnesota West administrators evaluate individual faculty regularly as required by the MnSCU Board of Trustees ([MnSCU Board Policy 4.9 Employee Evaluation](#)). New faculty are evaluated in several classes each year during the probationary period, unlimited full-time and non-probationary faculty every three years, and adjunct faculty during their first four terms and every three years after that.

The faculty evaluation tool currently used by the college is the Individual Development and Education Assessment (IDEA). IDEA assesses teacher effectiveness through a summary evaluation that averages progress on relevant objectives and overall ratings. The document shared with faculty displays average scores and the percent of students rating each item.

The entire faculty evaluation process requires each instructor to complete a self-evaluation and submit it to his or her evaluating administrator. A peer evaluation is also encouraged but optional. Students from classes taught by the instructor are given a few minutes of class time without the instructor present to evaluate the quality of instruction.

The evaluating administrator also makes classroom visits and completes a “Classroom Observation Report Form.” The number of visits the administrator makes varies based on the instructor’s employment status. After all the procedures are finished, the administrator meets with the faculty member to discuss the evaluation and results. After the conference, the administrator completes a “Faculty Evaluation Conference” form.

Faculty evaluations are also discussed in Chapter 6, Criterion IV.

Retention, Attrition, Matriculation to Graduation Report

In the spring of 2010, Minnesota West employed a researcher to prepare a [Retention, Attrition, Matriculation to Graduation](#) report. The purpose of the 57-page report was to ascertain the efficacy of the college’s efforts in these areas since the statewide merger of two-year college systems in 1997. Minnesota West’s efforts include:

- Fast Track – a one-week, late-summer developmental course offered without charge to underprepared first-year students to help them get ready for college.
- Kids College – One-week midsummer courses aimed at exposing fifth through eighth grade elementary students to college life and courses.
- Developmental courses – Two-credit remedial courses in English, math, and study skills for students underprepared for college work.

- Case management and learning contracts – Formal agreements with at-risk students intended to motivate success and build academic accountability.
- LARC – Centrally located venue for academic resources and tutoring services
- Faculty impact – Support for students to help them obtain necessary knowledge and skills to succeed academically and professionally.

The report measured how well the college meets its goals to retain and matriculate all students to graduation.

Annual Program Reviews

Minnesota West's [Program Analysis System](#) (PAS) was developed to be an effective and efficient method to evaluate college programs. The system complements assessments of student academic achievement. These two parallel programs provide the college with tools to meet its mission goals to provide relevant and cost-effective instruction and training.

The goal of PAS is to evaluate the status of each instructional cost center with respect to enrollment, cost effectiveness, and optimum use of classroom capacity. Each cost center is placed in one of five categories based on how effectively the program associated with it satisfies mission goal one: "To provide pre-professional and liberal arts courses which lead to associate in arts (AA) or associate in science (AS) degrees. The courses are designed to transfer to a four-year college or university and will apply toward a baccalaureate degree."

During the annual program review, each cost center associated with actual instruction is evaluated based on nine variables. The variables include enrollment trends, cost trends, ratio of faculty to full-time students, and other factors measured over a five-year period. Each of the nine variables has a value of 5, 10, or 15 points. The sum of the scores on the nine variables

determines the status of the cost center. Categories are rated to be in “serious decline,” “decline,” “stable,” “growth,” or “serious growth” modes.

Program faculty and the appropriate administrator develop “action plans” for programs found to be in “decline” or “serious decline” or “cost center goals” for programs deemed to be stable. Administrators make plans to monitor and correct cost centers that are identified as “declining.” They also develop recommendations for cost centers considered “growing.” The President’s Cabinet reviews action plans and makes recommendations prior to December of each fiscal year. If a program must be closed or downsized, appropriate union contract provisions are followed.

Non-transfer career and technical programs are also reviewed annually. If a program closure is necessary or cost center downsizing is required after completing the review process, appropriate union contract procedures are followed.

The PAS process itself is reviewed at the end of each year and modified if necessary.

For all new programs, changes to existing programs, and replications of existing programs, an “Instructional Program Proposal” must be submitted for both college and MnSCU approval. Non-transfer program cost centers (career and technical programs) are evaluated annually based on the percent of incoming students that graduate on time, number of graduates, results of graduate follow-up surveys, and starting salaries of recent graduates.

Audits

MnSCU contracted with the Office of Legislative Auditor to conduct process audits every three years. The most recent [Minnesota West audit](#) is posted online. MnSCU’s contract with OLA is now complete.

Federal financial aid operations are audited every three years by the Minnesota Office of Management and Budget. The most recent [Minnesota West OMB audit](#) was conducted in June 2008. No negative findings were identified in the report.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also audits financial aid every year.

CCSSE

Minnesota West administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement in the spring of 2009. College strengths identified by students who took the 2009 CCSSE included “student-faculty interaction,” “support for learners,” “collaborative learning opportunities,” and “no significant sense of isolation.” Identified challenges included lack of “student effort,” “reduced academic challenges,” and lower than expected exposure to “international or multi-cultures.”

Based on CCSSE results, the Minnesota West Pipestone campus was one of seven Minnesota community colleges to be named in the *Washington Monthly College’s Guide* top 50 best community colleges in the United States. Pipestone campus ranked thirtieth on the list, which was published in August 2010.

In April 2010, the President, Provost, Vice President of Instruction, a campus dean, and an instructor attended a two-day MnSCU seminar on student engagement in Chaska, MN. CCSSE staff led workshops and breakout sessions aimed at developing plans to increase student engagement at MnSCU colleges. The Minnesota West team submitted its plan to address the issues at the end of the conference. More information on CCSSE the Student Engagement Conference is in Chapter 5, Criterion IV.

External Accreditations

Minnesota West is a member of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools since 1973.

External accreditations and memberships for Minnesota West programs include:

American Dental Association

Commission of Dental Accreditation
211 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60601-2678

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

1361 Park Street
Clearwater, FL 33756

Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT)

20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 2850
Chicago, IL 60606-3182

Minnesota Board of Nursing

8229 University Ave SE, #500
Minneapolis MN 55414-3253

Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training

1600 University Avenue, Suite 200
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104-3825

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

90 West Plato Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55107

Minnesota Board of Barber and Cosmetologist Examiners

2829 University Ave. SE #710
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Minnesota Department of Rehabilitation Services

390 North Robert Street, 1st Floor
St. Paul, MN 55101

Minnesota State Approving Agency for Veterans Education

MDVA-MN SAA
206 Veteran's Service Bldg
20 West 12th Street
St. Paul, MN 55155-2079

National Accreditation Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences

8410 West Bryn Mawr Avenue, Suite 670
Chicago, Illinois 60631

National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission

3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 500
Atlanta, GA 30326

United States Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Student Senates

Student Senates on each campus participate in planning for the future of the college in several ways. Students are involved in distributing student life funds and have input into decisions regarding tuition and fees. They also offer suggestions for facility enhancements and equipment purchases.

All-Campus Conversations

Faculty, staff, and administrators identified Minnesota West's strengths, challenges, and opportunities during administration day conversations and a survey in 2009 and 2010. Among the strengths identified were quality college employees, effective advising and assessment, support for teaching and learning, and well-maintained college facilities. Challenges were internal communication, recruiting, marketing outside of the region, retention, and student housing. More details on the conversations are in Chapter 3, Criterion I.

Strengths

1. All aspects of Minnesota West operations are subject to frequent external and internal assessments. The results of those assessments give strength to the college's continued commitment to the goals specified in its mission and vision statements and planning documents.

2. Minnesota West shares the results of its assessments openly with its constituents. Many reports are posted on the college website and others can be viewed on request.

Challenges

1. If the college is to continue to grow, it must help to solve the housing crisis that affects the entire region.

Core Component 2d – All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

On-Going Analysis

Minnesota West’s planning for the future is driven and informed by the college mission, vision, and goals. As all of the published and posted reports show, planning at Minnesota West takes into account all demographic, academic, historical, and cultural data available. Decisions are based on thorough knowledge of accurate data provided by multiple and reliable sources. Planning and decisions are also collaborative, involving faculty, staff, students, administration, advisory boards and external constituencies.

Strengths

1. Common themes that emerge from all of the resources cited show that the college meets its mission goals of affordability, accessibility, and support for students, and it is continually seeking better ways to meet the needs of all of the region’s diverse populations.

2. Planning at Minnesota West is highly participatory. Faculty, staff, and students are involved in curriculum development, program reviews, budget development, technology planning and expenditures, and policy decisions.

3. Minnesota West more than adequately prepares for the future by planning all aspects of college operations, including curriculum, facilities, budgets, and regional economic development. Plans are based on careful analysis of comprehensive demographic and economic data from a wide variety of public and private sources.

4. Careful and effective planning and cooperation from partners and community benefactors enable Minnesota West to maintain modern equipment, technologies, facilities, and instructional resources that continue to propel students to their next goals, whether those goals are academic, occupational, personal, or professional.

5. Minnesota West remains flexible enough as an employer and as an institution of higher learning to respond to the region's short- and long-term educational and training needs.

Challenges

1. Minnesota West must continue to respond to the deficiencies noted in the CCSSE survey. The college initiated this process at the CCSSE retreat in April 2010, but efforts must continue.

2. Minnesota West must use its public funds frugally, knowing that any major increases in state allocations are not likely until the national and state economies recover from the current recession.

3. Minnesota West must continue to monitor the cost of books, tuition, and fees and limit increases in costs for students.

4. Minnesota West must continue to monitor and respond to shifting population demographics.

5. Minnesota West must develop policies of succession planning for knowledge management. Individuals often perform tasks without adequately documenting the processes

they follow to accomplish them. Without adequate knowledge management policies, the college has potential to lose vital information when it loses personnel to relocation, retirement, or death.

6. Planning is complicated in times of financial uncertainty and political polarity. Each election has the potential to radically change public policies and funding formulas. Minnesota West must constantly prepare for such contingencies.

Chapter 5

Criterion III: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

“The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.”

Minnesota West has worked diligently over the past two decades to develop a culture of assessment that permeates all of its programs and activities. Every course has clearly stated student outcomes that are printed and posted online in a variety of formats. Every Minnesota West-sponsored activity and workshop concludes with an evaluation.

Minnesota West’s catalog includes a statement on assessment that articulates that “student assessment is part of the College’s educational program” (110). New students are required to complete the Accuplacer assessment of basic skills before they can register for courses, instructors are regularly evaluated, individual courses include multiple measures of student achievement, and standardized tests and surveys measure skills and overall satisfaction with college services and offerings.

Core Component 3a – Minnesota West’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

In the early 1990s, the Minnesota Legislature ordered Minnesota’s higher education systems to develop and implement a standard core curriculum for general education that could be completed by first and second year liberal arts students and provide “seamless transfer” among public institutions of higher learning. Faculty representatives from the Minnesota Community College System, the Minnesota State University System, and the University of Minnesota developed that curriculum over a three-year period. The finished product was titled the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC), and it was to be implemented by the beginning of FY1996. For a variety of reasons, Minnesota West (then Worthington Community College) faculty and administration decided to implement the transfer curriculum for students seeking an associate of arts degree one year earlier, in fall 1994 (FY1995).

The MTC is primarily designed for students who seek AA degrees. It specifies learning objectives in ten major general education areas - communications, critical thinking, natural sciences, mathematical/logical reasoning, history and the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and fine arts, human diversity, global perspective, ethical and civic responsibility, and people and the environment. Minnesota West’s general education courses were designed or modified to satisfy MTC requirements by addressing the objectives in each of the ten general education areas.

Since 1995, the MTC has also been the foundational standard for general education both statewide and at Minnesota West for students seeking AS and AAS degrees. Students receiving AS degrees must successfully complete 30 semester credits selected from at least six of the 10 goal areas of the MTC and one physical education or health course. At least 25 percent of the total semester credits required to complete an AAS degree program must be in general education, and a minimum of three credits must be completed from each of three other major areas of the MTC. [Minnesota West Degree and Award Requirements](#) are listed on the college website.

In 2007, MnSCU ordered a review of the MTC at all MnSCU colleges. Minnesota West conducted its review and submitted a report in January 2008. MnSCU reviewed the report and in January 2010, specified some courses for further review and revision at the college. A follow-up response was sent from Minnesota West to MnSCU in September 2010.

Assessment Handbook

Minnesota West has a well-established assessment process that is documented in an [Assessment Handbook](#). The handbook is updated annually and published with the faculty handbook.

At the conclusion of each semester, teaching faculty complete and submit [Course Assessment](#) forms to their division chairs for each course taught during the semester. Instructors submit the forms at an all-college ITV assessment meeting coordinated and led by the assessment coordinator.

At the end of each calendar year, program directors complete [Program Assessment](#) forms. The forms enable instructors to identify and articulate strengths and weaknesses of their

courses, including textbooks, assignments, tests, and other factors. The forms also provide space for instructors to request additional training in specific areas, and that information is then forwarded to the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) coordinators on each campus to help them plan both local and college-wide CTL sessions for the next year. Feedback from these forms also promotes reflection and discussion of teaching methods and pedagogy as well as program outcomes and objectives.

Course Outlines

Minnesota West's *Curriculum Development Manual* describes policies and procedures faculty must follow to develop, modify, or terminate courses. Each request to implement a new course must include a course outline developed and approved by department faculty, divisions, local curriculum committees, and the Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC).

[Course Outlines](#) (CO) are on file and online for all courses at the college. The CO form is completed by faculty and includes a catalog description, a list of MTC areas that the course fulfills, any pre-requisite or entry skills needed for success in the course, the length of the course, the term the course is offered, and a brief description of how the course fulfills four basic college goals: "Academic Content," "Thinking Skills," "Communication Skills," and "Human Diversity." The form also lists "Expected Course Outcomes," "Learning/Teaching Techniques," "Assignments and Assessments," and "Expected Student Learning Outcomes." All instructors are required to follow the department-approved Course Outline, which is the intellectual property of the college.

In late spring 2010, the Worthington campus curriculum committee recommended to the AASC that the [Curriculum Development Manual](#) and forms be revised to streamline

procedures and more closely reflect curriculum change practices as they have evolved since the manual was last revised in 2007. That review is currently underway.

Syllabus Form

In addition to a course outline, faculty must develop and distribute a syllabus for each college class using a standard [syllabus template](#). The template includes class information, textbook(s), course requirements, classroom policies, and standards for assessment. To comply with MnSCU policy 3.22, instructors must provide a syllabus to each student in their classes within one week of the first class meeting. Course syllabi belong to instructors.

Program Descriptions

Each Minnesota West education program is briefly described online and in the college catalog. Most individual programs maintain separate printed [program descriptions](#) that program directors distribute on request. Program descriptions include one to two paragraphs that explain course content, prerequisites, or licensing requirements. The descriptions list required courses and general education classes in a logical sequence. Program descriptions are intended to help students plan and successfully travel their chosen educational paths.

In late spring 2010, the Worthington campus curriculum committee recommended to AASC that all program descriptions be expanded to articulate specific program learning objectives and outcomes. That process has begun.

Technical Program Outcomes

Technical program outcome descriptions are developed by instructors. Some programs, such as those involving health care, include state and national tests that students must pass to earn certifications or licenses required for employment. Other programs, such as Power Sports,

involve optional licenses or certifications from outside organizations (i.e. Power Sports faculty encourage students to test for the Arctic Cat CatMaster certification). When no other national tests or standards are required, most technical programs use National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) or National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) exams to measure student outcomes in their programs.

Students in agricultural and Farm Business Management programs must pass state exams to become certified for commercial pesticide applications, chemical spraying, and animal waste disposal. If they own and operate large vehicles, they may need special drivers' licenses.

An electrical journey worker's license requires 8,000 hours of work experience. A student who successfully completes the two-year electrical program at Minnesota West is credited with 2,000 hours of experience. Students must work an additional 6,000 hours in the field to be eligible to take the journey worker's exam. After another 2,000 hours, 10,000 total hours, graduates working in the profession may take the master's exam.

HVAC/Refrigeration students must pass a series of four tests to be certified by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Plumbing licensure requires 7,000 hours of experience in Minnesota. Students earn 971 hours for one year of schooling. Becoming eligible for full licensure usually requires three more years on the job.

In human services, a certified child development associate must have 480 hours of experience, a portfolio, and a CDA assessment to become certified. Students in the program graduate with 200 hours of experience toward that goal. A Minnesota Department of Human

Services “lead teacher” must have an associate’s degree and 1,040 hours of experience. To be an assistant teacher requires a degree plus 520 hours of experience.

In dental assisting, the Minnesota Dental Board requires a state jurisprudence exam, state registration exam, and a Dental Assisting National Board exam.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) examinations include the EMT basic and refresher exams, an online National Certificate Exam, first responder basic and refresher exams, and a CPR/AED/FA exam. Successful graduates receive two-year AHA certification.

Surgical technology, medical lab technology, and phlebotomy programs include certification exams students complete after finishing their coursework. Medical assistant graduates are eligible to take the American Association of Medical Assistants CMA exam. For Minnesota West to maintain its AAMA accreditation, at least 70 percent of graduates must take and pass this exam during a five-year period.

Practical nursing students must pass the NCLEX exam to be licensed to practice after graduation. Associate Degree nursing program graduates must pass the NCLEX-RN exam to be licensed registered nurses.

Truck driving program graduates take the commercial drivers license (CDC) exam.

Law enforcement graduates must pass the Peace Officer Standard Testing (POST) exam to be licensed.

Cosmetology students must complete 1,550 hours of class work and pass a state certification exam before they can obtain a Minnesota license. Nail tech and esthetician students must also pass Minnesota exams before they can obtain licenses to practice.

Pass rates are high for Minnesota West students in all of these fields. The percentage of both RN and LPN nursing graduates, for example, have passed the state licensure exams at rates near or exceeding the state average each year between 1998 and 2008. The pass rate for peace officers in 2008 was nearly 91 percent. These rates strongly indicate that the college prepares students well for their professions.

Student Self-Assessment

Student self-assessment is a tool many instructors use to help them understand student perceptions and expectations for courses. In response to a request for information on self-assessment in January 2010, ten instructors said that self-assessment is a regular part of their teaching. Some of the assessments relate to specific assignments and some are comprehensive assessments completed at midterm and at the end of the semester.

