



## HLC Accreditation Self-Study 2005

### Building on Excellence: Missouri State University Envisions the Future

#### Executive Summary

#### **Self-Study Purpose**

The primary purpose of the Self-Study Report is to apply for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, by presenting patterns of evidence that demonstrate that Missouri State University meets all five of the HLC accreditation criteria. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the major findings and conclusions presented in the Self-Study Report. The Steering Committee made the decision to frame the Self-Study Report using the four Cross-Cutting Themes outlined in section 3.3 of the HLC Handbook of Accreditation. During the course of preparing this Self-Study Report, the Committee, as well as the entire university community, was able to evaluate institutional policies, procedures, and practices, and to plan for the future. In the process, the University's strengths and its challenges for the future were identified. The full Self-Study Report is available at <http://accreditation.missouristate.edu>.

#### **Self-Study Process**

Preparation for the 2005 Self-Study began soon after notification of 10-year continuing accreditation from the Commission in February, 1996, with the formation of the North Central Review Committee in 1997. The Review Committee reported periodically to the President and his Administrative Council. Additionally, the NCA/HLC Review Committee was asked to monitor changes in Commission policy, statements, and, more recently, criteria for accreditation, and to report such changes to the university community.

The fifteen-member Steering Committee for the 2005 Self-Study and site visit was formed and began meeting in January, 2003, a year before receiving notification from the Commission of the University's 2005 site visit. Five of the committee members also served for the 1995 accreditation, thus providing continuity and leadership, especially during the early phases of the Self-Study.

*Missouri State University is a multi-campus metropolitan university system with a statewide mission in public affairs whose purpose is to develop educated persons while focusing on five themes: professional education, health, business and economic development, creative arts, and science and the environment.*



*Preparation for the 2005 Self-Study began in 1997. Before the work was through, the entire campus community had become involved.*

In November 2003, the Steering Committee drafted and submitted the goals and objectives of the present Self-Study Report to the HLC offices. Meetings during this period also began to consider the best way to evaluate the University's status for accreditation, using existing data and involving the campus community.

After addressing the concerns raised in the 1995 North Central Commission site-team report, the Steering Committee chose to link the 2005 Self-Study with the University's continuing long-range planning process. This linkage was endorsed by President Keiser and the Administrative Council and, as can be seen from the Self-Study timeline, both these activities officially began in January of 2004.

More than 600 faculty, staff, and students currently serve on more than 70 University committees. To best involve the entire campus community with the self-study process, the Steering Committee addressed evaluative questions regarding the Criteria and Core Components to these committees as well as to every department and unit in the University. Students contributed their ideas through the reports submitted by the Student Government Association and by Student Affairs. A listing of all University standing committees, as well as membership on these committees, may be found in the *2003/2004 Committee Handbook*.

Through much discussion about which committees and units might best provide certain types of evidence, the Steering Committee created a complex matrix which interweaves committees and units with HLC Criteria and Core Components. This system was the subject of a presentation at the 2005 HLC Annual Meeting.

The Committee used the matrix to develop questions to be addressed to each committee and academic or non-academic unit involved. The questions, based on the Criteria and Core Components, enabled the committees and units to provide information connected to the Self-Study's goals and objectives. Using the matrix ensured that all Criteria and Core Components were addressed.

### **Summary of Accomplishments**

Missouri State University has experienced a wide range of changes during the past decade. Examples of its many accomplishments include

#### **Institutional Changes and Events**

- Implementation and refinement of the statewide Public Affairs mission, as reflected most recently in the first annual Public Affairs Conference
- Continuation of long-range planning and annual performance measures



- Legislation changing the institution's name to Missouri State University, providing official recognition of the institution's evolution
- Increased external grant funding for sponsored research, from \$4 million to \$15.5 million
- Successful completion of the first comprehensive Capital Campaign by the Missouri State University Foundation in 2005, exceeding the goal of \$50 million
- Dr. Michael T. Nietzel named the 9<sup>th</sup> President of Southwest Missouri State University and the first President of Missouri State University