Instructors who use student self-assessments appreciate and understand their value. One instructor wrote: “The evaluations are incredibly useful. I use the information I receive to help me with my course assessment and planning for the next time I teach the course.” A philosophy instructor explained that at the end of the semester, students assign up to one-tenth of their own points in the class. An art instructor wrote:

I don’t allow students to “just give themselves points”; they have to justify the points assigned using a written response stating why they feel they met the specific criteria at the high level, or what they feel they could have done to improve the areas where they gave themselves lower scores. They also have to use proper art terminology.

Faculty also wrote that students who self-assess become more aware of the learning objectives and their performances relative to those objectives. One instructor wrote that “students often can see their own work with clarity if asked to do self-analysis.” Another observed that “students who self-assess and identify their own growth areas tend to focus on those areas for personal growth.”

Strengths

1. Minnesota West is committed to an assessment process that is well-defined and relatively easy to maintain. Most instructors participate in the process and don’t object to completing the written evaluations of courses at the end of each semester. Division chairs help to keep the process organized.

2. If a program description or course outline requires modification, department faculty work together to make the changes before presenting them to the division. After the division review and approval, proposals for changes advance through local curriculum committees to the AASC and, once approved, become part of the online college catalog.

3. Licensing, certification, and NOCTI tests ensure that students meet requirements for working in the field. Healthy passing rates for Minnesota West graduates indicate that the college effectively prepares workers to pursue their professions.

4. Student self-assessment requires students to know course learning objectives. It also compels students to think critically and take responsibility for their learning. Their self-assessments provide faculty with valuable perspectives on their courses and student effort.

5. Student evaluations of customized training/continuing education courses show a more than 90 percent satisfaction rate.

Challenges

1. Achieving 100 percent compliance with the assessment process among faculty and students is not always accomplished.
2. The *Curriculum Development Manual* needs to be updated, a process that has already begun.
3. All program catalog descriptions should be expanded to include learning objectives and outcomes.
4. Because of funding or time limitations, CTL cannot always provide training in all the areas requested on faculty-completed assessment forms during a given year.
5. New and adjunct instructors have not always been fully aware of the need to follow course outlines when they begin teaching. This problem has been noted and addressed by administrators working with new faculty. Beginning instructors are immediately provided with links to appropriate course outlines and syllabus forms.
6. NOCTI exams are increasingly expensive and their costs come from program budgets. Some program directors are seeking less expensive alternatives.
7. Testing sites for program certifications are not always local, so students must travel significant distances to take tests. Online students also must take certain tests in controlled environments, which are sometimes difficult to arrange or access for the students living great distances from Minnesota West campuses or locations.
8. Programs such as Biofuels Technology are so new that no national standards for certification or licensing have yet been established.

9. Not all instructors update their syllabi every year to reflect the changes noted in their assessments.

10. Students with little or no experience in self-assessment may be reluctant to engage in it or may rate themselves subjectively. Faculty new to receiving student self-assessments may have similar difficulties evaluating them. The college should consider developing a comprehensive vision or plan for using student self-assessment.

11. Programs offered through the CT/CE often rely on cutting edge technologies, which are sometimes unavailable in rural Minnesota. Finding expert instructors and industry-specific course materials can be difficult.

Core Component 3b – Minnesota West values and supports effective teaching.

Minimum Qualifications - Liberal Arts

College counselors, librarians, and all college instructors who teach credit-based courses must meet college faculty credentialing requirements established by [MnSCU](#) and [MnSCU Procedure 3.32.1](#). At Minnesota West, the Provost works with the Human Resources office to manage the credentialing process for temporary full-time (TFT) faculty, temporary part-time (TPT) faculty, adjunct faculty, and external instructors, such as high school teachers teaching Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) concurrent enrollment courses and customized training instructors teaching for-credit courses.

At the time they are hired, unlimited full-time (UFT), unlimited part-time (UPT), temporary full-time (TFT), and temporary part-time (TPT) faculty complete an on-line

credentialing application that is reviewed by the Minnesota West Human Resources office.

Newly hired instructors must submit official college transcripts, employment verifications of related occupational experience, relevant industry licensures or certifications, and any other documentation MnSCU requires. Adjunct and external instructors assigned to teach credit-based courses as well as counselors and librarians submit credentialing documentation to the appropriate deans, who forward the documents to the Human Resources office.

Exceptions to the process may include:

- Pending credentials: Individuals who are close to meeting minimum qualifications may be hired for no more than two consecutive semesters.
- Special expertise: Individuals with special expertise in specialized areas may be hired to teach courses in those areas. Examples are coaches. The college prefers to hire master's-prepared coaches but looks for specific athletic skills and experience.
- Renowned qualifications: Individuals who have achieved exceptional status or recognition in particular areas may be hired to teach courses in those areas. This is a rarely used option, and usually considered for seminar classes. The college has employed guest faculty in bioscience who held doctorate degrees but did not meet the credential for bioscience.
- Emerging fields: Individuals involved in emerging areas of study for which preparation requirements and experience are not yet clearly defined (i.e. alternative energies) may be hired until minimum qualifications are established.

Minimum Qualifications – Technical Instruction

In addition to meeting established MnSCU policies, technical faculty experience must include two full-time years (or the equivalent) of verified, paid work-related experience in the credentialed field. At least one year of this experience must be within the five years immediately preceding the date of application for credentialing. This requirement can be waived if the candidate has two years of successful full-time post-secondary teaching experience in the credential field within the past five years.

State or national industry licensure or certifications considered essential for practice in the assigned field is also required (i.e. practical nursing instructors must be registered nurses and law enforcement faculty must have POST Board certificates).

Hiring Practices

When faculty openings occur, the appropriate administrator, in consultation with faculty leaders, appoints a search committee. Candidates submit applications to the Human Resources office in Canby during a specified time period. Once the application deadline occurs, the search committee reviews the candidates' applications, selects and interviews finalists, and makes a recommendation. Strict rules of confidentiality are enforced regarding applicants and their personal information. Once the search committee settles on a candidate to recommend, the appropriate administrator forwards the name to the Provost, who then forwards the recommendation to the college President or designee for final approval.

Teaching and Learning Competency Requirement

MnSCU Board Policy 3.32 and Procedure 3.32.1 also require that all new full-time unlimited instructors hired after July 2006 complete a non-credit course titled Philosophy of

Community and Technical College Education. The course “focuses on the evolution, mission, purpose, and operating features of community and technical colleges.” It is a self-directed course managed by the MnSCU Center for Teaching and Learning and is offered online via Desire2Learn.

New instructors must also complete three additional credit-bearing courses within three years of their employment at Minnesota West. The courses cover course construction, teaching/instructional methods, and student outcomes assessment/evaluation. Southwest Minnesota State University developed the undergraduate/graduate courses, which are available online, on ITV, or in two-week face-to-face course blocks offered during the summer. New faculty who can document evidence of completing equivalent coursework or who have three years of successful full-time secondary, postsecondary, industry or trade apprenticeship teaching experience may be exempt from taking the credit-bearing courses. [Teacher Education Series](#) (TES) courses at Bemidji State University (BSU) or the University of Minnesota also satisfy the teaching and learning competencies.

According to the MnSCU website, these courses are

...intended to provide the faculty with an insight into the culture and climate of teaching at a community or technical college in Minnesota, lay the groundwork for excellence in teaching and learning, and ensure that faculty possess the minimum instructional knowledge, skill, and practice components foundational for the community and technical college teaching environment.

Faculty evaluations

All instructors at Minnesota West are evaluated regularly. Probationary instructors are evaluated in several classes during each year of the three-year probationary period. An announced classroom evaluation occurs during fall semester and an unannounced visit occurs in the spring of each year of probation. Unlimited full-time or non-probationary faculty members are evaluated on a three-year rotating schedule. Adjunct instructors are evaluated during their first four terms and on a three-academic year rotation after that. Evaluations may be done more frequently if problems occur or are suspected.

The objective of faculty evaluation is to encourage excellence in instruction and identify areas of instruction that need improvement. Each faculty evaluation includes a written self-evaluation, a student evaluation, a classroom observation, an evaluation conference, and an optional peer review. The self-evaluation requires instructors to identify and describe their perceived accomplishments and areas for growth. Online instructors also complete separate reviews of their online courses. The student evaluation tool is the IDEA Survey, which is partially composed of questions developed by instructors and directly related to learning outcomes for each course (see description on following pages). Students assess their own growth relative to assignments and methods of instruction. During classroom observations, administrators complete observation reports that they share with instructors at the evaluation conference. Evaluation conferences occur after the semester ends and bring together all elements of the evaluation process. The administrator and instructor then sign a summary of the evaluation for the instructor's file.

Instructors who are being evaluated are encouraged but not required to schedule a peer evaluation in their classrooms during the process. Instructors select their own peer evaluator to complete a Peer Classroom Observation Report and then discuss the report with the peer evaluator as soon as possible after the observation. Instructors then decide whether to share the report with administration.

Faculty Development Plans

Beginning in fall semester 2006, all faculty members in unlimited positions prepared professional development plans. The plans are reviewed by an appropriate administrator following the evaluation schedule to ensure compliance, progress, and relevancy to the instructor's credential field and level of teaching experience. The development plans include strategies to improve teaching and learning skills and methods, plans for discipline and program enhancements, student interactions, service to the college and community, and personal growth related to employment responsibilities.

More information regarding faculty development plans is in Chapter 6, Criterion IV of this document.

IDEA Surveys

Each semester, students are invited to provide feedback on teaching and learning in their courses. Minnesota West uses the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) survey to accomplish this task. Face-to-face and interactive television (ITV) students take the survey in person and during class time. Online students complete the survey electronically. Faculty chose IDEA after reviewing several other survey options because it allows students to

assess their own progress on learning goals that faculty establish. Students also provide feedback on the frequency of various teaching methods used in the course.

Minnesota West has been using IDEA since fall 2005. Students complete the surveys for all online classes of more than 15 students and in face-to-face classes whose instructors are being evaluated. The assigned administrator shares the results of the survey with the instructor of the class at the evaluation conference. The administrator also provides feedback based on the survey results to the college assessment coordinator who works with the Center for Teaching and Learning campus coordinators to arrange training to remediate teaching problems identified on the surveys. Survey results have brought about pedagogical improvements in both online and onsite classroom teaching methods.

In a survey conducted in August 2010, administrators, faculty, and staff were asked: “In addition to IDEA surveys, how do you obtain feedback from students regarding assignments, courses, or services?” Nearly half said that they engage in informal conversations with students, some said they seek comments by sending emails to students, and about one-fourth reported using mid-term or end-of-semester surveys to seek student comments.

Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

A key component of Minnesota West’s mission is to support and empower faculty to enhance instructional effectiveness and promote student academic achievement. The [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) (CTL) is designed to help the college meet those goals. Minnesota West has one college-wide CTL coordinator and each campus has two CTL campus coordinators to facilitate campus activities.

The CTL leaders determine yearly goals aimed at improving all faculty teaching and student learning. College-wide CTL goals focus on three main areas: teaching and pedagogy, technology and technical training, and cross-campus information sharing. When division chairs gather information from individual faculty assessment forms, they compile lists of training requests and pass them on to CTL leaders. The leaders then arrange to provide training in these areas. Workshops and training sessions are held on individual campuses throughout the year. A February duty day for all college instructors is dedicated to CTL activities, and statewide CTL leaders publish a newsletter and organize a summer retreat for coordinators and other interested faculty to learn what other campuses are doing.

In response to two questions on the previously mentioned August 2010 survey, nearly one-third of respondents described CTL as an effective vehicle to help them work with other faculty to improve teaching and learning both on their own campuses and college wide. One respondent wrote: “I have gained a wealth of information from [other faculty].” Another wrote regarding the college-wide CTL days: “We learn from each other on these duty days and can work with an individual if we choose.”

Faculty committees

Each academic division has a popularly elected division chair who serves for at least one two-year term. Divisions include Allied Health, Computer Science, Developmental Studies, Distance Learning, Humanities and Fine Arts, Management, Manufacturing and Energy, Science and Math, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Trades and Services, and Transportation. Assignment to both campus and college-wide committees is based on recommendations from division chairs.

Campus and college committees are established to promote communication and participatory management of college operations. The Faculty Shared Governance (FSG) and Academic Affairs and Standards (AASC) committees are established by contract and are college-wide. Other committees are campus specific and meet monthly or as issues arise. They include Campus Curriculum, Distance Learning, Fiscal Affairs, Equipment and Technology, Safety, and Scholarship. Committees that meet only as needed are Student Code of Conduct and Academic Appeals and Suspensions. Recent *ad hoc* committees have included Alcohol/Drug Policy Review, HLC Steering Committee, and distance learning subcommittees.

According to the MSCF master agreement, the AASC and FSG committees must consist of two-thirds faculty and one-third administration. The presidents of both the north and south chapters of the Minnesota West Community and Technical College Faculty (MWCTCF) serve on both the AASC and the FSG committees. Other faculty members on the committees are division chairs or their designees. The president of the MWCTCF south chapter chairs the AASC and the president of the north chapter chairs FSG. The college President appoints the administrators to both committees and usually attends the FSG meeting in person.

Curriculum Review

Minnesota West's curriculum review process involves individual instructors, divisions, campus curriculum committees, administrators, and the AASC. Curriculum changes follow a procedure outlined in the college curriculum handbook. The process is typically initiated by a member of the faculty and an appropriate administrator. When the change is ready to move through the approval process, the initiating faculty member proposes it to his or her division. If the division approves, the recommendation advances to the campus curriculum committee,

which either approves or denies the change. If the change is approved, the proposal continues to AASC for final review. If AASC approves the change, it becomes part of the curriculum and is added to the online college catalog and the next biennial printed catalog. If the AASC rejects the change, the process begins again or is dropped.

MnSCU must approve any new programs delivered online, onsite, or off-site. MnSCU must also approve changes in locations or delivery methods for existing programs that the college wants to duplicate. All virtual degree or diploma-granting programs must also have MnSCU approval.

To deliver degrees or diplomas online, a college must also have accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Minnesota West is accredited to deliver nursing programs off-site and online. On May 13, 2004, the college received independent HLC accreditation to offer all of its existing degree and diploma programs online.

Advisory Boards

Minnesota West has two types of advisory boards to assist with curriculum development and improvement. Program advisory boards meet at least annually to consider issues in academic programs. Campus advisory boards help the college work more closely with communities in the region to identify common economic and educational goals. Advisory boards are described more fully in Chapter 6, Criterion IV.

Awards of Excellence

The [College Faculty Awards for Excellence](#) (CFAE) program started in 2005 and continued until it was suspended for fiscal reasons in 2009. The awards provided campus presidents with means for rewarding faculty achievements “above and beyond the normal

requirements of the individual's positions" and addressed student learning outcomes. The program was suspended in the newest MSCF Master Agreement but may return when the economy improves.

CFAE was a campus-based program. Most guidelines and procedures were developed and implemented by campus committees. A college-wide committee comprising both faculty and administrators reviewed and approved CFAE projects. An example of a CFAE project that survived beyond the reward was the Fast Track developmental course at Minnesota West. Fast Track has now been taught for six years and is funded by the college.

Strengths

1. Full-time instructors usually chair faculty search committees.
2. Established minimum qualifications ensure that new faculty will have adequate and relevant education and technical experience.
3. Regular evaluations of faculty members provide a comprehensive view of faculty work, responsibilities, and community involvement. It includes self-assessment, student assessment, and administrative evaluation. The focus of the evaluation is always on professional improvement.
4. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) ensures a year-around focus on teaching and learning activities and improvement. CTL's value is supported by the college budget and offers a wide variety of learning opportunities.
5. TES (Teaching Education Series) courses help new faculty acclimate quickly to the community college teaching environment. The courses are offered at times that can work easily into new faculty schedules.

6. College Faculty Awards for Excellence, though suspended in 2009, were given to 74 instructors at Minnesota West. Instructors on all campuses have participated in the program. New CFAE courses have been offered to students, employees, and community members. Successful projects that started with CFAE and have continued include Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), online mental health resources, Fast Track, and several mentoring programs.

7. Faculty leadership and participation on key committees ensure that instructors' voices will contribute to fair college policies and practices that promote student learning and institutional improvement. Faculty committees are also cost-effective and responsive to change.

8. IDEA surveys have enabled the college to use student feedback to plan and carry out activities that improve teaching and enhance learning.

Challenges

1. Not all instructors take advantage of learning opportunities available to them.
2. Not all instructors contribute to or participate in college committee work or college life activities. This inequity sometimes causes resentment among peers and deprives the college of the good ideas that could come from a broader base of input. The problem has been exacerbated by instructors who teach only online and seldom appear on campuses.

Core Component 3c – Minnesota West creates effective learning environments

Because of its enormous geographic area, Minnesota West is challenged to provide effective learning environments for its students. The college solves that problem in several

ways, including offering face-to-face classes on all its campuses, providing interactive television (ITV) classrooms at all campuses and locations, offering off-site courses, and through the World Wide Web, using MnOnline and the Desire2Learn (D2L) platform to deliver classes.

Distance education at Minnesota West includes both ITV and online classes. Courses taught online or on ITV follow the same course outlines as face-to-face courses. Class size limits are the same for face-to-face, ITV, and online classes. Internships, management programs, and customized training courses also use the D2L platform to enhance learning opportunities.

Desire2Learn

Desire2Learn is an online course management system that provides instructors the technological tools they need to interact effectively with students. Minnesota West has used D2L since spring semester 2004, when MnSCU adopted D2L as its official course management system.

Minnesota West offers approximately 180 courses online each semester. Instructors in face-to-face courses can also use the D2L system for grading, posting assignments, encouraging discussions, and making announcements. Students are beginning to expect a D2L site for every course, so they can check their grades and assignments, participate in discussions, and communicate easily with classmates outside of the classroom. Approximately 300 face-to-face or ITV courses use the system each semester.

Faculty development and training on D2L began in 2001, when an instructional design position was added to the college faculty. Faculty training takes place at summer workshops, on faculty duty days, and during brown-bag noon sessions throughout the academic year. Practice

communities have developed at each campus to help new instructors become acquainted with the system.

Because so many instructors incorporate D2L in their courses, an Introduction to Online Learning course was developed to orient students to the system. The free course is always available on the D2L website. All students registered for online classes are automatically added to the course and most online instructors require or strongly encourage their students to complete it. The course was first offered in fall 2005, and nearly 2,100 students had completed it by January 2010.

[Customized Training Services](#) offers courses at company offices and public locations throughout the region. CTS/CE courses are discussed in several places in this self-study.

Information Technology

The goal of Minnesota West's information technology services (ITS) is to provide technical infrastructures that support the development and delivery of courses across a large geographic area. Minnesota West instructors have access to a number of technologies that enhance distance learning, including the D2L course management system and video editing, video streaming, and video capture technologies.

Minnesota West employs a Dean of Technology and Distance Learning (DTDLE) to assist faculty in developing course work. The DTDLE provides coaching and basic technical support to individual faculty members and helps to research, select, and develop appropriate learning resources for each course. Other IT staff members work closely with the DTDLE to identify technologies that will enhance course offerings and provide students with quality learning experiences.

Because some disciplines require a more “hands on” approach to course materials, Minnesota West and its consortium partners provide web-based conferencing systems such as Adobe Connect to create synchronous learning environments. These technologies allow instructors to communicate with students in real time, which is more effective for presenting some course material than asynchronous presentations can be.

Interactive television (ITV) instruction was first offered by Worthington Community College in 1988 and continues to play a vital role in linking Minnesota West students at various campuses and locations. Minnesota West supports 32 ITV rooms, from small meeting spaces to technology-enhanced classrooms with high-definition video equipment.

Nursing Labs

Nursing labs are located at the Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, Pipestone, and Worthington campuses. The labs are



used by instructors and students in nursing assistant, practical nursing, and associate degree nursing programs. The purpose of the labs is to help students develop psychomotor, cognitive, and critical thinking skills in environments conducive to learning. Nursing labs are designed to simulate and support the clinical nursing environment.

Skill labs are equipped with patient care stations that include beds, life-size mannequins, and a variety of skills modeling and medication administration equipment. Pipestone and Worthington labs have wall suction and oxygen administration simulators available. Both high- and low-fidelity simulations enhance students’ clinical and critical thinking skills in realistic

patient-care situations. Minnesota West owns one SimMan® and four Kelly simulators, which enable students to listen to heart and lung sounds and measure vital signs that the instructor controls. In the labs, students feel safe making mistakes while they learn to perform skills correctly.

Science labs

Minnesota West maintains science labs at its Canby, Granite Falls, Pipestone, and Worthington campuses and at the Luverne additional location.

The college has made substantial investments in science labs in the past decade. Investments at Canby total \$277,000; at Granite Falls, \$462,876; at Pipestone, \$515,000; and at Worthington, \$375,000. At Worthington, three science labs - biology, chemistry, and physics - were remodeled, and a greenhouse was constructed outside of the main academic building. Science and nursing faculty helped to redesign the labs to make them modern, effective, and safe learning environments for instructors and students.

The investment at Canby was used primarily to renovate the 1,462 square foot Dental Health Career Lab while making the space more flexible for biology and soil and water course lab work. Included were the improvements in dust collectors, ventilation, cabinets and counters, flooring, and wiring for both electricity and data distribution.

The investment at Worthington was used to re-align the laboratories for more efficient use. Chemistry and biology labs were co-located to allow sharing of prep/storage space and reduce supply inventories. The remodeling also made it easier for other sciences, such as soil science and agronomy, to use the facilities. The college bio-science program also uses laboratory space off-campus at Newport Laboratories.

The investment at Granite Falls added a 1,200 square foot science lab designed to accommodate biology and chemistry courses for the nursing program and the newly developed renewable energy curriculum. Before the new lab was available, those courses were taught in an open shop. The Granite Falls lab contains lab benches, analytical instruments, and appropriate environmental and safety equipment. Courses taught in the lab include Microbial Energy, Biodiesel Fundamentals, Process Plant Chemistry, and Distillation and Evaporation.

A medical science lab was established as part of the remodeling project at the Luverne additional location. The lab not only supports the nursing program but also medical assistance, medical laboratory technology, and radiologic technology. Funding for the lab was provided by Sanford Health Systems, the City of Luverne, and Minnesota West.

In addition to laboratories, some science instructors have also developed home science kits for students taking online science courses, including anatomy and conceptual physics. The kits contain most of the materials needed to perform inquiry-based lab experiences at home. Students order the kits through the college bookstores.

Arts Labs

Minnesota West's Worthington campus includes facilities for visual and musical arts. The Fine Arts Building on campus includes an art gallery, a music room, private music rehearsal rooms equipped with pianos, a ceramics room with an adjacent kiln room and storage, and a large classroom for painting instruction. When studio art classes are offered on other campuses, shop spaces are used. A portable kiln and throwing wheel are moved to the campuses for ceramics classes and easels are moved for painting and drawing courses.

Minnesota West arts students participate in Fine Arts Festivals attended by students from two-year colleges around the state. Minnesota West hosted the festival in 2007.

Visiting artists from a variety of cultures throughout the region, some of which are former Minnesota West students, exhibit their work at seven to nine separate exhibitions in Worthington's Fine Arts Gallery throughout the year. Each spring, the art department conducts a student art show and competition in the gallery. The Granite Falls campus also hosts at least one art show each year.

Second grade elementary students come to the Worthington campus each spring to learn printmaking and pottery-making at a workshop taught by Minnesota West art students. Kids College, a one-week summer program for fifth through eighth grade students, nearly always involves an art class.

The Fine Arts Theater on the Worthington campus is used throughout the year for student and student/community performances, presentations, lectures, hearings, and events. Recent theater productions include *The Fantasticks*, *Snoopy! The Musical*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Defying Gravity*. Community organizations also cooperate with the college to use the theater for seminars and meetings. In fall 2009, the college theater hosted a regional workshop on diabetes that was co-sponsored by the college, Sanford Regional Hospital, and area Lions Clubs.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West's online platform, D2L, is relatively easy for students to access and navigate. Support for using the platform is available through the startup pages and a Help Desk.
2. D2L enhances communications among instructors and students.

3. D2L is integrated with ISRS, the MnSCU student record system, so updates are made nightly.

4. The D2L online platform is used by all MnSCU institutions, so students who transfer from Minnesota West to a four-year MnSCU university need not learn to navigate another online system.

5. Minnesota West instructors are willing to use new technologies to improve course and program delivery.

6. Nursing and science labs are safe and up-to-date learning environments where students can practice skills they need to succeed in their respective professions after graduating.

7. Campus arts facilities enable students to express their own creative impulses as well as experience works by more experienced artists.

8. Campus facilities are used and enjoyed extensively by the larger community.

Challenges

1. Not all students are immediately comfortable with online learning environments.

2. Not all instructors are ready or willing to convert courses to provide online instruction.

3. Not all courses and programs lend themselves easily to online instruction.

4. Arts events offered in the Worthington campus Fine Arts Theater are sometimes poorly attended.

5. Faculty workload in science laboratories is high, which may affect their effectiveness and efficiency.

6. Some online students rely on LARC computers to access D2L classes because they don't have computers at home. The LARCs must strive to be as accommodating as possible.

Core Component 3d – Learning Resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Counseling and Advising

Minnesota West has one counselor available to help students with behavioral, emotional and social needs, including those with physical disabilities and mental health issues. Long-term counseling needs are met by referring students to the many community agencies available. The Minnesota West website includes a [Health Watch](#) page that lists resources for mental and physical health needs.

All students are assigned to an academic advisor upon enrolling at Minnesota West. Advisors are available to help students select courses to meet degree requirements, register for classes, understand college policies, plan for careers, navigate academic programs, transfer credits, satisfy the requirements of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, and complete degree audits. In FY10, the college provided 13 liberal arts advisors, 52 technical advisors, and one online advisor. Most advisors have a dual role of advising and counseling, although their primary role is to advise.

Multicultural Counseling/Advising

Minnesota West does not discriminate against any person or persons in regard to “employment, personnel practices, or access to and participation in programs, services or activities because of race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status,

status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in any local commission as defined by law.”

Minnesota West embraces the notion that diversity enhances campus environments, and it regards affirmative action in a broader context than merely employment opportunities. The college also promotes equitable representation of female, ethnic minority, and disabled persons as role models in leadership and other key positions.

Each Minnesota West campus has a diversity coordinator and recruiter who engage in multiple activities designed for diverse populations. Coordinators on three campuses meet regularly with Native American communities and councils to plan for enrollment and programs. A summary of these activities can be found in the [Access, Opportunity Report for 2010](#). In 2004, Minnesota West opened an Office of Cultural Diversity on the Worthington campus. The office was later re-named “Culture Corner,” and its purpose is to improve retention of students of color and increase racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among students. Culture Corner “fosters a campus environment of inclusion, knowledge, and understanding among all groups.” It helps faculty, staff and students value diversity and respect individual differences that enrich the college community.

In addition to the three Mission Goals cited in Chapter 2 –Criterion 1 of this document, the Culture Corner has six primary purposes:

1. To develop sensitivity and training programs that promote a climate in which people of all cultures are appreciated as valued members of the campus community.
2. To increase minority enrollment by assisting with college recruitment efforts.

3. To increase minority retention by providing programs and services designed to help students achieve their academic and career aspirations.
4. To encourage and assist students of color with their academic and social adjustments to college life.
5. To serve as liaison between students of color, faculty, and administration.
6. To promote a positive image that all cultures contribute to the college and make the college experience productive and successful for all students.

Minnesota West employs a part-time diversity and multi-cultural coordinator at the Worthington campus. The coordinator arranges and promotes cultural awareness-raising events at the college. In 2010, events included Mixed Blood Theater performances; classroom and public presentations from an African refugee; Worthington World Market; an international Christmas open house; Native American dancing, storytelling, and canoe building demonstrations; and individual programs on Israel, Guatemala, Liberia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia-Liberia-Sudan. Most of the events were multiple performances and attracted 350 or more audience members.

The college also supports community events with funds or volunteers or both, including a Mother's Day event, Cinco de Mayo, and Worthington's annual International Festival, which is held in July.

Minnesota West's diversity coordinator also has recently translated guideline and application documents for the Post Secondary Education Option from English to Spanish. Copies have been distributed to advisors, marketers, the Nobles County Integration Collaborative and other groups. The coordinator distributes the translated documents when speaking to

immigrant parent groups at local industries, the local Work Force Center, Native American schools, national college fairs, and non-profit agencies. The coordinator has also translated other college documents including the President's Welcome and photo captions for the college website.

Culture Corner is also discussed in Chapter 4, Criterion II.

Disability Services

Minnesota West has a Coordinator of Disability Services, and each campus designates one advisor to work with students who have documented disabilities to help them succeed in college. Advisors arrange accommodations and support services and, when necessary, advocate on behalf of the students in matters of appropriate physical accommodation for accessibility. Students with certain types of disabilities are also informed that some courses or programs require specific physical abilities.

According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), an individual with a disability has a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activity." Minnesota West's policy is to provide access to and encourage participation in its programs, services, and activities to all persons with disabilities whenever possible.

Cultural and Arts Events

In recent years, the college has hosted countless arts and cultural events and guest speakers. Most of the events have been hosted at Worthington or Granite Falls.

The Worthington campus hosts talent shows, theater productions, concerts, public readings, and arts workshops. Artists from around the world have visited the campus. Among

them have been painters and sculptors from Mexico, the Czech Republic, Canada, Norway, Puerto Rico, Africa, and many American states.

The Granite Falls campus hosted its own arts and humanities series from 2002 to 2007. Among the events were three musical performances, a philosophy lecture, a filmmaker's presentation, a painter's exhibition, and many literary readings. The campus also hosted two women's issues forums with keynote speakers Linda Hasselstrom and the late Carol Bly. Nearly every event was free and open to the public.

In October 2009, Granite Falls hosted a Cultural Competency Conference. The conference was a collaboration of Minnesota West, Pathways, and the Yellow Medicine County Agency. The event was attended by educators and representatives from several Native American groups, including both Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux agencies. In 2010, the Granite Falls campus hosted a Native American Photography Exhibit.

Getting Connected Days

Minnesota West administrators, faculty, and staff provide vital information for new students at orientation meetings both on campus and online. The college also invites students to come to campus for "Getting Connected Days" and college open house events. Some campuses combine orientation sessions and tailor them for specific programs. Agenda items include campus tours; detailed instructions for application, class registration, and financial aid; and training for accessing student records, student email, D2L, and Smarthinking. Students may also obtain identification cards at these events.

Homecoming

A homecoming celebration is held at Minnesota West-Worthington each year during fall semester. Homecoming is a week-long event celebrating school spirit, building relationships, meeting new people, having fun, and demonstrating pride. Each year has a designated theme that is incorporated in such activities as talent shows, outside entertainers, volleyball games, royalty interviews and coronation, hog roasts, a football game and a dance. Recent themes have included “Wild, Wild West,” “Minnesota West Goes Hollywood,” and “Beach Party.” A committee of students, faculty, and staff plan and organize homecoming events. Homecoming royalty are chosen by a process that combines merit and a popular vote by students.

At other campuses, student events include a Fall Kick-Off Picnic, Fall Harvest Party, Halloween “Spooktacular,” game nights, Karaoke nights, “Stress Break Luncheons” (before final exams), and bowling and roller skating outings.

Instructional Designer

Minnesota West is committed to providing faculty with the necessary tools and resources to be effective instructors. College leaders also acknowledge that learning environments continue to change rapidly and new instructors need guidance. The college added an Instructional Designer (ID) in 2001. The ID is a member of the teaching faculty who is given release time to carry out those duties.

Minnesota West’s ID provides technological solutions for teaching challenges and solves software issues that arise for faculty. At the core of the ID’s duties is the responsibility to assist faculty with D2L courses by guiding instructors through system revisions, requirements, and solutions and by helping students use the system correctly. The ID and a team of volunteers

developed the Introduction to Online Learning course on Desire2Learn and revise it as changes occur. Minnesota West's ID also works with the MnSCU D2L team to solve platform functionality issues and alert faculty when problems occur and when and how they are resolved.

The ID also works with faculty to develop and implement new courses and to test new software offerings that may be suitable for the campuses. For example, the ID recently worked with the distance librarian to make streaming instructional videos available to enhance online courses. Research and advanced security tools have also been implemented under the ID's leadership.

When instructors who are unfamiliar with available software describe their needs, the ID seeks out new programs to meet them. The ID tests new software programs and recommends them to instructors when appropriate. The ID also works with CTL leaders to respond to requests for faculty training.

Finally, the ID advises faculty of outside teaching opportunities and conferences that are designed to improve effectiveness or advance pedagogical innovation. The ID also identifies and disseminates articles that relate to teaching, technology, and other relevant issues. The ID offers short courses on teaching online, using D2L, and fine-tuning teaching strategies during the summer and through the academic year.

Note: In fall semester 2010, the current ID took a leave of absence from the position to serve as an interim administrator. She continues to perform many of the same functions, but not all of them. The college commitment to the position is expected to return to normal levels after the interim position is permanently filled.

Smarthinking

Smarthinking® is a 24-hour online tutoring service available to all Minnesota West students from any computer with internet access. It provides real-time or timely help with accounting, chemistry, economics, math, physics, Spanish, statistics, and writing.

Smarthinking® Usage	
Year	Hours Used
2005-06	345
2006-07	822
2007-08	756
2008-09	686
2009-10	858

Students access Smarthinking “e-structors” by linking to Smarthinking® at Minnesota West’s LARC web page. Smarthinking services also include an online writing lab that allows students to submit drafts of writing assignments for revision assistance and receive feedback within 24 hours. Hours of access to the service have ranged from 345 hours in the first year (FY06) to a peak of 858 hours in FY10.

The Smarthinking service is supported by Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act funds and purchased hours can be carried over from year to year. The college has purchased “buy-two-get-one-free” hours through MnOnline, although the maximum number of hours that are available at that price varies from year to year. MnSCU and MnOnline also provide some hours to the college each year, and until FY10, additional hours were available from statewide reserves.

In FY10, the number of Smarthinking hours purchased for the college was inadequate to meet student demand. A change that adversely affected the program that year was that the Smarthinking charges to review essays rose from 35 minutes to 40 minutes. When the Perkins funds ran out, LARC staff found other funds to support the program to the end of spring semester, but the service was not funded for May term and the first half of the summer

session. Minnesota West writing students submitted 729 essays from July 2009 to early March 2010, using 545 Smarthinking hours. That compared to 394 essays from July 2008 to June 2009.

Student Organizations

Several extra-curricular organizations are available to help students learn at Minnesota West.

Minnesota Community and Technical College Student Association (MCTCSA) is the statewide student political body. The state organization is affiliated with campus associations usually called Student Senates. Each Minnesota West campus has its own Student Senate. No changes in MCTCSA can occur without approval of the local Senates. Representatives of each campus Senate are invited to attend a statewide MCTCSA General Assembly held each fall and spring semester.

Alpha Nu Kappa is the Minnesota West chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, a national honor fraternity for two-year liberal arts students. Membership is based on a minimum 15 hours of earned credit with a 3.5 or higher grade point average and by invitation. PTK sponsors several activities throughout the year and participates in regional and national PTK activities as well.

Health Occupation Students of America (HSOA) is a national organization that promotes leadership, career skills, and interaction with workers already established in health careers. Students in Medical Laboratory Technician, Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy, and other health-related programs meet on campuses, attend conferences, and participate in state and local competitions.

Business Professionals of America (BPA) is a national organization for students pursuing careers in business, computing, or office work. BPA's goals are to promote student leadership,

develop technical competencies, promote understanding of business principles, and improve student poise, sociability, attitudes, and tact. BPA students attend conferences and compete in local, state, and national competitions and elections.

Skills USA is a professional organization for students in trade, industrial, technical, or health programs. Members exchange ideas, discuss problems, and cooperate with each other to achieve common goals. Skills USA offers opportunities for students to gain recognition for themselves, their programs, and the college through competitions in skill areas and contests in leadership development.

Fluid Power Technology Club – Iota Chapter of the International Fluid Power Society is active on the Granite Falls campus. The club participates each year in Fluid Power Society state competition and has achieved 28 of the top 65 places since 1998. Other Granite Falls campus organizations are the Computer Support Technology Club and the Child Development Program Club.