### **Curricular, Academic, and Technological Changes**

- Moving from an open-admissions to a selective-admissions institution, resulting in an increase in the six-year graduation rate and in the average ACT score of entering freshmen from 21.9 in 1994 to 23.8 by the fall of 2005
- Restructuring of the General Education Program, tying it to the Public Affairs mission
- More than doubling the number of graduate programs and the number of students served (21 new programs added)
- Extending the University's international focus (Study Away and exchange programs) to include a China program
- Sponsoring the Missouri Fine Arts Academy and the Missouri Public Affairs Academy, both for high school students
- Establishing the Missouri Virtual School, providing high school learning environments across the state
- Making advances in online application technology support in registration, advisement and records (the My Information system and the Faculty Advisor Resource Center), and in Web-based instruction, including complete online degree programs
- Developing collaborative academic programs with other institutions, including the Doctorate in Educational Leadership (with the University of Missouri—Columbia), the M.S. in Nurse Anesthesia (with St. John's Hospitals and Clinics), and the M.A. in Teaching (with Missouri Southern State University).
- Creating alliances with international institutions of higher education, including the MBA agreement with the International School for Management Studies (Chennai, India) and the M.S. in Plant Science agreement with China Agricultural University (Beijing, China).
- Implementing a Master Advisor Program in 1996 that has earned national attention
- Opening the Academic Development Center in 2002 as a resource for faculty development

*Between 1995 and 2005, the number of Graduate Programs and the number of students served more than doubled.*



*The average ACT score of entering freshmen increased from 21.9 in 1994 to 23.8 by the fall of 2005.*

- Instituting two graduate degree programs through online instruction, and additional learning opportunities through Missouri State Online, which now includes more than 50 courses and is rapidly expanding
- Acquiring and moving Ozarks Public Television in 2001 to its new facilities in Strong Hall on the Missouri State University campus
- Establishing the local chapter of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

#### **New Centers and Partnerships**

- Center for Dispute Resolution, providing services that mitigate conflict and unnecessary litigation
- Center of Applied Science and Engineering, expanded to include the Jordan Valley Innovation Center, supporting homeland security and defense-related research
- Mid-America Viticulture and Enology Center, coordinating the resources to provide quality grape and wine research and advisement programs for the Midwest region
- Office of Citizenship and Service Learning, supporting the mission and matching students with local constituents
- Several hundred clinical-site affiliation agreements and partnerships, facilitating the expanded level of health-care academic programs
- Ozarks Environmental and Water Resources Institute, conducting applied and basic research focusing on the relationship between land-use patterns and water quality
- Bull Shoals Field Station (established 1999), testing water quality in five locations

#### **New Facilities and Renovations**

- Wehr Band Hall (1996)
- Strong Hall (1998)
- Physical Therapy Building (1999)
- Renovation of Plaster Student Union (1999)
- Renovation of Darr Agricultural Center (2000)
- Mall-in-the-Middle, linking student services, recreational facilities, housing, and multimodal transport routes (2000)
- Meyer Library renovation and addition (2002)
- Renovation of Jim D. Morris Center for Continuing Education (2004)
- Intermodal Transfer Facility and connecting transitways (2005) ,complementing the first Park-n-Ride Facility (1995)



## Self-Study Report: Major Findings

The interrelated nature of the recently adopted HLC Criteria of Accreditation provided the opportunity for the University to use the four Cross-Cutting Themes as the context for evaluation and as the format for the Self-Study Report. From early in the process, the Steering Committee considered a thematic approach, which links the University's accomplishments to the Criteria and Core Components, to be the most effective way to present a complete picture of Missouri State University.

### Theme One: *The Future-Oriented Organization*

- Missouri State University maintains a continuous and open planning process which features
  - Goals created and published through long-range plans; *Daring to Excel*, the third in a series of plans, is to be adopted late in 2005.
  - Input sought from all constituencies, through numerous public forums and a long-range planning Web site used to post information and to receive comment
  - Oversight by the University Planning Advisory Committee, whose members are broadly representative of the University community
  - Publicly-reported annual performance measures and annual updates help the institution determine to what extent it is meeting its goals.
- Missouri State University is a mission-driven organization. Its statewide Public Affairs mission, which includes the broader purpose of developing educated persons, was adopted in 1995. Since then, the University has refined but maintained that mission.
- The University continually invests in technology for use by students, faculty, and staff. Performance Measures for the Office of Information Technology indicate the goals and accomplishments in bringing technology to classrooms on the West Plains and Springfield campuses.
- As Missouri State University has planned for continuing social and economic changes, it has established collaborative ventures to better serve its constituents.

### Theme Two: *A Learning-Focused Organization*

- A revised general education program was implemented in 1997. The program includes a continuous review of each general education course using a three-year sequence. The accompanying administrative and committee structures that were created have facilitated the program.
- The Faculty/Advisor Resource Center on the Web provides easy access to student records and advisement data for authorized users.