Student Ambassadors is a leadership organization for students who have high academic achievement and are nominated by staff or faculty members. Selected students go through an interview process for inclusion in the group. Ambassadors serve the college by assisting at special events, contributing to community projects, assisting with recruiting, and conducting college tours. Ambassadors meet regularly to develop leadership skills, listen to guest speakers, and tour other facilities within the community. The group was not fully active in 2010 because its advisor was out on maternity leave, but it returned to normal in 2011.

Musical groups include college chorale and pops singers. Instrumental musicians can earn college credit for participating in a jazz band or municipal band groups.

Intramural athletics are offered for both men and women on all campuses at Minnesota West. Students in any sport that generates sufficient interest and meets with college approval can be accommodated.

Theater productions during fall and spring semesters offer students, faculty, staff, and friends of the college opportunities to participate in dramatic performances or behind the scenes activities. In the past, the Worthington campus theater department has cooperated with the community's Grassroots Theater to stage popular productions.

Computer Services

Minnesota West provides an array of technology-based tools to administrators, faculty, students, and staff. Each administrator, instructor and staff member has access to a computer work station, current software, email, and, in many cases, portable computing equipment. The standard equipment replacement cycle is every three years for full-time employees. Adjunct and part-time staff can expect basic equipment replacement every fourth year. This planned replacement is minimal and equipment is often replaced more frequently than scheduled.

Student access to computer resources is evaluated annually on each campus. Computer resources are centralized at campus LARC facilities to provide security for equipment and support for students. Hours of access are determined by student needs and staffing resources at each location. Two Worthington campus classrooms equipped with computers are used for computer science, graphic design, math, and writing instruction.

Wireless internet access is provided at each campus. The open wireless systems allow internet access to students with personal computers and other wireless devices.

College classrooms are equipped with technologically advanced equipment to enhance instruction. The standard configuration includes a flat-screen television or video projector, an electronic document camera, a DVD/VHS player, and a computer connection for display. Audio enhancements are installed in rooms that require them. Access to Internet resources is provided in each room either via wireless connectivity or a hardwire connection.

Student email accounts are provided for college communications. In the fall 2009, Minnesota West selected Microsoft Live as the student email platform. Students who use the system have additional advantages of web-based storage, mobile device connectivity, and account portability. When students complete their work at Minnesota West, they can take their information and accounts with them to other campuses or work locations.

An external evaluation of information technology resources at Minnesota West was conducted by the InSight Solutions Group (ISSG) in the fall of 2009. The evaluation assessed overall IT effectiveness and efficiency, staff competencies, customer service priorities, costs, and risk mitigation abilities. IT strengths ISSG identified included a very “lean” operating infrastructure, an innovative and hardworking staff, a generally efficient operating process, and acceptable levels of customer service. Areas of concern included the informal nature of project tracking and completion and change management, including communication and staff preparedness.

ISSG recommended that the college institute more formal process for project and issue resolution. In response, the college instituted an online “Ask IT” website. Faculty and staff can access a database of information, and, if they can’t find what they want, they can submit a work “ticket,” which is then routed to the appropriate staff person to resolve the issue. IT

acknowledges the request with a note advising the sender when to expect resolution. After the addressing the issue, IT sends a follow-up message to confirm that the problem is solved.

To assess staff capabilities and skill level, the college conducted a 360 degree review of the IT staff, including personal evaluations and a client's perception of each IT staff person's technical and customer service skills. The reviews were used to help staff develop personalized plans for skills improvement.

Steps to improve communication included increasing the number of face-to-face meetings with faculty and staff, posting bulletins in email and on the college website, and more frequent and detailed IT staff meetings and visits to campuses and locations.

Library and Academic Resource Centers (LARCs)

In spring 2005, Minnesota West transitioned to a system of one-stop academic support services known as campus Library and Academic Resource Centers (LARCs). Each campus expanded its library space to include computer labs, tutoring centers, test proctors, and career center services. The computer Help Desk for online services was also established at the Worthington campus LARC. The Help Desk provides support for student email accounts, distance learning, and the MnSCU e-services student portal. The shift in resources was completed in time for the start of the 2006 academic year.

Minnesota West Library Mission

Minnesota West libraries strive to be a place where individuals and groups have access to information for exploring, learning, and teaching. Each library will establish a viable collection of resources, provide access to networks and online information, instruct in the use, interpretation, and evaluation of information, and be staffed by professional librarians and qualified technical support.

The Worthington campus library was started in 1936 when Worthington Junior College opened its doors. The libraries at Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, and Pipestone were established in 1993, some 30 years after the colleges were started. Before 1993, specialized resource materials were maintained for each technical program on the campuses. Since 1993, collections of resources for technical programs have continued to expand while resources for liberal arts programs have been added at each campus library. Sharing among the LARCs is common and encouraged. Requests for materials are submitted through an online catalog and sent via U.S. mail.

Each campus librarian purchases materials for campus libraries. To better facilitate college-wide collection development, the librarians wrote a *Collection Development Policy* in 2006 and updated it both in 2008 and 2009. The policy is in the resource room. Collaborative collection development has become increasingly important for the college as more money is allocated each year to online resources to support both on-ground and online student

populations. Since 2007, the LARCs have increased purchases of electronic resources such as e-books and streaming videos.

Minnesota West uses MnPALS for its online catalog, circulation, interlibrary loan, and acquisitions services. MnPALS is an ExLibris product supported by state appropriations. The college libraries converted to this system in 2004-05. The transition was a major training challenge for library staff and faculty due to the complex nature of the system and the need to maintain five campus libraries within the system.

In addition to print resources at each LARC, increased emphasis has been focused on acquisitions of online resources. The State of Minnesota provides free access to a number of databases, but they are subject to change with RFP processes. During the most recent process, MINITEX secured access to 46 databases for all public libraries, school libraries, and public institutions of higher learning. Of those 46 databases, the Minnesota West library web page provides links to 22 of them. The libraries also subscribe to eight subject-specific databases targeted to programs and courses. Annual monitoring of statistics and faculty input helps determine which services should be retained or replaced each year.

Minnesota West also takes advantage of Open Source software developed at the University of Minnesota. Subject resource pages, known as “Research QuickStart” pages, support student learning via a server maintained at St. Cloud State University. By November 2010, the list of “Research QuickStart” pages had reached 42, with topics from Agriculture to Wind Energy.

Students and faculty can access library resources from off campus via a proxy server at any time during the day or night. Access to the server requires the barcode number that is

printed on college identification cards. Students who take only online courses are informed in a print letter, in the Introduction to Online Learning course, and on the library website to contact a librarian to obtain a barcode number.

LARC instruction sessions are conducted by librarians at the request of instructors. The Research QuickStart pages are usually the starting point for library presentations. Instruction sessions are conducted face-to-face, over ITV, and online. Librarians work with instructors to determine student needs and modify their presentations accordingly.

Each campus determines LARC hours of operation to meet the needs of its students and the limitations of its available staff. Typically, open hours at the technical campuses are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fridays. The Worthington campus LARC has open hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays during fall and spring semesters. LARC hours are reduced for May term, winter term, and summer sessions. LARC hours have fluctuated over the years as campus needs and course offerings have changed. For example, when ITV classes were scheduled in the evenings, the LARCs stayed open to provide technical assistance and accommodate students and faculty involved in those classes.

The administration of the LARCs is the responsibility of the college Provost. When the transition from campus libraries to LARCs occurred, a LARC director position was created to oversee LARC operations, but this position was eliminated in 2009 due to budget cuts. The college's three librarians are now assigned to campuses and work together to provide LARC resources and services. One librarian is always at Worthington, one librarian divides hours

between Worthington and Jackson, and the third covers remaining campuses and distance learning services.

Campus librarians provide reference and bibliographic instruction and work together to maintain and develop library collections. Increasing demands for materials in electronic formats combined with flat budgets have necessitated increased collaboration in all areas of LARC operations.

When LARCs were created, library staff positions were redefined to reflect the variety of services available. Library technicians assist in daily library operations but also help with tutoring, test proctoring, and career services. Support workers are all part-time employees who have honed their skills on the job rather than through formal library training.

Early in LARC development, monthly team meetings occurred to identify and resolve issues in the LARCs. Now, less frequent face-to-face meetings occur and email and the telephone are the primary vehicles of staff communication. Librarians and support staff are encouraged to participate in staff development activities and on campus and college-wide committees.

Since the LARC director's position was eliminated, librarians work together to submit a library budget to the Provost each spring. Budgets have remained flat through the past several years, except for a five percent decrease in funding during FY09. Once the budgets are approved, acquisitions librarians are responsible for resource purchases.

Individual and small group tutoring services are also available in Minnesota West LARCs. Tutoring is provided by both LARC staff and peer tutors. Since 2004, online tutoring has been available to students through Smarthinking.

Each campus LARC also establishes hours for test proctoring based on staffing and student needs. Students can make appointments and arrange with instructors to make up tests during those hours. Students with documented disabilities can also schedule tests at alternative times. If necessary, LARC staff will also provide special accommodations, such as reading tests to students with documented disabilities.

When the LARCs first opened, Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council agreed to place a Career Center staff person on each campus one day per week to help students develop resumes or find jobs in the community. That service was continually adjusted as needs changed. On some campuses, the Career Center visits were increased to two days per week and on others the visits were reduced to two days per month. In FY09, the arrangement with the Career Center ended altogether. Career Services continue, however, through a link on the LARC website where local employers are encouraged to post job openings. LARC staff members also assist students with resume building and cover letter writing.

The LARC Help Desk is designed to help students who have trouble with logins, D2L access, Smarthinking, or other technology related questions. The help desk is housed at the Worthington LARC and is the primary responsibility of one staff person, but all LARC personnel are able to assist with Help Desk calls. In 2004, Minnesota West purchased access to a customer relationship FAQ management tool called [“Ask Jay”](#) that has greatly reduced the number of Help Desk calls. Students can search the database for information and submit questions if they can't find the answers they seek. In FY10, an online chat component was added as an alternate mode of contacting the help desk. In response to the 2009 IT audit, LARC workers continue to clarify and streamline help desk functions and services.

Strengths

1. The assessment process at Minnesota is well established and well defined and is an integral part of the campus culture.

2. Minnesota West LARCs provide incomparable support services to students and staff. They do so with flexible scheduling and sagacious use of limited staff and financial resources.

3. Minnesota West provides a distance librarian and distance support services for students.

4. Minnesota West provides an instructional designer to assist both new and established faculty improve their courses.

Challenges

1. Some instructors are hesitant to exploit the full potential of new digital media that could enhance online course offerings, even though the college has made the equipment, resources, and training available.

Chapter 6

Criterion IV: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

“The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.”

Institutions of higher learning in Minnesota, and Minnesota West in particular, have historically promoted lifelong learning not only for students, faculty, and staff, but also for the communities the institutions serve. The [MnSCU Mission](#) states that the system will offer “higher education that meets the personal and career goals of a wide range of individual learners, enhances the quality of life for all Minnesotans, and sustains vibrant economies throughout the state.”

[Minnesota West’s mission](#) reflects and reinforces that mandate by promising to provide for “the varied educational needs of our diverse populations in affordable, accessible and supportive settings.” Minnesota West’s mission goals three through seven address this promise specifically:

3. To provide learning opportunities for people of varying ages, backgrounds, and abilities with particular focus and commitment to retraining and lifelong learning.
4. To provide continuing education, management education, and customized training for professions, businesses, and industries.

5. To provide facilities for programs, activities, conferences, teleconferences and courses to meet community needs.
6. To provide extended educational opportunities by means of flexible scheduling and delivery.
7. To provide effective and efficient use of resources through partnerships with agencies, other educational institutions, businesses and industries.

Core Component 4a – Minnesota West demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administration, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

MnSCU offers and supports special services for learners of all ages and backgrounds. For example, the Alliss Grant is available for adults who desire to start college or return to college. MnSCU also supports customized training and certificate and degree programs at all 32 of its colleges to help adult learners get the training or retraining they need to stay or get back into the workforce quickly. Minnesota West participates fully in these programs.

Professional Development plans

Minnesota West understands that excellence is not static but must be tended and nurtured in an environment of continuous improvement. Professional development and training are the focus of Goal 8 of the college mission: “To provide continuous improvement processes via assessment, evaluation, and upgrading of programs and services, and to support the professional development of college personnel.” Administrators, supervisors, and

employees work together to set professional development goals and plan training or education strategies to achieve them.

At an all-college administration day at Pipestone campus in August 2010, faculty, staff and administrators were asked to respond to this question: “How can your professional development plan help you fulfill your role in the mission?” All of the nearly 80 responses to that question are available in the resource room, but some typical answers included:

“By completing my PD plan, I will broaden my knowledge base and the skills needed to work with varied student populations.”

“By increasing my knowledge by taking classes, I can learn new skills and implement them in my teaching.”

“Continuing to educate myself keeps me current and invigorates my teaching. It has the added benefit of creating empathy for student needs.”

“Having a plan keeps me focused on constantly watching for changes I need to make.”

“Learning new techniques at conferences can help me improve my teaching, which will enhance the experience of my students, and then they can tell about their experience (positive feedback).”

“My professional development plan will help me to continue my role as a librarian to provide better educational experiences for our students, be more knowledgeable in my use of technology, and become more confident in my ‘teaching’ others the use of our tools available to them.”

Faculty

Minnesota West hires and retains fully credentialed instructors who stay current in their disciplines and skills. It does that by completing frequent and thorough faculty evaluations, encouraging on-campus learning opportunities, and providing financial and institutional support for continuing education and professional development.

All new instructors at Minnesota West must have their education and experience evaluated according to MnSCU faculty credentialing guidelines. Faculty qualify for assigned fields and are placed on the salary schedule according to their education and experience, but they also must complete up to four teaching and learning competency courses within the first three years of employment, which is the probationary period for new instructors.

Each Minnesota West instructor must complete and submit a professional development plan to the appropriate academic administrator and review it with the administrator at least once every three years. New instructors must submit and review their plans every year for their first three years. After that, instructors must update their plans at least once every three years. Instructors submit their plans on forms approved by the Minnesota State College Faculty. Instructors' professional development plans must establish a minimum of six specific objectives and outcomes with respect to the following factors:

- A. Content knowledge and skill in the discipline/program
- B. Teaching methods and instructional strategies
- C. Related work experience
- D. Study appropriate to the higher education environment
- E. Service to the college and greater community

F. Other components, as appropriate

Administrators review the professional development plans with instructors along with other documents during faculty evaluations. Administrators work with instructors to plan further education or training.

Administrators and Staff

Every administrator and staff member is evaluated annually at Minnesota West. The evaluating administrator solicits information from others who work extensively with the employee being evaluated. The goal of each evaluation is to assess performance, review position descriptions, and plan for future education and career development. The college's [Classified Staff Development Policy](#) specifies that "staff development should promote the wholeness of the individual mentally, emotionally, physically, and academically. By fostering growth in these areas, the clientele of the college will be better served." The [Unclassified Staff Development Policy 4.17](#) applies to members of MAPE, MMA, and excluded administrators.

The college Provost and a delegation of administrators attend a chief academic and chief student affairs officer's conference and workshop twice each academic year. The event is designed to enable administrators to present and discuss new policies, practices, and student issues.

All college employees are also encouraged to attend campus Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) events. Classified workers are urged to attend a state-wide annual conference titled "Energizing Our Front-Line Network," sponsored by AFSCE, MAPE, and MnSCU.

Development Funds

Professional and staff development funds are available for all Minnesota West employees.

The current MSCF contract specifies that each college will allocate \$250 in faculty development funds for each full-time equivalent instructor during the preceding academic year. Provisions for carrying over unused funds are also included in the contract. Each local chapter determines how the money is allocated and establishes rules for its use. Instructors at Minnesota West can use development funds to pay for learning materials, travel, housing, meals, or registration for professional conferences, workshops, meetings, or memberships.

In FY 2009, Minnesota West employed 85 classified and 52 unclassified staff. Each campus budgets funds for classified and unclassified staff to use for credit-bearing and clock-hour classes, seminars, workshops, books, and other continuing education activities.

Tuition waivers

Tuition waiver benefits are also available for college employees attending Minnesota West or other MnSCU colleges. The number of credits available is established by negotiated labor agreements. If space is available, full-time faculty may use tuition waivers for up to 24 credits per year at any of the 32 MnSCU colleges or universities. If instructors choose not to use this benefit, their spouses or dependents are eligible to apply the tuition waiver for up to 16 credits per year at any MnSCU two-year college. Union contracts for both classified and unclassified employees offer tuition waiver funding for up to 20 credits annually for the employee or 16 credits for employee dependents. Unlike the waiver for full-time faculty, the tuition waiver for classified and unclassified workers can only be used at other two-year institutions in the MnSCU system. Tuition waivers are processed at the central business office.

In FY10, 11 staff members took advantage of the waiver to obtain a total 83 credits. Since the program started, 34 instructors have used the waiver to earn 261 credits.

Development funds for classified staff are managed by a committee of peers who receive, review, and approve applications for funds. The funding limit is \$200 initially, but additional funds may be obtained after May 15 of each year if the fund still has a balance. In FY09, \$9,200 was budgeted for classified staff development. That amount was reduced to \$6,700 in mid-year because of unallotment of state funds. Twenty classified workers used a total of \$2,601.97 in FY09.

Funds for unclassified staff development are managed by the Chief Human Resources Director, who reviews requests for funds and makes final decisions regarding disbursements. The individual funding limit is \$500 per period initially, but workers may apply for remaining funds after May 15. In FY09, \$5,000 was budgeted for unclassified workers. That amount was later decreased to \$4,000 as a result of unallotment. Eleven unclassified workers accessed the funds in FY09, requesting a total of \$1,813.34.

Supervisory Core Training

The Science of Supervision and The Art of Supervision are two courses in a five-day program to give supervisors information regarding the rules, processes, and procedures needed to operate effectively within the MnSCU system. Minnesota West requires new supervisors to attend this program within the first year of employment to help them learn or polish effective management skills and strategies. Topics are presented by MnSCU's Office of the Chancellor staff and include workers compensation, ethics, data practices, safety issues, leave policies, and contract provisions.

Center for Teaching and Learning

Minnesota West's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is designed to support and empower faculty to improve their instructional effectiveness and students' academic achievement. One CTL coordinator oversees activities for the entire college. Each campus has two campus CTL coordinators to facilitate campus activities.

CTL leaders work with division chairs and academic administrators (see Chapter 5, Criterion III) to set yearly goals for training intended to improve teaching and learning. Division chairs summarize training requests from faculty assessment forms and pass them on to local CTL leaders. Non-mandatory workshops and training events are then offered throughout the academic year and summers for faculty and staff who seek further instruction. One all-college development day during spring semester is devoted entirely to CTL activities. Faculty and staff on all campuses credit CTL activities for helping them work collaboratively with and learn from colleagues on their campuses and college wide. Some of their specific comments are included in Chapter 5, Criterion III.

College-wide CTL training goals focus on three main areas: 1) teaching and pedagogy, 2) technology/technical training, and 3) cross-campus information sharing. [CTL yearly reports](#) are posted on the college website.

Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical leaves offer faculty opportunities to obtain additional education, training, or experience to make them better instructors. Minnesota West administrators encourage qualified faculty to make use of sabbatical leave opportunities. Full-time faculty who have served continuously for the equivalent of six or more full-time academic years at a MnSCU two-year college with an aggregate of 12 semesters of actual service are eligible. Each eligible instructor submits a sabbatical plan for approval by the college President during fall semester the year before the planned sabbatical leave. After the sabbatical experience, the instructor submits a written report to the President explaining how he or she met the objectives.

Since the last HLC comprehensive visit, 37 Minnesota West instructors have taken sabbatical leave. At least two but no more than six instructors have participated each year. Historically, far more liberal arts instructors than technical faculty have participated in the program, but in recent years three technical instructors have taken sabbatical leave.

Awards of Excellence

The College Faculty Awards for Excellence program started in 2005 and continued through 2009, when it was suspended due to budget difficulties. This program was funded by the Office of the Chancellor and provided campus presidents with the means to reward faculty initiatives that went “above and beyond the normal requirements of the individual’s position(s)” and that addressed outcomes for student learning. Some 53 Awards of Excellence were granted to Minnesota West faculty over the four-year period. Faculty developed many projects that now continue with regular college funding, including Health Watch and Mental Health Watch links on the college website and Fast Track, a supplemental remedial course for students who don’t quite achieve minimum Accuplacer cut scores for college-level work.

Professional Conferences

Many Minnesota West instructors, administrators, and staff attend professional conferences each year to improve their teaching, widen their knowledge base, or enhance their skills. Conferences also help workers establish and maintain support networks in their respective disciplines or positions. The list below represents some of the conferences and meetings that Minnesota West workers attend annually or have attended recently. The list reveals that more technical instructors than liberal arts instructors attend professional conferences each year, and only a few members of the college staff participate in professional conferences.

- Affirmative Action Conference, Washburn University – five instructors
- Bio Tech Conference, University of California-Berkeley – one instructor in 2009
- Bioscience Conference – four to five instructors and administrators annually
- Desire2Learn conference – five instructors annually
- Diversity and Multiculturalism Conference – five faculty and administrators in 2009
- Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting – two to five instructors and administrators annually
- International Builders Show – one or two instructors annually
- League of Innovations – 15 instructors and administrators
- Math Educators Conference – four or five instructors annually
- Minnesota Association of Financial Aid Administrators – one or two staff and administrators annually
- Minnesota Dental Educators Conference – two instructors annually
- Minnesota Electrical Instructors Conference – four instructors annually
- Minnesota Library Association Conference – one or two faculty annually
- Minnesota Nursing and Allied Health Educator Annual Conference – six instructors and administrators annually

- National Basketball Coaching Association Annual Conference – one instructor annually
- National Conference of American Wind – four instructors, administrators, and staff
- National Conference of Marketing and Public Relations – two administrators
- National Cosmetology Association Instructor Training – one or two instructors annually
- National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks Workshops for Community College Faculty – eight instructors in recent years
- National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission Annual Conference – four instructors and administrators
- Realizing Student Potential/iTeach conference – eight to ten instructors annually
- Regional Conference of Marketing and Public Relations – one administrator annually
- Research Institute for Symbolic Computation (affiliated with the Johannes Kepler University in Linz, Austria) – one instructor
- State Agriculture Education Conference – 14 instructors
- State Conference of Marketing, Recruitment, and Retention – two staff and administrators annually
- The Teaching Professor – eight faculty in recent years
- Tri-State Bookstore Conference – one or two staff annually
- Tri-College NEW Leadership Institute – one college marketer in June 2010
- Western History Conference (Univ. of Missouri-St. Louis), Lake Tahoe, Nevada – one instructor in October 2010.
- Tutoring Summit – one to three faculty annually
- Women Leadership Conference, Sioux Falls, SD – eight staff members in recent years

NEH summer workshops

Over the past 50 years, southwestern Minnesota has transformed from a nearly homogenous European-American region to a salad bowl of cultures from all over the world. For

example, in the Worthington public school district, more than 52 percent of students are of Hispanic, African, or Asian descent. The Worthington community of nearly 13,000 citizens supports more than 35 minority-owned businesses, several ethnically diverse church congregations, a Buddhist temple, and, until it closed in spring 2010, a dual-language immersion charter school. Nobles County, of which Worthington is the county seat, supports a very active Integration Collaborative organization to deal with this phenomenal mingling of diverse cultures.

Minnesota West's student demographics reflect these changes in population. Ethnic minorities have a significant presence in all college programs, including technical programs, liberal arts, performing arts, medical skills training, nursing, law enforcement, and athletics.

Minnesota West instructors have been eager participants in the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer Landmarks of American History and Culture summer programs for community college instructors. Eight Minnesota West faculty members have attended NEH workshops in the past six years, and some have attended more than one.

The result of one of the Landmark workshops, titled "From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike," has been that the college has been able to entice veterans of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi to visit the Worthington campus during each February (Black History Month) to share their stories. Some notable speakers have included Dr. Leslie McLemore, the youngest participant in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964; Chuck McDew, an original member of Mississippi's Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); Hollis Watkins, a member of the Mississippi SNCC while he was just a high school student, and who is now executive director of Southern ECHO; L.C.

Dorsey, a retired professor from Mississippi Valley State University who was a sharecropper's daughter and an activist in Mississippi's Head Start program; Dr. Rickey Hill, who grew up in Bogalusa, Louisiana, was a member of the Black Stone Society at Southern University in the early 1970s, and is now dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, MS; and the Rev. Samuel "Billy" Kyles, the Mississippi-born Memphis minister who was standing with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis when Dr. King was assassinated in April 1968. Whenever they visit, these venerable guests conduct a public forum at noon and then visit "The Turbulent Sixties" class in the afternoon.

Leadership Development

The course titled 7 Habits of Highly Effective People was offered to 23 business office, financial aid, and Human Resources staff members in June 2005. The course was facilitated by Winona State University. The focus was on living effectively, building trust, building support systems, shedding unproductive habits, creating teams, and acquiring other habits that lead to success. The course was repeated in June 2006 to 21 members of the student services staff, and a review course was also offered to those who took the course in 2005.

Louma Leadership Academy is an 18-month leadership development program designed to nurture MnSCU leaders. Participants may include deans, directors, managers, financial aid officers, faculty, and staff who aspire to leadership positions. The course is sponsored by the MnSCU Office of the Chancellor and facilitated by The Academy of Mesa, Arizona. Minnesota West has sent seven employees to the Louma Leadership Academy since it began in 2004.

Participants have included two faculty, one administrator, two middle managers, and two MAPE employees.

Student Leadership

Minnesota West offers a Leadership Academy to Minnesota West students interested in becoming student leaders. This annual retreat is intended to help 12-15 students understand and build leadership skills in their academic, work, community and private lives. Participants are chosen for the academy through nominations from faculty and staff. After an academic background check, potential participants receive an invitation, an application form, and a short essay assignment. At the academy, students work in small groups to develop projects that they can incorporate at the college and in their personal lives.

MnSCU recently developed [Mindquest Academy](#), a free online “bridge program” for students who are finishing their GED or Adult Diploma and plan to continue into college courses. The Mindquest College Prep course is designed to help students understand what to expect in college as well as help them choose a career. It includes instruction on strategies for succeeding in college by improving listening, note-taking, and testing skills and by “planning study time, setting goals, building motivation, dealing with procrastination, and improving health and wellness.”

Annual Awards Banquets

Each spring, Minnesota West invites outstanding students and their families and friends to awards banquets on each campus. Students are recognized for earning places on deans’ lists and achieving special distinctions in specific disciplines. Speakers at the events are often successful Minnesota West alumni or recent retirees from the faculty, staff, or administration.

Commencement Ceremonies

At the end of spring semester each year, Minnesota West celebrates its graduates at formal commencement ceremonies held at each of the five college campuses. Included in each event is a commencement address by a retiring instructor or administrator or an academically skilled graduating student, usually an officer in Student Senate or other student organization. Minnesota West instructors who have completed advanced degrees during the year are also recognized at the events.

Approximately 600 students graduate each spring. Commencement ceremonies at the Worthington campus are webcast for the benefit of students and families unable to attend the event.

Kids College

Each summer, Minnesota West's Worthington campus invites middle school students to a one-week Kids College. The program is the result of a partnership between Minnesota West and Nobles County Integration Collaborative. Courses include Building Rockets, Connecting across Cultures, Dairy, Global Positioning Systems, Green Technologies, Graphic Design, Improvisation, Mythology, Photography, Pneumatics, Web Development, Wireless Technology, and many others. Since the program was initiated in 2003, more than 900 students have enrolled in 256 different classes. In 2006, Kids College was one of five finalists for a Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Award for Campus-Community Collaboration. A similar program was started at the Canby campus in summer 2010.

Each summer, Minnesota West also works with local school districts to bring students of all age groups to the campuses for special events. Each event is at least partially designed to

interest young people in attending college and to help them begin to consider their long-term academic goals.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West demonstrates strong commitment to professional development for administration, faculty, and staff, and it backs that commitment with designated financial resources, recognition of individual achievements, in-house training, and sabbatical leaves.

2. Minnesota West employees show their commitment to lifelong learning by attending workshops, enrolling in college courses, participating in sabbatical leaves, and pursuing advanced degrees.

3. Minnesota West provides its students ample opportunities to expand their education and experience beyond the classroom.

4. Minnesota West encourages the development of future leaders by providing leadership opportunities and training for current students and through Kids College, a program for middle school students. The college celebrates that leadership at annual student awards ceremonies.

Challenges

1. In a difficult economy, threats of funding cuts for professional development, sabbatical leaves, and tuition waivers are a constant concern.

2. Technical instructors are sometimes reluctant to take sabbatical leave because they fear their programs will be weakened by their absence.

Core Component 4b – Minnesota West demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational program

General Education

Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

The [Minnesota Transfer Curriculum](#) (MTC), also described in Chapter 5, Criterion III, was developed in the mid-nineties to standardize general education curricula in public institutions of higher learning throughout Minnesota. Its original application was for AA degrees, but since then it has served as a starting framework for designing general education components of AS and AAS degrees, diplomas, and certificates. The MTC specifies learning objectives in ten major general education areas: communications, critical thinking, natural sciences, mathematical/logical reasoning, history and the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and fine arts, human diversity, global perspective, ethical and civic responsibility, and people and the environment. Each AA degree must include successful completion of at least 40 credits from the MTC. Each AS degree must include 30 MTC credits, and each AAS degree must include 25 percent general education courses, with classes from at least three major subcategories of the MTC.

Co-Curricular Activities

Although open-door institutions such as Minnesota West continually deal with underprepared students, the college also strives to challenge and encourage academically gifted students.

Alpha Nu Kappa, a chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the national community college honors society, began on the Worthington campus some years ago, but the opportunity to participate in PTK was expanded to students on all campuses in 2008. In that year, an administrator, a student services leader, and the PTK advisor participated in the Phi Theta Kappa Leadership Development Certificate Program. The program's purpose was to provide instruction on how to develop student leaders on campus. After attending a three-day seminar, all three participants were certified in the PTK Leadership Development Program.

At the CTL duty day in February 2009, the PTK coordinator and a student services advisor presented a breakout session titled "Developing and Integrating Student Leadership." The purpose of the session was to encourage faculty to integrate development of student leadership into their academic philosophies. Since then, PTK student members have taken over the goal setting for the chapter. Officers and members volunteer to research topics approved by PTK, set goals to disseminate information, and implement projects that have positive impact on Minnesota West and the region.

Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) is a national organization that promotes leadership, career skills, and interaction with individuals in various health occupations. Minnesota West Students in the Medical Laboratory Technician, Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy, and other health-related programs meet locally, attend conferences, and participate in state and national competitions.

Business Professionals of America (BPA) is a professional organization for students in business and office programs. Its purposes are to promote student leadership, develop vocational competencies, promote understanding of business principles, and improve student poise, sociability, attitude, and tact. Members also participate in state and national competitions, conferences, and elections.

Skills USA is a professional organization for students in trade, industrial, technical, or health programs. Members exchange ideas, discuss problems, and work together to reach common goals. Skills USA offers students opportunities to gain recognition for themselves, their programs, and the college through competitions in occupational skill areas and leadership development.

Post Secondary Agricultural Students (PAS) organized on campus in the late 1990s. Some 30 to 35 agriculture students participate in PAS each year. Locally, the group sponsors trap shoots, archery contests, and annual pork lunches. During the winter, members compete at state level contests involving livestock, crops, soil science, dairy, equine, and horticulture as well as a College Bowl competition. PAS members attend career planning workshops and tour local businesses and industries. Each year, a group of members qualify for the National PAS Conference where they continue their competitions, attend workshops and take tours. Recent national conferences have been in Idaho, Missouri, and Pennsylvania.

Future Wind Techs of America is a relatively new student organization at the Canby Campus. The FWTA mission statement proclaims that

The Wind Energy student club is committed to promote and enhance student education through exposure to wind energy related activities. To stimulate

students to be more effective communicators so that they can be the sought after employees the industry is looking for. To provide a broader view of what the wind energy industry has to offer and to create long lasting relationships among like-minded individuals.

Students at Canby also participate in Skills USA, which is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry leaders working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. Skills USA helps all students excel in training programs and future technical, skilled and service careers, including health occupations.

Customized Training/Continuing Education

The acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are also integral to Minnesota West's Customized Training/Continuing Education (CT/CE) programs. Courses and programs offered through CT/CE target workforce development through life-long learning and new skills development. CT/CE coordinators develop and deliver courses and programs to meet industry standards and trade-specific criteria. Courses and programs are approved by appropriate state and national governing boards and associations. In FY09, some 1,100 training sessions involved more than 13,000 students using a variety of effective and efficient delivery systems.

CT/CE courses are taught face-to-face, on ITV, and online. Minnesota West actively seeks and regularly secures specialized training grants to support specialized workforce development for workers and training for employers expanding their workforces and technology. Some of those grants are listed and described more completely in Chapter 4, Criterion II.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West demonstrates its commitment to general education by offering courses to fulfill the requirements of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.
2. Minnesota West demonstrates its commitment to broader educational goals and citizenship through co-curricular activities, customized training, and management programs.
3. Minnesota West shows its commitment to providing students with a broad base of knowledge and skills through its support of a wide range of co-curricular activities.
4. Minnesota West shows its commitment to enhancing the knowledge and skills of the region through its persistent efforts to develop and deliver continuing education programs to constituents of all ages.

Challenges

1. Student participation in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities depends largely on factors beyond the college's control, such as economic conditions, proximity to campuses, and family obligations. Students with jobs, long commutes, and families often don't have time for such activities.
2. The growth of online enrollments decreases the time students spend on campus, which makes attracting and keeping students involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities more challenging than in the past.

Core Component 4c - Minnesota West assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society

Student Right to Know Report

With the help of the registrar and the college researcher, in spring 2010, the Minnesota West provost studied a cohort of 571 full-time students who entered Minnesota West in 2004. All of the students in the cohort were seeking to earn a degree, diploma, or certificate at the college. The cohort represented approximately 20 percent of the full-time students entering college in that year. The purpose of the study was to determine both the graduation rate and transfer-out rate for Minnesota West students after three years. The study showed that the graduation rate for the college was 45 percent, and the transfer out rate was 13 percent. The combined graduation rate and transfer-out rate for the college was 58 percent, compared to a national rate for similar colleges of 41 percent.

The study identified several reasons Minnesota students don't graduate or transfer within three years. Reasons include a high number of entering students who need developmental courses; students who switch from full-time to part time; students who "stop out" for a semester or more because of unforeseen personal, family, or financial issues; and students who take jobs before they graduate.

A number of efforts were initiated in 2007-2008 to increase graduation and transfer rates for Minnesota West students. Among them were the development of the Fast Track course; an increased institutional commitment to provide human and financial resources for tutoring, advising, and mentoring, especially for minority students; the implementation of a Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) for more accurate tracking of student transcripts; and an "early warning system" for faculty to alert advisors that students are struggling in courses. In fall 2010, a second developmental writing course (Engl 0095) was added to the curriculum as

well as a one-credit Freshman Seminar course to help students understand what is expected of them in college. Also in fall 2010, the college employed a part-time retention coordinator to increase success rates for student athletes.

The complete *Student Right to Know Report* is in the resource room.

Program review

To ensure that Minnesota West provides a quality learning environment for its students, a Program Analysis System (PAS) is used to evaluate each educational program the college offers. Measures are both qualitative and quantitative. The PAS evaluates new and existing programs annually to determine educational and cost effectiveness, to develop a two-year action plan, and to assess the effectiveness of previously developed action plans. Records of PAS plans provide an institutional history that administrators consider when making decisions regarding program continuation, expansion, suspension, relocation, or closure. Academic Program Review is outlined in [Minnesota West Education Policy 3.10](#).

Advisory boards

College Advisory Committee Policy 3.35 affirms Minnesota West's commitment to meet employer needs for competent, high-performing employees. Minnesota West graduates must enter the workforce with the technical expertise and job-success skills required by a modern workforce. Advisory boards provide expert guidance and advice for the design, development, implementation, evaluation, maintenance, and revision of technical and liberal arts curricula. Advisory boards also help with recruitment, placement, and financial support of college programs. The college advisory committee policy describes the purpose, characteristics and

roles of advisory boards. The policy includes guidelines for committee membership, selection of officers, activities, terms of service, and recruiting.