*Quality faculty contribute to high-quality teaching and research, thus contributing to the development of educated persons.*



*Missouri State University is committed to providing a variety of services to help students of all backgrounds succeed.*

- Numerous opportunities assist faculty in developing their knowledge and skills to meet changing educational trends.
- As part of the assessment process many academic units undergo regular external review. As a result, most academic programs are accredited or certified by their respective national or state agencies.
- A decentralized system of assessment is coordinated through a network of activities embedded throughout all levels of the university. Processes and results are open for review by internal and external groups and are facilitated by the Assessment Council.
- Faculty drive curricular development.
- Quality faculty contribute to high-quality teaching and research, thus contributing to the development of educated persons.
- Missouri State University is committed to providing a variety of services to help students of all backgrounds succeed.
- Missouri State University promotes life-long learning for faculty, students, and the community.
- Student research is strongly encouraged, evidenced by the annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Forum in which graduate students from across campus present their research.

#### **Theme Three: *A Connected Organization***

- The public affairs mission includes an emphasis on service.
- Many students, faculty, and staff participate in service activities, often on a volunteer basis.
- The University collaborates with external constituents, including other educational institutions. This collaboration conserves resources and eases the transfer process.
- Internal constituents have many opportunities to voice their ideas about the University and its programs.
- External constituents respond positively to the University's work.

#### **Theme Four: *A Distinctive Organization***

- Missouri State University is distinctive, in part through its statewide mission in public affairs.
- Missouri State encourages and promotes diversity in its broadest sense.
- Since 1995, the University has increased diversity through articulated plans, the hiring of women and minorities in administrative roles, and minorities in faculty positions.



- In keeping with its mission, the University “promotes knowledge and understanding of multicultural environments” through several aspects of University life. Academic programs provide students numerous opportunities for learning about diversity through course materials.
- Missouri State is accountable to many internal and external constituencies.
- Missouri State is self reflective through systematic self-evaluations.
- Faculty, staff, and students typically work together for the greater good of the institution.
- Missouri State supports a strong system of faculty governance that includes the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Council, College Councils, the Committee on General Education and Intercollegiate Programs, and the Professional Education Council.
- External advisory committees are used by many departments and units.
- The Teaching Fellowship Program and the University’s Performance Measures are two examples of sustained efforts to connect assessment with the improvement of educational programs.

### Recommendations

The Self-Study identified a number of challenges and opportunities that require future institutional focus and action. Based on these, the Steering Committee recommends that the University should

- Develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated plan as a part of its assessment process to survey and track all graduates and maintain the data in a central electronic data base available for query
- Evaluate the curricular review and approval process, with the goal of streamlining and speeding up curricular actions, while maintaining quality assurance
- Encourage academic units to accept more responsibility in seeking available data and applying the results of assessment strategies
- Broaden the involvement of faculty, staff, and administrators in pursuing professional development opportunities, such as those offered by the Academic Development Center
- Develop a new standard for productivity in the Faculty Handbook and address the need for a new reward system during the next year, in accordance with the recommendations of *Daring to Excel*
- Give higher priority to diversity in student recruitment and faculty hiring, including allocation of additional funds to make attempts more successful
- Improve external funding of all types

*Missouri State University supports a strong system of faculty governance that includes the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Council, College Councils, the Committee on General Education and Intercollegiate Programs, and the Professional Education Council.*



*The full Self-Study Report may be viewed online at: [www.accreditation.missouristate.edu](http://www.accreditation.missouristate.edu)*

- Improve the learning environment through upgrading facilities. As noted in *Daring to Excel*, the University should continue to seek funding to complete the items designated for renovation and /or construction in the University's Master Plan with continued annual assessment.
- Continue to strengthen graduate programs
- Improve international programs, with an emphasis on globalization
- Improve all levels of communication as discussions of policy changes and the implementation of new programs and initiatives take place
- Implement a more inclusive and informative budget process.

### Conclusion

In summary, the Steering Committee views the preparation of the Long-Range Plan, *Daring to Excel*, as part of the 2005 Self-Study. Another part, manifest in the Self-Study Report, evaluates the degree to which Southwest Missouri State University, now Missouri State University, meets the HLC Criteria and Core Components. The preparation of *Daring to Excel* and the Self-Study Report was a collaborative effort involving internal and external constituents. The two resulting documents complement one another by providing a comprehensive portrait of the present and a visionary guide for the future. The results not only provide convincing documentation that Missouri State University meets all the Criteria for Accreditation, but also benefits the University as it continues to plan, implement, and evaluate changes designed to increase services needed by its many constituencies.

Over the past decade the University has maximized its resources, made significant changes in its curriculum, increased the number of graduate programs, adjusted services to community requisites, and striven to be both student centered and future oriented. The Self-Study Report demonstrates that the University operates at a level of excellence that merits continued accreditation based on the Criteria and Core Components of the Higher Learning Commission.

*The members of the 2005 HLC Self-Study Steering Committee:*

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