When faculty and program leaders are asked how they value and use their advisory boards, they typically say that the advisory boards suggest changes in curriculum. However, some advisory boards also donate funds and equipment, conduct mock interviews for students, help with grant writing, provide scholarships, and help students find jobs after graduation.

Some specific faculty responses on an August 2010 survey included:

“Each of the training areas in Customized Training Services has an industry advisory committee that meets biannually – the directions from the committees are used for programming, training delivery, marketing, etc. In addition, the advisory boards assist with student recruitment.”

“Our board has discussed the 60/120 and recommended which course to eliminate from curriculum to bring MAAS from 64 to 50 credits.”

“[The advisory board] encouraged Spanish classes for nurses; this year, 35+ enrolled.”

“[Advisory boards] are greatly valued. We meet to discuss the program and state regulations involving the EMS program.”

“[Advisory boards] provide industry-specific information; a board member provided information on the ‘Red Flag Rule’ and that is now part of the program.”

Minnesota West currently has 41 program areas represented by advisory boards.

[Advisory Committee Policy 3.35](#) and an [Advisory Board Handbook](#) are posted online.

Industry and Business Survey

Minnesota West assesses the usefulness of CT/CE curricula by administering training assessments and evaluations. Each program includes course-specific evaluations, but training curricula and new program development grow from industry and business needs assessment surveys conducted by Workforce Development Centers that represent employers throughout the region. The surveys identify industry trends, employer satisfaction, and training deficiencies. Results of the surveys are shared with Minnesota West leaders to guide decisions about course and program development.

Management Programs

[Farm Business Management](#) (FBM), [Lamb and Wool](#), and [Small Business Management](#) (SBM) programs are designed and maintained specifically to serve students who are already actively engaged in ownership, operation, and management of a farm operation, a lamb and wool enterprise, or a small business. The programs help develop the students' ability to organize resources to meet specific goals. All three programs encourage students to set goals, identify and evaluate resources, maintain good records, and analyze and interpret information relevant to successful operations. Students in the programs register for approximately 10 credits per year. The FBM curriculum is delivered over a ten-year period; the Lamb and Wool and SBM curricula are delivered over a three-year period.

FBM and SBM partner with lending institutions in nearly every community in the Minnesota West service area. FBM cooperates with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on a variety of projects; one of the most recent projects was to enroll students who have been certified as organic growers in southwestern Minnesota. FBM also works with the Farm Service

Agency to ensure that all students understand the government program options available for their operations.

Minnesota West currently employs nine FBM instructors, two Lamb and Wool instructors, and two SBM instructors to serve a 16-county region. Instructors work with students in classroom settings, small group sessions, and individually. Online courses and field trips are also included in the curriculum.

Management programs can lead to an AS degree in Management and Supervision in Healthcare. Students can earn diplomas in three areas: Small Business Management, Farm Business Management, or Lamb and Wool. Certificates are available in five areas: Supervisory Leadership in Management, Healthcare Supervision and Leadership, Essentials of Farm Business Management, Applications in Farm Business Management, and Advanced Farm Business Management.

The following table shows the number of credits obtained through the three management programs over a six-year period:

Fiscal Year	FBM	SBM	L&W
2004	3,737	2148	672
2005	3,240	637 ⁴	588
2006	3,160	617	565
2007	3,165	540	651
2008	3,390	751	699
2009	3,202	811	672

Survival Spanish

Minnesota West offers Survival Spanish courses through its affiliation with Command Spanish, Inc.® Courses are scheduled during the academic year and summers for students in

⁴ The large decrease from FY04 to FY05 was due to a change involving Customized Training.

programs or occupations such as law enforcement, nursing, and related medical fields. Students in the courses learn basic Spanish phrases and questions necessary to carry out specific procedures in their respective professions. Discussions and outside assignments also involve cross-cultural issues to help build positive relationships between non-Hispanic professionals and staff and people in Hispanic/Spanish-speaking communities.

In the mid-1990s, an administrator and faculty member attended a seminar that qualified Minnesota West to become a licensed and registered provider of Command Spanish, Inc.® programs. Since then, Minnesota West has offered specialized courses to banks, clinics, hospitals, law enforcement agencies, local retail businesses, manufacturers, and other groups. Providing this language and cross-cultural training has improved service, increased workplace safety, and enhanced relations between long-time English-speaking residents and the Spanish-speaking newcomers to the region.

Minnesota West has written several grants to offer Survival Spanish for administrators, teachers, and support staff to its own faculty, administration, and staff on all five campuses. The courses have also been taught at public K-12 school districts in the region. As the demographics of southwestern Minnesota change, Minnesota West continues to lead by providing this essential service.

Student Satisfaction Surveys

During 2007-08, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey was administered to students throughout the college, including online students. Results of the survey revealed the need for increased attention to financial aid services and access to college advising. As a result, both services were modified. Advising services were expanded to include more advisors and to

initiate new activities such as learning contracts and case management, assignments of advisors to students from underserved populations, an early warning system for faculty to inform advisors of grade deficiencies, and joint advising meetings. The review of financial aid services revealed that the director needed a change in student service philosophy, so the new philosophy was adopted throughout the college.

In 2009, the Office of the Chancellor of MnSCU mandated use of the Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) instrument to measure student engagement and satisfaction. The CCSSE survey asks students to assess their college experiences by answering questions regarding how they spend their time; what they feel they have gained from their classes; how they rate their relationships and interactions with faculty, counselors, and peers; the kinds of work they are challenged to complete; and how the college supports their learning. Results of the survey showed that Minnesota West scored near or above the benchmark scores in “Active and Collaborative Learning,” “Student-Faculty Interaction,” and “Support for Learners.” Minnesota West scored a few points lower than the benchmarks in the areas of “Student Effort” and “Academic Challenge.” Some differences were also noted between responses from part-time students and full-time students, with part-time students’ scores lower than full-time students in all areas except “Support for Learners.”

The survey was administered in March and April 2009 in classes randomly selected by CCSSE to ensure and to preserve the integrity of the results. Some 657 students responded to the survey: 111 from Canby, 93 from Granite Falls, 109 from Jackson, 114 from Pipestone, and 230 from Worthington.

The results of the survey were likely skewed by the small sampling and the exclusion of online student participation, but the college is acting on the results nevertheless. Four Minnesota West administrators and one faculty member attended a statewide Student Engagement Institute in Chaska, MN, in March 2010. The purpose of the institute was to develop a plan for addressing the problems revealed in the CCSSE survey. The completed plan was submitted to CCSSE and the MnSCU Office of the Chancellor. A copy is available in the resource room.

A second CCSSE survey was conducted in spring semester 2011.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West deliberately mines information regarding student success and takes proactive measures to remedy issues that the data reveal.

2. Minnesota West advisory boards play a vital role in shaping the curriculum and policies at Minnesota West to keep academic and skills programs current and relevant.

3. Minnesota West has responded to the need for increased communication between long-term residents and recent immigrant groups by offering Survival Spanish to various professional groups throughout the region.

4. Business and student surveys continue to feed college policymakers the data they need to gauge student satisfaction, perceptions, and institutional effectiveness.

Challenges

1. Changing assessment tools from Noel-Levitz to CCSSE forced the college to establish new baseline and trend data.

2. With the college's limited financial resources, dedicating funds to remedy newly identified or perceived deficiencies may be possible only by taking funds away from other programs or existing services. Such reductions may create new deficiencies in subsequent surveys.

Core Component 4d – Minnesota West provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Minnesota West Policies and Procedures

All [Minnesota West policies and procedures](#) are posted on the college website. The student handbook, faculty handbook, program handbooks, and employee handbook are updated regularly. Federal laws applying to all staff and students, including FERPA laws, Cleary Laws, drug and alcohol laws, and financial aid directives, are also in the handbooks.

MnSCU's Office of the Chancellor and the MnSCU Board of Trustees must approve all policies affecting local colleges and campuses. Minnesota West abides by [MnSCU policies](#) and regularly updates local procedures and policies to comply with MnSCU policy changes.

Internships

Nearly 30 Minnesota West programs involve internship opportunities prior to program completion. Administrators and supervisors understand the importance of uniform standards for internships. Policies governing those policies are available in student and faculty handbooks. In FY10, 300 Minnesota West students participated in internships/externships.

Clinicals

Clinical hours are crucial to the education of students in health careers. Clinical experiences allow students to apply knowledge gained in the classroom and laboratory under the supervision of faculty or qualified preceptors. Minnesota West programs involve approximately 70 clinical sites for the surgical tech, radiology tech, medical lab tech, medical assisting, and dental programs. Approximately 80 clinical sites are used for practical nursing and PN mobility programs.

Intellectual Property

Protecting the intellectual property rights of individuals and the institution is a high priority at Minnesota West. Intellectual property rights policies at Minnesota West comply with [MnSCU Policy 3.26 Intellectual Property](#).

Financial Aid

Minnesota West maintains its eligibility for Title IV programs annually by completing the required Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP). The college also monitors its participation agreement as it adds programs of study and makes personnel changes.

[Financial aid](#) in the form of grants, scholarships, student loans, and student employment is available to students based on financial need. The financial aid office provides information to prospective students at parent/teacher meetings at area high schools and with information posted on the college website. The college website also provides links to the FAFSA form and other potential financial aid resources. The website provides contact information for financial aid staff at each campus. Students can also view the status of their financial aid package via

their online student account or get answers to the financial aid questions by using the “Ask Jay” portal on the college website.

[Minnesota West Policy 2.9 Satisfactory Progress Standards](#) requires that “a student must be enrolled in a program leading to a degree or certificate and must be making satisfactory academic progress according to standards and practices of the institution in order to continue to be eligible for the federal programs, state programs, or institutional programs.” Financial aid is disbursed throughout the year, but the majority of students receive payments at the beginning of each semester.

Student information from the central processing system is uploaded daily. From the updates, the college financial aid office reviews new student information and/or student data changes to make appropriate adjustments to a student’s financial records. During an award year, students may have special circumstances that change their financial needs. Job losses, medical problems, or the death of loved ones may cause unforeseen financial hardships. If presented with adequate documentation, the financial aid director can modify data on FAFSAs to reflect such changes and adjust the amount of aid for which students qualify.

The following table indicates the number of students and the types of aid they received in 2009 and 2010.

Type of Reward	2009	2010
Federal Pell Grand	1,059	1,419
MN Grant	902	1,154
SEOG Grant	291	411
Subsidized Loan	1,634	1,465
Unsubsidized Loan	1,775	1,265
Child Care Grant	74	69
Federal Work Study	144	133
State Work Study	100	134
Total FYE	2,088	2,360

A financial aid specialist is available to assist students on each Minnesota West campus. Financial aid specialists work closely with business office and admissions staff to provide effective and efficient service. Policies and programs are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with federal and state policies.

Scholarships

The Minnesota West Foundation is the administrator for most Minnesota West scholarships.

To encourage academically gifted students to attend Minnesota West, in 2005 the college began offering a Presidential Scholarship to new students. The scholarship pays tuition for up to 16 credits per semester for four semesters.

Recipients must meet the following criteria:

1. Must have an ACT composite score of 28 or above
2. Must register for at least 12 credits per semester
3. Must have graduated from high school within three years of application.
4. Must complete and submit the scholarship application and associated material.

The following table shows how the **Presidential Scholarship** has been applied.

Semester	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10
Renewals	4	4	3	3	8	9
New awards	5	4	15	14	3	3

Another popular scholarship available to Minnesota West students is the Academic Scholarship, which contributes \$500 toward tuition costs each semester. Recipients must meet the following criteria:

1. Must have an ACT composite score of at least 26 or a high school GPA of 3.92 or higher on a 4.0 scale
2. Must register for a minimum of 12 credits per semester
3. Must have graduated from high school within three years of application
4. Must complete and submit the scholarship application and associated material.

The table below describes recent **Academic Scholarship** usage:

Semester	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10
Renewals	3	3	7	7	5	4
New Awards	9	8	7	6	2	2

Minnesota West awards five renewable \$500 tuition-only Technical and Professional Scholarships each semester. Recipients must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be pursuing an AA or AS degree
2. Must be accepted into a technical program
3. Must register for a minimum of 12 semester credits in program courses
4. Must submit a resume and letter of application
5. Must complete and submit a scholarship application
6. Must submit an Accuplacer Assessment Program or ACT scores

The table below shows Technical and Professional Scholarship usage:

Semester	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10
Renewals	18	15	37	32	28	28
New Awards	55	52	46	46	18	16

The Returning Adult Student Scholarship is also a \$500 renewable tuition-only scholarship. Eight scholarships are rewarded each semester. Recipients must meet the following criteria:

1. Must have been out of high school or college for more than three years
2. Must register for at least six credits per semester
3. Must submit a resume and letter of application
4. Must complete an Accuplacer Assessment Program
5. Must complete and submit a scholarship application and associated material

The following table shows recent Returning Adult Student Scholarship usage:

Semester	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09	Fall '09	Spring '10
Renewals	2	2	6	6	8	6
New Awards	14	11	9	9	8	6

After 2012, all scholarships will be awarded at the discretion of the Minnesota West Foundation.

Crime Reports

Minnesota West encourages all students and members of the college community to be aware of safety issues on all campuses and locations and on the private property adjacent to the campuses and locations. All are encouraged to prevent or report any illegal or inappropriate activities that they witness or experience.

Pursuant to the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act, Minnesota West monitors criminal activity and publishes an annual [Campus Security and Fire Safety Annual Report](#). The report includes a three-year statistical history of crime data for each campus, off-campus adjacent property, or facilities owned or used by Minnesota West. The college informs prospective students and parents, current students and parents, current employees and prospective employees of the availability of the *Campus Security and Fire Safety Annual Report* by October 1 of each year. The report is a single document separate from but linked to the college website. A printed version of the report is available to any current student or employee on request.

All criminal reports are submitted to campus Student Services offices. Everyone associated with the college is encouraged to report any real or potential criminal activity to the campus dean and the local police. Minnesota West normally requires a written complaint before beginning an investigation, but it will make exceptions when cases present clear danger to victims or to college property.

Minnesota West offers to assist anyone who desires to file a complaint with local law enforcement offices.

Minnesota West issues an annual report of criminal activities to each Campus Dean, college-authorized security personnel, and law enforcement agencies for crimes occurring on

college property or facilities on private property directly accessible from a campus. The report lists crimes alleged to have occurred at any Minnesota West location, whether it's owned or rented by the college. Reportable crimes include arson, assault, burglary, drug violations, hate crimes, liquor law offenses, manslaughter or murder, possession of illegal weapons, robbery, and sex offenses.

The Campus Deans serve as liaisons for campus security with all law enforcement agencies.

Student Code of Conduct

The *Minnesota West Student Handbook* includes policy 3.6, which clearly articulates the college code of conduct:

Minnesota West Community and Technical College has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment for all students. The college, therefore, reserves the right to take necessary and appropriate action to support and protect the safety and well-being of the college community: its students, faculty, staff, facilities and programs. Students are expected to abide by local, state, and federal laws, and the college's rules.

The code of conduct policy explains the definitions, jurisdictions, and conduct violations as well as investigation procedures, processes, paperwork, sanctions and student appeals. When assistance is needed, the MnSCU General Counsel provides resources to help answer questions, provide counsel, or resolve issues.

The [Student Handbook](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) are living documents that are works in progress, so maintaining them electronically allows the college to keep them constantly up-to-

date. As required by law, the *Student Handbook* is available in printed form to all students who attend Minnesota West orientation programs.

Getting the Word Out

The Minnesota West Coordinator of Communication, working with college marketers and administrators, prepares and distributes information about Minnesota West through a variety of regional media outlets. Information is sent to regional newspapers and radio and television stations in the form of news releases or public service announcements. News items are also posted to the college website or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The Coordinator of Communication writes news releases that involve the entire college. Each Minnesota West campus has a campus marketer who writes and distributes information regarding the local campus. Information may include dean's lists, admission dates and policies, student awards and achievements, campus celebrations, special guests or speakers, public forums, and information regarding individual programs.

MnSCU requires that each communication from Minnesota West includes the following statement:

Minnesota West Community and Technical College offers more than 60 majors in technical and liberal arts disciplines. The College is a leader in online and distance delivery education and consistently ranks in the top five Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for online and distance delivery. Minnesota West has campuses in Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, Pipestone, and Worthington, and learning centers in Fairmont, Luverne, Marshall, and Redwood Falls, Minnesota.

The College is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, the largest provider of public higher education in the state of Minnesota.

All press releases or other materials distributed by the college disclose that the college is an “Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Educator/Employer” and its facilities are ADA accessible.

Alumni publications

The Minnesota West Foundation produces three alumni publications each year to inform graduates of events on each campus, activities of current students, and profiles of successful Minnesota West graduates. The publications, titled [Staying Connected](#), are the foundation’s primary vehicle for connecting with Minnesota West alumni. Current and past editions of *Staying Connected* are posted on the college website.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West has established a culture of assessment to ensure that all learners are provided the best education and training they can receive regardless of their age, gender, or ethnic or cultural heritage.

2. Minnesota West demonstrates support for learning by ensuring that administrators, faculty, students and staff feel safe in college facilities.

3. Minnesota West provides significant financial support for students through the Minnesota West Foundation.

4. Minnesota West promotes job-readiness by providing students with clinical, externship, and internship opportunities away from campus.

5. Minnesota West communicates with its external constituents in a variety of ways to ensure that the region's awareness of and pride in the college continues to increase.

6. Minnesota West maintains relationships with alumni through its newsletter and online social networks.

Challenges

1. Locating clinical sites for growing medical and nursing programs is a constant challenge.

2. Offering a consistent "brand" and message to constituents in dynamic times is challenging for marketers.

Chapter 7

Criterion V – Engagement and Service

“As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.”

Minnesota West’s Constituents:

ACT	MnSCU Board of Directors
Advisory boards	MnSCU office
Alumni	Non-profit agencies
Business and industry partners	Non-traditional students
City governments	Pre-school children
Clinical sites	Regional health agencies
Community organizations	Senior citizens
County governments	State government
Current and prospective students	The federal government
Displaced workers	The general public
Faculty, staff, and administrators	The Higher Learning Commission
Higher education institutions	Traditional students
K-12 school districts	

Core Component 5a – Minnesota West learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Marketing

Minnesota West's marketing efforts are coordinated from the Central Information Center (CIC) at the Pipestone campus. The Coordinator of Communications, Marketing, and Advertising works with the CIC and reports directly to the Provost. The CIC has two full-time staff members. Five Minnesota West campus marketers and three location managers carry out most marketing and recruiting operations for the college.

Minnesota West's CIC has identified several target audiences for its efforts – high school students, four-year college students and non-completers, minority students, underrepresented students, distance learning students (both online and ITV), and the unemployed or underemployed. The most accessible group is high school students, most of whom plan to attend college after graduation. Many local graduates consider Minnesota West first because of its easy access and low cost. Some students enroll elsewhere and then discover that they are not prepared emotionally or academically for moving away from their families or communities. Those students are continually assured that they will be welcomed when they transfer to Minnesota West.

Throughout the school year, marketers meet with potential students at alternative learning centers, business gatherings, career fairs, community orientations, high schools,

workforce centers, and other on-campus events. During FY10, marketers recorded 4,251 contacts.

Marketers plan and assess their efforts based on needs of individual campuses and communities. As a result of the current economic downturn, marketers have worked closely with workforce centers and employers to discover needs and train displaced workers for new occupations and careers.

Marketers gather and use data regarding constituents to plan events and visits that optimize contact with those most in need. Specific events include community orientations that focus on meeting the new arrivals to the region. Classroom presentations are conducted at area alternative learning centers to impress on at-risk and underrepresented students the need to continue their education after high school graduation. Marketers also work closely with the business community and non-profit organizations to inform leaders of the opportunities for advanced training that the college provides. To help with these meetings, marketers have produced several Spanish language materials to distribute to Hispanic workers and their families.

New marketing materials that focus on online learning and diversity recruitment were introduced in FY11. Marketing campaigns have also expanded into the technical environments where modern students live, including online advertising and the social networks Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Marketing staff review data that help direct marketing strategies at monthly marketing meetings. Student data and prospect information are kept for five years in the ISRS system. The college does not share or sell the information it gathers.

Advisory boards

As discussed in Chapter 6, Criterion IV, more than 40 advisory boards help develop and guide programming and curriculum at Minnesota West. The advisory boards meet annually or semi-annually to consider issues of innovation, technology, and training needs for various professional and technical disciplines. A complete list of [advisory boards and their meeting minutes](#) is posted on the college website.

Minnesota West's Customized Training Services program learns from its constituencies and business partners primarily through advisory boards and business/industry focus groups. Advisory boards work with CTS to guide program and curriculum development, identify industry trends and needs, and apprise leaders of emerging technologies. Focus groups identify specific needs for training.

Some specific advisory boards include:

- The advisory board for the dental assisting program at Canby meets annually. It is made up of dentists, dental assistants and hygienists, and one public member.
- The medical assisting advisory board meets annually, usually at the Luverne additional location. Members include workers from administrative and clinical areas of the profession (some are Minnesota West alumni), one physician, one public member, and one or two students.
- The radiology program advisory board meets semi-annually at the Luverne additional location. Members are representatives from clinical sites, the director of nursing, and the Pipestone campus dean.

- The advisory board for Medical Lab Technician meets annually during fall semester prior to externships that begin in January. Meetings are held at the Luverne additional location. Members are lab managers, lab staff workers, one current student, and one alumnus or alumna.
- The associate degree nursing and practical nursing programs have a combined advisory board that meets annually. Members are area nurses, students, nursing faculty, a Minnesota West administrator, and potential student employers.

College Readiness Assessment

In FY10, more than 600 juniors from eight area high schools participated in the College Readiness Assessment Project. In addition to taking the Accuplacer college entrance exam, participants responded to a number of background questions regarding their plans and expectations. Among the questions was “What are your plans after high school graduation?” Among the respondents, 21 percent said they planned to attend a two-year college, 59 percent said they planned to attend a four-year college, 2 percent expected to receive some short-term training that would help them get a job, 2 percent expected to “go straight to work,” 4 percent expected to join the military, and 12 percent were undecided.

Professional Journals

Administrators, faculty, and staff rely on information from several print and electronic publications to help guide curriculum and program decisions. In addition to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, publications include professional journals in various departments and disciplines. Many of these publications are now available electronically through LARC

subscription services, so print subscriptions have been discontinued. This shift has greatly reduced costs and storage considerations for archived issues.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West encourages and values the contributions its advisory boards make in shaping the content and direction of its programs.

2. Minnesota West's advisory boards help place college graduates.

3. Minnesota West faculty and staff stay in touch with constituents through advisory boards, marketing data, assessments, and professional publications, both online and in print.

4. College Readiness Assessments enable Minnesota West to anticipate and plan for future enrollments.

5. Professional journals and publications, in both print and electronic forms, keep faculty, staff, and administrators informed of current developments in their disciplines.

Challenges

1. Times of economic uncertainty make planning difficult. High school sophomores and juniors can't predict factors that have potential to alter their post-secondary plans.

Core Component 5b – Minnesota West has the capacity and commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities

Partnerships and Collaborations

Minnesota West engages with its constituents in a number of partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

In the past five years, for example, collaboration with Nova Tech Process Solutions and Minnesota West faculty has resulted in the development of the first ever ethanol training simulator. The simulator has become the “training tool of choice” in the ethanol industry. So far, Minnesota West has provided training to more than a dozen Midwest ethanol companies including Glacial Lakes Energy; Cardinal Ethanol; POET Biorefining; SIRE Energy; Adkins Energy; Global Ethanol; Lincolnway Energy; Valero Ethanol; Golden Triangle Energy; Minnesota Energy; Granite Falls Energy; Denco, LLC; and Buffalo Lake Energy.

Newport Laboratories has partnered with Minnesota West by sharing the cost of equipment such as a High Performance (High Pressure) Liquid Chromatograph (\$65,000) and incubators (\$30,000). The college also shared the cost of a fermenter (\$25,000) with Newport Laboratories. Prairie Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Newport Labs, recently added a 10,000 square foot laboratory space that includes 1,200 square feet for Minnesota West’s bioscience instruction. Prairie Holdings charges Minnesota West no rent for using the lab, where college students sometimes work directly with professional scientists. Some students have also secured part-time jobs as laboratory assistants at Newport Labs because of their experience.

Minnesota West nursing programs saved approximately \$4,000 in FY10 due to donated supplies from area health care facilities. Sanford Health also donated an x-ray machine directly to Minnesota West and provided approximately \$200,000 to the City of Luverne for remodeling the college’s Luverne additional location.

Smith Trucking in Worthington allows Minnesota West to lease trucks at a reduced rate for training college students and provides internships to students.

In October 2010, CISCO Systems donated \$60,000 worth of computer hardware to the college to enable students to learn network routing, subdividing, and access control, among other skills.

Higher Education

Minnesota West also collaborates with other higher education institutions to provide benefits to students and employers.

University of Minnesota – Morris and Minnesota West faculty recently developed a three-credit environmental science course. The course focuses on biomass gasification and is taught on the Morris campus by faculty from both colleges during a three-week period each summer.

A Minnesota West faculty member serves on the advisory committee for the University of Minnesota-Crookston's Biofuels and Renewable Energy Technology program, part of its Agricultural Systems Management (ASM) major. The U of M–Crookston accepts several Minnesota West biofuels courses into its ASM major.

North East Community College in Norfolk, NE, adopted the entire ethanol curriculum developed by Minnesota West faculty. Minnesota West provided facilitator guides and conducted train-the-trainer seminars at NECC. NECC also obtained an ethanol training simulator from Nova Tech Process Solutions and continues to use training manuals developed by Minnesota West instructors.

Southern Illinois University houses the National Corn to Ethanol Research Center on the Edwardsville campus. SIUE also uses training manuals developed by Minnesota West and

worked with Minnesota West faculty in 2009 to develop a train-the-trainer video to use at the research center.

Minnesota West faculty and administrators also took the lead to establish a consortium of ten MnSCU community and technical colleges that offer an Energy Technical Specialist A.A.S. degree. Students began enrolling in the new program in fall 2009. Minnesota West is solely responsible for courses in wind, ethanol, and biodiesel, and it oversees solar energy courses developed by Century College in White Bear Lake, MN.

Community Projects

Minnesota West and Southwest Minnesota State University cooperate each year to present Career Expo at the SMSU campus at Marshall, MN. The event attracts more than 1,700 high school sophomores. Representatives from 70-100 area business enterprises exhibit and meet with students to help them understand the skills that they need for various professions.

The Auto Expo event is held each year at the Canby campus. Community members and auto dealers bring cars and motorcycles to campus for exhibition. Industry professionals demonstrate their skills and techniques for repairing and modifying the vehicles. The event is open to the public and draws a large crowd from throughout the region. The Granite Falls campus also hosts an annual auto show.

Diesel powered equipment is featured at the annual Extravaganza on the Canby campus. The event features demonstrations by professionals and is open to the public.

Economic development

Minnesota West sends three representatives to Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council's Youth Council (PICYC), a committee that develops and seeks out appropriate

education and employment opportunities for area young people. The PICYC meets quarterly and includes members from PIC, Workforce Center, Upward Bound, area employers, alternative school representatives, area service coops, and others.

Minnesota West's Customized Training Services provide continuing education, training, and retraining to individuals and employers throughout the region. CTS programs concentrate on five major areas: Computer Technology, Emergency Response and Industrial Safety, Health and Human Services, Manufacturing and Automation Technology, and Management and Professional Development. CTS consistently serves approximately 6,500 employees in 22 counties of southwestern Minnesota with an average of nearly 77,000 hours of training annually.

Minnesota West provided space in its LARCs for a Private Industry Council (PIC) career services representative for several years. Services included financial assistance for education, career exploration, and assessment, resume and cover letter development, interviewing skills, and job placement. That agreement ended in June 2009, but since then Minnesota West sends representatives to area Workforce Center offices at least one day each week. Their purpose is to provide guidance and assistance to job-seekers who are considering post-secondary education options and to network with Workforce/PIC staff.

Minnesota West is a long-standing member of Southwest Minnesota Work Force Council. The council serves 14 counties. Its members include local leaders in business, education, human services, job services, economic development, and community organizations. Minnesota West's current President serves as a member of Southwest Minnesota Work Force Council.

A related group, known as the SMART Alliance, is a regional collaborative designed to support and sustain economic development. The alliance was started with funds from a FIRST grant and is led by the Southwest Leadership Team. Minnesota West's President and Director of Customized Training participate in the SMART Alliance.

FastTRAC programs are funded through a grant that ties Adult Basic Education, Workforce Centers, the PIC, and Minnesota West together to provide training for manufacturing, maintenance, healthcare, and customer service industries. Local partners meet to identify needs and develop training services specific to their industries. Courses are delivered by appropriate Minnesota West faculty working with instructors from ABE. More than 240 participants have completed programs offered by FastTRAC.

K-12 schools

Minnesota West works with area high schools in a number of ways. The college staff administers the Accuplacer exam to all high school juniors in the region. The college also partners with area alternative schools and the Private Industry Council to offer the Breaking Traditions program on each of the campuses. The programs encourage students who are less likely to consider advancing to postsecondary schools to consider the economic advantages that continuing their education can provide. Current students help with the program to provide hands-on activities and informal interaction with instructors. The technical campuses have offered the program for the past ten years.

Minnesota West also partners with Adult Basic Education on some campuses. At Jackson, for example, ABE is housed in Minnesota West classrooms. College staff makes

presentations to ABE students several times each year. In 2009, a Minnesota West representative presented information on college services at a statewide ABE conference.

Mindquest Academy is a tool Minnesota West offers to help high school students prepare for college level reading, writing, and math skills. Mindquest Academy is designed to help under-prepared students who are completing a GED, testing into developmental courses, or experiencing language barriers.

Fast Track, which is discussed in previous chapters, is a one-week course offered in late summer to students who test into developmental courses. The course is an intense review of reading, math, English and study skills. Students who take this free course retake the Accuplacer exam at its conclusion and may revise their registration if they raise their Accuplacer scores.

Career Scope® is a career interest and aptitude assessment that each Minnesota West campus offers to students, prospective students, and community members. The self-administered career and assessment reporting system is a product of the Vocational Research Institute. It measures general learning ability, clerical and form perception, and numerical, spatial and verbal aptitude.

Technical Skills Challenge is a collaborative project involving the Southwest Minnesota Service Cooperative, Minnesota West, and area K-12 school districts. Each year, a campus is chosen for the challenge and students converge on that campus to participate in a variety of activities. In 2010, students competed in challenges involving individual welding, group trailer welding, solar sprint cars, and photography.

The Minnesota West Pipestone campus partners with Flandreau (SD) Indian School (FIS) to conduct a Career Day at the FIS campus. FIS students also visit the Pipestone college campus to explore the programs that Minnesota West offers. Plans are currently being developed to offer training on the FIS site.

Kids College is hosted by Minnesota West in July and multi-cultural collaborative groups attend summer events on all college campuses. PSEO and concurrent enrollment courses enable high school students to jump-start their college experience. Elementary, middle school, and high school students are invited to share in events such as lectures, presentations, and theater productions at the college throughout the year. High school students involved in Future Farmers of America (FFA) also gather at Minnesota West campuses for contests and interviews.

In addition, the Worthington school district utilizes college facilities for its Alternative Learning Center program. Worthington campus gymnasiums are used for the Wild Turkey Shootout, an invitational basketball tournament for fifth through eighth grade students held every March. In summer 2010, the Worthington public school district's middle school was closed for remodeling, so the Worthington college campus hosted middle school summer classes.

Community service by students, faculty, staff, administration

Minnesota West faculty and staff contribute to their communities in scores of capacities and venues. Many college employees are active in community churches, political parties, and service clubs, including Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis Clubs, Lions Clubs, and Rotary Club. Many employees work with and provide leadership for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, chambers of commerce, charitable organizations, city and county governments, community celebration

committees, conservation groups, food shelf committees, health care organizations, political parties, and school boards. Technical instructors work closely with the community industries most closely related to their areas of expertise and interest.

Institutional Volunteerism

All Minnesota West campuses cooperate with the American Red Cross to provide space and the volunteers needed to conduct blood drives each semester.

Medical assisting students offer voluntary blood pressure checks at the Luverne Home Show.

MLT students help with area health fairs by conducting cholesterol checks. Students in the program recently drew blood for a veterinary clinic, where they checked employees for rabies titers, and at a packing company, where they checked employee cholesterol levels. Students in the program have also donated time to area charitable meal sites.

Associate degree nurses helped with a Diabetes Forum held at the Worthington campus in November 2009 and at a Heart Healthy event held at the Worthington Area YMCA in February 2010.

Members of Alpha Nu Kappa, the local chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, participate in a number of volunteer activities. In recent years, they have conducted food drives, collected children's books to be redistributed at local food shelves, and organized campaigns to raise awareness against domestic violence. The local chapter also participates annually in the local Relay for Life, a fundraiser for cancer research, and the donations it raises for that cause range from \$400-700 each year. The chapter collects used books for Better World Books (designated for Africa) at the end of each semester. In spring 2010, the group participated in "Soles for

Souls,” an effort to collect used shoes to send to third-world countries. Also in 2010, ANK sponsored an honors topic event that involved members showing a DVD on economics and monitoring follow-up discussions with area high school honors students.

Students at the Pipestone campus recently collected nearly 60 prom dresses to donate to the Flandreau Indian School. Unclaimed dresses were stored and will be made available during the next prom season. This event was not intended to be annual, but will be repeated when the supply of unclaimed dresses diminishes.

Also at Pipestone, Minnesota West nursing students provided free blood pressure checks at a “Monument and Minnesota Night” observance. The program was sponsored by Active Living Partnership for Pipestone County. Massage Therapy program students offered chair massages for tips two times at Pipestone and once at Luverne. They donated the tips to Honor Flight Southwest Minnesota, an organization that sends surviving World War II veterans to see the war memorial in Washington, D.C.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West works closely with regional industries to keep college programs relevant and maintain equipment that is actually used in the field.
2. Minnesota West has strong, long-standing relationships with other institutions of higher learning that allow the institutions to collaborate for the good of students and employers.
3. Minnesota West plays a key role in promoting the economic health of the region by hosting events, responding to employer training needs, and participating on boards and committees dedicated to the continued economic development of southwestern Minnesota.

4. Minnesota West cooperates with K-12 schools to prepare students for academic success, responsible citizenship, and satisfactory adult life.

5. Minnesota West employees demonstrate their commitment to lead in all aspects of their communities by donating time and energy to a wide array of worthwhile activities and causes.

6. Minnesota West students in specialized programs gain valuable experience and contribute to the greater good of the region by participating in several worthwhile off-campus projects.

Challenges

1. Communities throughout the region are struggling with unemployment, shrinking populations, and diminished funds to pay for public services. The need for volunteers will continue to be great in the coming years. To help communities survive and overcome those difficulties, Minnesota West employees and students must continue or increase their contributions to the public good.

Core Component 5c – Minnesota West demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for services

Minnesota West continually seeks new opportunities to respond to the needs of constituents where they live. One of the ways that commitment has been demonstrated in the past ten years is by the development of additional locations at Fairmont, Luverne, and Redwood Falls.

In Fairmont, city officials developed an independent learning center, so its citizens could access post-secondary training and higher education. The center struggled financially until MnSCU agreed to enter into a partnership with the City of Fairmont to support Minnesota West offerings at the location for two years. A location coordinator was hired and the center opened in 2006. After the initial two-year period expired, MnSCU extended its support at a reduced rate for two additional years. The location now features two ITV classrooms, office space, and a student commons area shared with Presentation College. Other MnSCU institutions also offer courses at the location, so each year more classes and services are available and the likelihood of continued viability increases.

In 2004, a three-way partnership involving the City of Luverne, Sanford Health, and Minnesota West was formed after the college president toured the recently vacated Luverne Municipal Hospital building with the city's economic development officer. The partners developed a business plan that called for the development of a radiology and surgical technician program to be offered at the location. Over the next two years, the three partners pooled funds, developed curriculum, remodeled facilities, and hired instructors. Programs began operating at the location in 2006.

Discussion for opening a location at Redwood Falls began in 2006, when Redwood Falls city officials indicated a desire to offer higher education to local citizens. Attending the initial planning sessions were officials from Southwest Minnesota State University, Ridgewater Community and Technical College, Minnesota West, Redwood Falls city government, and the Lower Sioux Tribal Council. A business plan, a technology plan, and budgets were developed, and Minnesota West began offering classes at the location in the fall of 2009. The city of

Redwood Falls paid to design, construct, and finish a 2,500 square foot climate-controlled space in the Redwood Falls Government Center. Rent for the space was \$0 per square foot during the first year of operation and \$2.50 per square foot for the remaining five years of the agreement. The location has one part-time manager to assist students and monitor activities. The Granite Falls campus provides student services and technical support for the Redwood Falls location.

The growth of online course offerings at Minnesota West has been the leading story of the new millennium. From FY05 to FY10, the number of sections taught online increased from 266 to 421. Each year that number increases, and nearly all Minnesota West students experience some type of online learning sometime in their pursuit of a degree, diploma, or certificate.

Customized Training's responsiveness to employer needs is demonstrated through its flexible training delivery. One example is the online industrial maintenance/machine automation and the online Trained Medical Administration training programs, both of which were developed in direct response to requests from employers. The programs combine online classroom instruction with face-to-face practical skills training. Sixteen hospital employees participated in the Trained Medical Administration training in spring 2010. Evaluations yielded a 97 percent satisfaction rating from both students and employers.

Community Partnerships

Minnesota West has a long tradition of partnering with business and industry, local governments, and academic institutions throughout the region. Minnesota Job Skills

Partnership (MJSP) grants obtained by the college have been especially helpful in meeting the employee training needs for emerging industries in the region throughout the past decade.

When Suzlon Corporation established a plant to produce rotor blades for wind generators in Pipestone, 236 workers needed to be trained in composite technology. Minnesota West secured some \$50,000 in grants from the City of Pipestone, Pipestone County, and the Southwest Initiative Foundation to plan the training, which involved a trip to India to observe production, and develop the training curriculum. The college then secured a \$380,000 MJSP grant to provide the training.

Prairie Holdings, Inc. is a major agricultural services employer based in Worthington. Its Newport Laboratories division develops custom vaccines for large animals and is one of the leading producers of animal vaccines in the world. To meet the need for skilled lab workers, Minnesota West used a MJSP grant to develop a training program. At the same time, the college partnered with the City of Worthington, Independent School District 518, and Prairie Holdings to develop an Industrial Lab Technician program with an emphasis on agriculture. The college obtained a \$130,000 grant from Blandin Foundation. Prairie Holdings expanded its labs to include training space for Minnesota West students and its existing employees. The City of Worthington and Nobles County then established a bio-science park with a \$2.5 million bio-science bonding award for infrastructure development.

As mentioned earlier, Minnesota West, the City of Luverne, and Sioux Valley Regional Health System (now Sanford Regional Health) worked together to create the Educational Center for Health Careers in the recently vacated Luverne Hospital building. Each partner contributed funds for the project. Once the renovation was complete, medical programs including massage

therapy and medical laboratory were relocated to the location from other campuses and locations. New programs were developed in surgical technology and radiologic technician training to offer at the site. The city of Sioux Falls, SD, only 28 miles from Luverne, is a major medical center for the tri-state region, so the Luverne programs provide trained workers for both Sanford Regional Health Systems and its rival Avera-McKennon hospitals and clinics there as well as for their affiliated hospitals and clinics and independent medical facilities throughout southwestern Minnesota.

Minnesota West, the City of Worthington, regional health care providers, and the Worthington YMCA worked for nearly a decade to co-locate a new YMCA facility on the Worthington campus. More than \$5 million was raised for the facility, including funds from a community capital campaign. The facility, named Worthington YMCA-DeGroot Family Center, was completed and occupied in November 2009.

Minnesota West is a member of the Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications and Technology (SHOT). The organization, which was founded in 1994, has offices at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) and provides telecommunications and technology services for SMSU, the University of Minnesota campuses at Morris and Lamberton, Ridgewater Community and Technical College campuses at Willmar and Hutchinson, and all Minnesota West locations. Minnesota West's ITV classroom schedules, IP telephone services, and Adobe Connect operations are among the services coordinated through SHOT.

Community Use of Facilities

Scores of community organizations throughout the region depend on Minnesota West to provide the facilities they need for events and activities. Among the many activities held on campuses are athletic camps; American Red Cross and Community Blood Bank blood drives; concerts and recitals; driving schools; fund-raising events for groups such as Dollars for Scholars, community service clubs, and United Way; information-gathering meetings for public institutions such as the University of Minnesota; public hearings for lawmakers and policymakers; service club meetings and special events; monthly, quarterly or annual meetings for conservation groups, farm cooperatives, and ministerial associations; and special events sponsored by regional non-profit organizations including economic development groups, chambers of commerce, and private industry councils.

The Minnesota West Worthington campus is also a regional center for ACT testing six times each year.

Student life events

Student life events are frequent and well-attended at Minnesota West campuses. Events include art shows; homecoming activities such as coronations, talent shows, picnics, and dances; “Snow Week” events to break up the long Minnesota winters; “Getting Connected” days with local employers, health clubs, non-profit organizations, merchants, and landlords; guest speakers; noon-hour entertainments such as Bingo, comedians, hypnotists, magicians, and musicians; hog roasts; intramural sports leagues; pool tournaments; poetry readings; popcorn sales; sports clinics and events; study groups for students with special interests; immunization clinics; holiday events at Halloween, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving,

Christmas, and Valentine’s Day; and post-commencement receptions for graduates and their families and friends.

Intercollegiate Athletics

Minnesota West’s intercollegiate “Bluejays” and “Lady Jays” athletic teams are based at the Worthington campus, but students from other campuses are invited and encouraged to participate. The college fields men’s teams in football, basketball, wrestling, golf, and baseball. Women’s teams include volleyball, basketball, softball, and golf. Minnesota West maintains membership in the Minnesota Community College Athletic Conference and that National Junior College Athletics Association.

Child Care Services

Minnesota West’s Granite Falls campus houses a [Midwest Child Care Resource & Referral](#) approved child care center. Pipestone campus hosts “Kiddie Kampus” to care for infants through preschool children. Other campuses and locations do not offer child care services. The college website provides information regarding child care services and the Post-Secondary Child Care Grant Program on the [Campus Child Care Centers](#) page.

Strengths

1. Minnesota West works closely with all of its constituents to understand their needs and provide programs and services to satisfy them.
2. Community groups rely on Minnesota West to provide facilities and space in which they can conduct activities and events that contribute to the region’s quality of life.

3. Minnesota West demonstrates its commitment to students by sponsoring student life events that enable students to develop relationships with each other, the college, and with their extended communities.

Challenges

1. Minnesota West's lack of student housing and high number of nontraditional students makes planning student life events difficult. Most events must occur during the day when students are likely to be on campus.

2. Child care services are not provided at most campuses and locations. Only the Granite Falls and Pipestone campuses offer on-campus child care facilities.

Core Component 5d – Internal and external constituencies value the services Minnesota West provides.

Feedback from Alumni

The Minnesota West Foundation collects reports of alumni successes for its quarterly newsletter. Some examples are a 1994 Worthington campus graduate who completed her master's degree in divinity from a theological seminary in spring 2010 and will serve as pastor at a Kansas church; a 1996 Jackson campus graduate who owns his own electrical business in Hartford, SD; a 1997 graduate from the Granite Falls campus who owns and operates his own business in Billings, MT; a 1999 Canby campus graduate who in 2009 completed her master's degree in health administration from Long Island University in New York; and a graduate from Worthington in 2000 who completed his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 2009 and is working in corn genetics research at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

Feedback from Students

As noted in Chapter 6, Criterion IV, Minnesota West measures student satisfaction through standardized surveys. During 2007-08, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey was administered to students throughout the college, including online students. Results of the survey revealed the need for increased attention to financial aid services and access to college advising, and those needs were addressed. In 2009, the Office of the Chancellor of MnSCU mandated use of the Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) instrument to measure student satisfaction. Results of the survey showed that Minnesota West scored near or above the benchmark scores in “Active and Collaborative Learning,” “Student-Faculty Interaction,” and “Support for Learners.” Minnesota West scored a few points lower than the benchmarks in the areas of “Student Effort” and “Academic Challenge.” Some differences were also noted between responses from part-time students and full-time students, with part-time students’ scores lower than full-time students in all areas except “Support for Learners.”

A number of comments from students who participated in “Qualitative Interviews” can be read in the report titled [Retention, Attrition, Matriculation to Graduation](#), which is also linked to the Minnesota West website.

Full-time and part-time students as well as first-year and second-year students were interviewed for the report. Among the interview topics were the reasons they chose Minnesota West; the usefulness of developmental courses, including Fast Track; whether they took classes online, face-to-face, or both; frequency of use and usefulness of LARC or tutoring programs; frequency of meetings with advisors or faculty members outside of class; and various questions regarding improvement of college academic offerings and services.

Online students in classes of more than 16 provide feedback via a D2L survey titled “Priority Survey of Online Learners.”

As discussed in Chapter 5, Criterion III, Minnesota West students rate faculty using an IDEA survey. Results of the survey are collected each semester and posted annually. Data from online and on-site evaluations are kept separate. [IDEA reports from FY05 through FY10](#) are posted on the college website.

Individual faculty members solicit feedback from students in various ways. In a survey completed by faculty in August 2010, instructors reported that they solicit student comments both formally, with midterm and final assessment surveys, and informally, with conversations outside of class and emails.

Web Survey

From September 2010 through February 2011, Minnesota West posted a link to a web survey on its website. The survey’s purpose was to gather data regarding public perceptions of the college’s value to the region. A link to the survey was also sent to vendors, advisory board members, and other college constituents with an invitation to participate. Results of the survey are reported in Chapter 3, Criterion 1C.

Economic impact on communities

One of the best measures of success for a college is job creation. Minnesota West actively pursues and secures Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grants to create and deliver training for workers. Since 2006, the college has secured \$1,352,080 in funding to deliver training services to southwestern Minnesota. As a result of the training, eight employers in seven communities were able to add 524 jobs.

Employer	Community	Funding	Jobs Created
Agco, Inc	Jackson, MN	\$220,000	67
Case New Holland	Benson, MN	\$120,000	143
Avicenna Technology, Inc.	Montevideo, MN	\$90,000	15
Fey Industry, Inc.	Edgerton, MN	\$160,000	12
Hoffco Cabinet Accessories	Wood Lake, MN	\$70,000	8
Future Products, Inc.	Benson, MN	\$50,000	14
Electrolux Home Products	St. Cloud, MN	\$262,080	22
Suzlon Rotor Corporation	Pipestone, MN	\$380,000	243

Strengths

1. Minnesota West is a major and widely recognized leader in the economic health of its region.
2. Whenever and however they are asked, Minnesota West students praise the college's faculty and staff and express appreciation for the education and training they receive at the college.
3. Minnesota West's vendors, advisors and neighbors recognize that the college is an extremely valuable asset to the region.
4. Employers and municipalities in the region treasure the presence of Minnesota West to the extent that they are willing to contribute funds and enter into partnerships with the college to provide convenient learning environments for their constituents.

Challenges

1. In a difficult economic climate, local businesses are less able to provide financial or “in-kind” support for college programs or hire graduates.

2. Graduates in selected Minnesota West programs, such as wind energy or biofuels technology, may need to seek work in other geographical areas because of saturated markets here.

Chapter 8

The Self-Study Process

Self-Study History

The self-study process for the merged campuses of Minnesota West was nearly continuous from 1993, the year that Southwestern Technical College (STC) first received accreditation from NCA, until 2003, the year that Minnesota West received HLC approval to offer degree programs online.

In November 1993, STC underwent an NCA focused visit on libraries and general education, two services that were developed at STC largely in cooperation with Worthington Community College (WCC). In 1994, WCC began preparing for its NCA focused visit on finance and assessment in April 1995. While WCC was engaged in that activity, STC began to prepare for an NCA continuing accreditation visit in April 1996.

After the higher education systems were merged statewide in January 1995 and the five regional campuses were combined to form Minnesota West Community and Technical College in January 1997, a *Merger Progress Report* was prepared for and submitted to NCA in the fall of 1997. That report was followed closely by a revised *Assessment Plan for Student Academic Success*, which was submitted to the commission in May 1998. In October 2000, Minnesota West submitted a *Focused Report on Faculty Credentials and Professional Development* that NCA approved in January 2001.

Minnesota West's last comprehensive self-study for reaccreditation occurred in December 2001. As a result of that self-study and visit, HLC accreditation was extended for ten

years. In April 2003, Minnesota West submitted a *Request for Institutional Change* and became the first MnSCU institution to be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission to deliver degree programs totally online.

The Current Self-study

The process for the current comprehensive self-study began in the fall of 2008 when Minnesota West's president appointed a Worthington campus English instructor to be self-study coordinator. In October 2008, the coordinator, a steering committee member, and two administrators attended an HLC Self-Study Design Work Day at St. Louis, MO. After a series of meetings involving the provost and the vice-president for instruction, the coordinator appointed a steering committee in spring 2009. During the summer of 2009, the coordinator reviewed self-studies from other campuses and developed a structure and list of tasks for self-study subcommittees. The steering committee met in the late September 2009 to form subcommittees and accept specific responsibilities for the self-study.

Self-Study Steering Committee

Administration:

Dr. Richard Shrubbs, President

Dr. Diane Graber, College Provost (retired)

Dr. Jeff Williamson, College Provost

Lori Voss, Vice President of Administration

Al Brudellie, Dean of Management Programs

Mike Fury, Worthington Campus Director of Students/Athletic Director/Coach

Dennis Hampel, Dean of Career and Technical Programs

Faculty and Staff

Kayla Westra, English instructor, interim Dean of Technology Services

Dr. Steve Schultz, chemistry instructor

Pam Sukalski, Librarian

Ruth Van Heukelom, nursing instructor and Director of Nursing

Diane Wells, bookkeeping/administrative support instructor

Mike Dierks, Farm Business Management instructor

Mitz Diemer, administrative assistant

At the meeting in September 2009, each member of the steering committee was appointed to co-chair a subcommittee for the self-study. The subcommittees were organized around the five criteria and core components. The co-chairs were directed to describe and evaluate the operational areas of the college relevant to the criterion assigned to them. Co-chairs approved the list of tasks for the subcommittees and agreed to activate their respective committees before the end of calendar year 2009. The co-chairs were encouraged to recruit Minnesota West faculty and staff to assist them in gathering information for the study.

After the initial meeting, subcommittee co-chairs gathered members and organized meetings to explain the tasks and assign individuals or subgroups to gather the information needed to complete the study. The investigation and evaluation was to be completed and returned to the coordinator by February 16, 2010.

In fall semester 2009, the steering committee proposed dates for the self-study visit to the commission office. Dates proposed were October 31, 2011, or November 7, 2011, in the

first cycle, or March 19, 2012, in the second cycle. In December 2009, HLC notified Minnesota West's president that the visit would be October 31-November 2, 2011.

In April 2010, the college Provost and the self-study coordinator attended the NCA annual meeting in Chicago. While there, they visited with HLC associate director Dr. Karen Solomon, Minnesota West's liaison. Dr. Solomon suggested that the college submit a draft of the self-study to consultant evaluators in the area before submitting it to HLC. She also suggested that the coordinator invite her for a college visit before she starts selecting members of the visiting team.

From spring 2010 until the early spring 2011, subcommittees continued to gather and review information and evaluate assigned areas of Minnesota West. As their work progressed, they reported their findings to the coordinator who incorporated the information into the draft of the self-study report. Levels of subcommittee members' involvement in the self-study varied. Some members offered extremely active and useful service, some relied on subcommittee chairs to gather the information, and some simply responded to the coordinator's requests for specific information.

The first draft of the study was made available to subcommittee co-chairs, administrators, and CEOs in late fall 2010. Subcommittees reviewed drafts, corrected and expanded evidence, edited text, and further reviewed and evaluated the implications of the data.

Dr. Solomon visited Minnesota West's Worthington campus in December 2010. She met with the self-study coordinator, the steering committee, administrators, members of the community, and other college employees via ITV. The purpose of the visit was to help her

understand the culture of the college to better inform her selection of the visitation team in October 2011.

In January 2011, the college obtained the services of a web designer to help construct the final documents and electronic resource room for the self-study.

A Minnesota West delegation consisting of the college President, Provost, Vice President of Administration, and self-study coordinator attended the HLC Annual Meeting in Chicago April 2011. At the meeting, the Provost and coordinator further discussed the re-accreditation process with Dr. Solomon. After the annual meeting, a revised draft of the self-study report was made available to everyone in the institution for widespread review and comment. The final draft and printed document was posted and released in July 2011.

Chapter 9

Request for Re-Accreditation

As this self-study shows, Minnesota West Community and Technical College is a vital and respected institution of higher learning with deep historical, economic, and cultural roots in a vast geographical area of southwestern Minnesota. Although the college faces challenges, it clearly meets or exceeds all of the criteria for continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

- Minnesota West has clear and well-known mission and vision statements that guide its decisions and planning to meet the needs of all the college's internal and external constituents.
- Minnesota West offers a number of platforms, resources, strategies, and technologies to meet the diverse higher education and training needs of its region.
- Minnesota West deliberately, studiously, and systematically prepares for the future.
- Minnesota West conducts all of its operations with integrity and transparency.
- Minnesota West maintains a culture of assessment that permeates every aspect of its operations, from traditional classrooms, to internal workshop, to public meetings, to customized training and continuing education. Assessments instruments range from those that are locally produced to those that are nationally normed.

- Minnesota West has stable financial, human, and physical resources that will enable it to continue effective operations far into the future.
- Minnesota West is connected to and invested in the continued well-being of its constituents and provides facilities, leadership, and other resources that enhance southwestern Minnesota's overall quality of life.

Therefore, Minnesota West Community and Technical College respectfully requests that its accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and schools be extended for another ten years.

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